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## POLITICS PEIRCE ART



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## INTRODUCTION:

### PRAGMATISM AS A SPECIAL 'LEBENSPHILOSOPHIE'

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Once upon a time, in high school, I was a Marxist. As a university student, I became an admirer of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and then, the circumstances of my life led me to Pragmatism. What is the common denominator, which made these changes possible?

Our everyday life is mostly a process of heterogeneous, fragmented, and rhapsodic happenings. It is not simple to unify them, and if we are missing a unified framework regarding our life, our psyche can easily find itself in a pathological condition. In everyday life, our world-view has the task of creating this framework. Nevertheless, on this level, it is usually enough if people can create an emotional unity among the different dimensions of their life. Those who want more, let us say some discursive order in their life, need concepts, or in the best scenario, some philosophy.

However, it really matters which one is the best philosophy for us? It is difficult to choose since many religions, sects, and, as Ch. S. Peirce put it, „philosophical slop-shops on every corner” (Rorty quotes it in PSH, p. 20.) provide their *global solutions*, next to the traditional philosophies. Therefore, those who did not get any philosophical training, and people mostly did not get it can be lost easily as children in the jungle of spangle but unworthy products. If we follow Heidegger's advice and want to choose from the several discursive opportunities not only by chance but based on understanding and interpretation, then we should think over first our human situation. What is the main characteristic of our life? It is almost impossible to refute that we are unavoidably natural and social beings, and we remain such beings as long as cyborgs do not replace us. It is much more difficult to accept that **human life is primordially practice**.

Nevertheless, this claim of Pragmatism is my common denominator, which I felt only during high school. At the university, it became clear that the political and

ideological implications of Marxism are incidental for me, because, otherwise, the young Heidegger's philosophy could not enchant me. His hermeneutic, ontological phenomenology interpreted the connections between the different dimensions of human life amazingly, and first of all, its origin: practice. Extremely heterogeneous activities can belong to our life already on the level of everyday life (we work, play, relax, making politics, doing sports, etc.), but we must create the unified whole of our life in practice, since, otherwise, we shall bear sharp tensions and contradictions in our psyche. Pragmatists agree not only in the statement that human life is first of all practice, but they also claim unequivocally that this practice in a broad sense also includes every form of thinking (both science and philosophy). Thus, pragmatists say, and I absolutely agree with it, that every theory is also a tool since life (from pragmatist and evolutionary point of view) is problemsolving, where we use tools.

Thus, not in the sense of Schopenhauer, Bergson, or Kierkegaard, but this broad sense of Pragmatism can be regarded as Lebensphilosophie. We, pragmatists, say that human life is primordially practice, which is always a sequence of problems, and we have to solve these problems in very different forms and on extremely different levels. The present volume of Pragmatism Today is an excellent example of this diversity, which could be unified only from the practice-oriented Pragmatism that always includes meliorism. Our issue has three main parts: politics, Peirce's philosophy, and art.

In the first part, the beloved reader might find three papers. Richard E. Hart shows us how we can use Richard Rorty's philosophy in the interpretation of the present, divided American political situation. Scott Pratt explains to us that we can find an original theory of agency and sovereignty, even in the philosophy of the indigenous American people. Belayneh Taye, from his original Ethiopian point of view, defends the new contextual and pragmatist approach of bioethics.

After politics, four excellent paper analyzes the different dimensions of Peirce's philosophy. Examining Peirce's early papers, Karolína Šedivcová focuses on the prehistory of Pragmatism. Avoiding the possibility of an

overblown ontology, Anoop Gupta reformulates the Peircean indispensability argument with the help of Quine, Putnam and others. Vasily Kiryushchenko compares Charles Peirce's and Robert Brandom's conceptions of normative objectivity. He claims that Peirce's conception reconciles better the social character of knowledge and the objectivity of norms shared by a community of knowers, than Brandom's one. Tullio Viola delves deep into Royce's late reading of Peirce, and he shows, where Royce fails to do full justice of Peirce's thoughts. At the end of the second part, Martin Švantner shows in his article, „Several regimes of semiotics: G. Deleuze's & F. Guattari's rhetorics of affections,“ that their rhetorical and methodological strategies of analysis of various sign systems connected to the general semiotics are based on the idea of specific “pragmatics.”

In the third part of the present issue, we turn to art. Annette Svaneclink Jakobsen examines in her article, “Movements of Design Mediation,“ what constitutes spatial mediations of design by studying the future V&A

East Collection and Research Centre in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London. Bálint Veres shows us (“Tactile Tactics in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cultural Displays”) that the museum was once considered a church, later a school, then a stage. “Today, in accordance with somaesthetics, cultural displays can be conceived as physical sites of intersubjectivity and models of human environment relationship, in other words: social and ecological agoras.” Dan O'Brien tries to convince us that some images of Christ's suffering, which depict God's high-level empathetic understanding of humanity (via the depiction of the body of Christ), can reconfigure our conception of God and specifically his omniscience. By criticizing the present interpretation of virtual art, Tamás Seregi clarifies the concepts of virtuality and simulacrum (“Virtuality versus Simulacrum”).

The material of our present issue is so rich and diverse that I am convinced, it can re-present Pragmatism as a special “Lebensphilosophie,“ which can offer new considerations for every interested reader.



# POLITICS

## RORTY AND THE DIVIDED STATES OF AMERICA

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Merely legal guarantees of the civil liberties of free belief, free expression, free assembly are of little avail if in daily life freedom of communication, the give and take of ideas, facts, experiences, is choked by mutual suspicion, by abuse, by fear and hatred. These things destroy the essential condition of the democratic way of living even more effectually than open coercion which...is effective only when it succeeds in breeding hate, suspicion, intolerance in the minds of individual human beings.<sup>1</sup>

John Dewey

ABSTRACT: This paper undertakes a philosophical analysis of the fractured, polarized political situation in America today, exacerbated by the presidency of Trump. The focus is on values and principles as I seek to decipher extraordinary foundational shifts in culture, national psychology, philosophy and values that have helped bring about the dangerous malaise America is witnessing. In my aspirational search for plausible, if tentative, steps toward social healing I reflect on some leading ideas of Richard Rorty from his works, *ACHIEVING OUR COUNTRY* and *PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL HOPE*. I term my construction a Rorty "wish list" for saving our country.

**Keywords:** American culture and politics, polarization, Richard Rorty and social hope

Two weeks after our American electoral nightmare of 2016 I published a letter in my local newspaper (THE SMITHTOWN NEWS, Nov. 24, 2016,) in which I argued vigorously that, regardless of winners or losers, "...there is one reality that any citizen with eyes wide open must acknowledge as abundantly clear—the United States of America is no longer a united states." I went on to claim that the collapse of a united country had been developing for a long time and that the electoral process just then concluded was "...a glaring symptom of an underlying crisis and fissure." My somewhat whimsical yet serious point was that "We are de facto two widely separate groups of Americans with no [apparent] signs of reconcili-

ation." I asked polemically whether it was "...time to consider a two state solution?" I further detailed how the two Americas (A and B) might be constituted, which parts of the country might be included in each, and justified the break-up by asserting that we have reached a point in our history where "...neither group (A or B) is doing the other any good, each casting the other into fear, anger, even paralysis." The truth is, "They (A and B) are simply getting in each other's way," with everyone "...feeling the anxiety, the pain, the disillusionment, and finally the hopelessness." Since each group muddies, misrepresents and actively seeks to cancel the other's vision of, and hopes and dreams for, America, it's no surprise to find our electoral politics pitting people angrily against one another. "When long-time friends and neighbors [and family] think and say in earnest 'Your America is not my America' then we as a single country are in deep trouble."

Six months later, in another letter to the same paper (May 11, 2017,) I wrote that in the interim I had seen absolutely nothing that would change my view regarding the two Americas. If anything, the chasm, the hostilities, had "...become ever more entrenched and ugly." I cited as an example Trump's then recent appearance at the Intrepid Air and Space Museum in Manhattan where angry anti-Trump protestors shouted epithets like "We're the real New Yorkers" and "This village does not want its' idiot back." Trump supporters countered by proclaiming that "People on the other side are traitors...they are racist against Trump," and "I want to throw up on the liberals because they don't love our country... they are anti-American, period." (NEWSDAY, May 5, 2017). I then asked, rhetorically, "Does this sound like one country, indivisible with liberty and justice for all?" and pointed out, in concluding, that "...a house divided is destined to fall" and further that democracies, like other forms of government, come and go, most collapsing under their own weight. Writing now, in 2018, I must sadly reiterate that I've seen little if any evidence that refutes my view of the two Americas and the direction in which our country is heading.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, "Creative Democracy: The Task Before Us," LW.14.228

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<sup>2</sup> To illustrate, one could chose, nearly at random, say any three large issues on which Americans today hold radically divergent



In this paper I will not do a deep dive into the weeds—that is, dissect, debate or critique specific policies, investigations, political stunts, psychological disabilities or maddening details of the everyday news cycle in America. All that is about base politics. This hopes to be about philosophy and values. Rather than immersion in particulars, I want to speculate on what to me registers as the bigger picture. I wish to decipher what are the extraordinary foundational shifts in culture, national psychology, philosophy and values that have brought about the dangerous malaise America is witnessing now and I fear for the foreseeable future. David Brooks of the *NEW YORK TIMES* (Feb. 23, 2018) frames the matter more eloquently when he describes the United States as a nation that is “...emotionally sick,” characterized by “...the decline of social trust, the breakdown of family life, the polarization of the national life, the spread of tribal mentalities, the decline of social capital, the rising alienation from institutions [and norms] or the decline of citizenship and neighborliness.” He concludes that “It is simply impossible to tell any good news story when looking at the data from these moral, social and emotional spheres.”

In my identification of foundational problems and aspirational search for plausible, if tentative, steps toward solution, I will invoke philosopher Richard Rorty and a few of his leading ideas about America, its past and its future. I will be referring to this, again rather whimsically, as a Rorty “wish list” on how we might proceed. While no doubt he would be profoundly distressed at what’s happening with and in America today, could he offer even a glimmer of hope for a potentially brighter future? If so, what needs to happen and would any of his ideas be realistic or simply idle pipe dreams?

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and seemingly irreconcilable positions. For instance, gun violence and its remedy, Russian election meddling and what to do about it, and immigration, both legal and illegal. On each, the two Americas are hysterically passionate and angry, prepared to fully engage in tribal warfare to see “their side” win. I hear succumb only slightly to hyperbole.

## II

The problem is that we are becoming a nation of cowards and voluptuaries, either egging on or sitting passively as abuse and contempt take over our political discourse.

Arthur C. Brooks, American Enterprise Institute

As both David and Arthur Brooks rightly claim, America’s problems are deeper, more pervasive, more corrosive, and potentially long-lasting than the daily spats between Republicans and Democrats or arguments over who one should vote for. The problems reflect, and exacerbate, ruptures between Americans that are cultural, economic, moral, even philosophic in character. We can and should invoke particular themes like lost jobs and unequal wages, elites vs. working class, urban vs. rural, etc.—all important in an immediate sense and the subject of tons of recent studies, articles and books. However, such issues are but evolving symptoms of an underlying disorder that confronts American society. Even Trump is simply a culminating symptom, rather than original cause, of America’s diseased state. To be sure, he is a shockingly powerful symptom who aggravates and multiplies the chaos and national heartache in manifold ways every single moment of his presidency.

My mind drifts to an analogy I find instructive though some may consider weak. When teaching introductory philosophy, and the class arrived at the problem of ontology and identity, I would frequently introduce the proverbial “When is a chair no longer a chair?” question. If one leg is removed or all, if the back or seat is cut away, when is a point reached where there is no longer a chair but perhaps firewood or tinker toys? Can we draw an illuminating analogy between a chair and a country?

For arguments sake, let’s assume a country (USA) that’s a constitutional democracy with guaranteed basic rights, privileges and responsibilities for all. A republic (federation) of independent states rooted in equal representation where every state and every vote is meant to count. Such a country ought to have no voter suppression, no buying of public office by the rich and powerful, no gerrymandering that stacks the electoral deck in favor

of one party over others. Such a country operates on the rule of law wherein no one, including high officers, is above the law. The judicial system that enforces the law has as its highest objective the achievement of justice, the common denominator and highest ideal for everyone—rich and poor, minority and majority, male and female, native born and immigrant. This, then, is a country of grand, even grandiose, ideas and ideals—forever an imperfect work in progress—wherein every person is supposed to get a shot at pursuing life, liberty and happiness. In this country the individual and community enjoy not an either/or relation but instead a both/and. And this country is historically a welcoming country that joyfully acknowledges it was built out of the talents, hard work and patriotism of immigrants. This country has more times than not throughout its history displayed compassion for the oppressed, the persecuted, the infirm, extending opportunity rather than building walls. Much of what I describe about America is, of course, aspirational and never fully realized. However, the point is not about arriving at some final achievement, but rather the tacit presumption of an historical process and what might be called “regulative ideals” that direct our association with one another, our national conduct and our outreach to the world. In short, what America could and should be. Further, it’s fair to say that this characterization largely, though hardly exclusively, defines America (the aspiration) and represents its calling card and attraction to so many from around the world.

Now to the identity question, which has been anxiously raised numerous times over the past 2-3 years by leading experts and pundits. Similar to cutting off the legs, seat and back of the chair—resulting in the eventual elimination of the chair—what happens when a society, a culture, a country like America is confronted with any or all of the following subtractions?

—The abandonment of a shared sense of reality, when as Brooke Gladstone writes, “...the nation seems to

be waging civil war over reality itself.”<sup>3</sup> Distinctions between fake and actual, optics and substance, principles and crass politics collapse resulting in everything blending pathetically into chaotic quicksand.

—The abandonment of any agreed upon sense of truth or facts. When truth is transformed into “alternative truth”, facts into “alternative facts,” how does anyone know what to believe or when to believe? How can there be any effective sort of orientation? When lies, distortions, willful deceptions enjoy the same currency as established truth, fact and consensus, what are we left with? Could it be anything other than confusion and chaos that keeps people’s minds off important matters?

—The abandonment of justice, the desire for fairness and equal treatment, and the unrelenting challenge to the rule of law itself—could all this lead to the possibility of a quasi- authoritarian state in which justice and law are decided by the strong-man or party in power rather than legislatures and the will of the people?

—Giving up on, in fact deriding, any sense of shared morality and values, and any viable sense of the “common good,” the focus of a recent book by Robert Reich and many earlier studies. It is commonly understood that American programs and services such as Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, unemployment benefits, and sound, accessible public education for all rest on a sense of the common good. But when Republican and Democrat values and priorities are crippling antagonistic to one another, what becomes of any shared moral character for the nation? What if any collective values shape the behavior of the nation?

Considering these subtractions, when even the prospect of a shared sense of reality, truth, justice and morality is subjected to relentless and withering attack, and appears to be increasingly impossible, even undesirable politically

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<sup>3</sup> Brooke Gladstone, *THE TROUBLE WITH REALITY: A RUMINATION ON MORAL PANIC IN OUR TIME* (New York: Workman Press, 2017), p. 60.

and culturally, we may legitimately ask--is America heading in the direction of the dismantled chair, thus running a serious risk of becoming non-America? Is the country left to be a viable reality in anything other than a nominal or formal sense? Could it be as Richard Rorty, "concerned citizen of a country in decline" asserts, that America may be "...in danger of losing its soul?"<sup>4</sup> While Trump repeatedly clamors that without borders (walls) we have no country, could it be that in the absence of a viable, shared sense of reality, truth, justice and morality we are left with no country to wall in? Perhaps Maureen Dowd is on point when she writes, "We have crossed into a surreal dimension where we are limited only by our imaginations. The American identity and American values are fungible at the moment. The guardrails are off. Our brains are so scrambled that it's starting to make sense that none of it makes any sense." (NEW YORK TIMES, May 13, 2018).

### III

Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation."<sup>5</sup>

Martin Luther King, Jr.

This section offers an overview, chiefly in my own words and absent numerous citations, of some of what I, in practical terms, take away from the essays that comprise two of Rorty's major works that relate to America's present crisis and some ways the crisis might be addressed (ACHIEVING OUR COUNTRY and PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL HOPE). Earlier I referred to what I termed a Rorty "wish list" for possibly recovering and achieving our country. To that end, I now address five basic themes drawn from the two books. While each (and all) has

political and cultural significance, each has philosophical import as well, though hardly philosophical in a typical academic sense. Surely, from Rorty's perspective the present American dilemma is not about abstract philosophical theory. It's not a "professional, disciplinary" squabble in the acceptable academic meaning most people readily embrace. Rather, Rorty encourages, actually insists, that it's basically all about our stories, our lived experiences, our aspirations, actions and interactions. He is far more interested in the narratives of history, literature and communal experience than any exposition of general theory, dogma or abstraction. So, what, if anything, can we worried Americans (and world citizens) learn from him, and can it make any difference? Assuming, along with Rorty, that an (ideally) tolerant, pluralistic, constitutional democracy requires, at a minimum, trust, cooperation, empathy, compromise and consensus building, what concrete steps does Rorty put on offer?

1) In ACHIEVING OUR COUNTRY Rorty calls for a return to an "activist, reformist left" and a move away from a "spectatorial cultural left" that has come to dominate our attention. For him the "cultural left" is rooted in identity politics, individual or group grievances and separate partisan ideologies. While advances have assuredly been made by the "cultural left" (e.g., respect for ethnic, racial or religious differences), we must now re-prioritize and shift the focus in favor of the common, shared interests and concerns of all Americans. This shift zeros in principally on economic issues—jobs, decent education, earnings that afford a viable standard of living for all and not just the wealthy and powerful. Associated considerations include the prospects for adequate health care and secure retirements that reward a lifetime of hard work and contributions to the well-being of society. Consideration of our responsible stewardship over nature is, also, crucial. Substantive moves in this direction would undercut much of the conservative critics' anger over "political correctness" and its al-

<sup>4</sup> Richard Rorty, PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL HOPE (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 234.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King, "I See The Promised Land," WRITINGS AND SPEECHES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper One, 1992), p. 201.

leged elitist divisiveness. As we know, much of Trump's appeal to disenfranchised voters involved relentless bashing of a nebulous "political correctness" that neither he nor his followers understood the least bit about, but was, nonetheless, effective. If a "reformist left" yielded genuine, verifiable improvement in the economic conditions of working people much of the thunder could be stripped from the inflammatory Trumpian rhetoric while its hollowness and hypocrisy would be made clear.

- 2) A "reformist left" would, also, bring an energetic, resurgent focus on what Rorty calls "campaigns" rather than "movements." Movements, like socialism or religious orthodoxies, involve proselytizing and forced adherence. They presume a grand, sweeping overview and require the long haul, what Rorty regards as various forms of transcendence. Specific campaigns, to the contrary, involve a focused struggle for improved social conditions in the here and now. Efforts to minimize suppression and thus secure voting rights for all, to realize adequate health care services (preventive, maternity, psychological and drug treatment, care for special needs), to secure a minimum wage that leads to a survivable standard of living—all are examples of waging campaigns of concerted effort rather than attaching oneself, in many cases blindly, to big and rather amorphous movements that may never deliver results.
- 3) Integral to realization of themes 1 and 2 for Rorty is the restoration of effective labor unions in America. In recent decades unions have been decimated and workers left unprotected and exploited while income inequality has risen to record heights. Rorty accepts the flaws and excesses (at times) in the labor union movement, but, also, understands correctly that the wealthy and powerful owners and managers of capital, as well as leaders of government, have never, and will never, give in to legitimate worker concerns and requests unless the workers collectively exercise

power. Federal and state governments in America have for the most part given up on protecting the rights of the working class in favor of rewarding the rich and the party in power. This disenfranchisement, in effect, led much of the working class to succumb to the hollow promises of an unscrupulous real estate mogul and billionaire who assured that he was always and only about the "little guy." In both *ACHIEVING OUR COUNTRY* and *PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL HOPE* Rorty makes a recurring plea for academics, intellectuals generally, professionals of all sorts, and artists to get back together with, get on the same page with, labor leaders and every day working people who have built and nurtured America.

- 4) The essay, "Looking Backwards from the Year 2096" (PSH) was written in 1996, but entices us to consider its relevance for 2018. While Rorty talks a lot about inequality and wage slavery, class divisions and the perils of cultural fixations, his basic appeal is largely to bring our country back together by "...bringing back its old pride in fraternal ideals." Rorty contends we must recover a viable sense of fraternity and care for one another, for as John Steinbeck pointed out in *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, "As long as people in trouble can sacrifice to help people who are in still worse shape...there is fraternity and therefore social hope" (cited in PSH, 248). Rorty concludes the essay by warning ominously "...that everything depends on keeping our fragile sense of American fraternity intact" (251).

Keeping this sense intact requires overcoming the presumption of American exceptionalism that has characterized the last two centuries. We no longer have the luxury of thinking of ourselves as singled out and blessed and beyond all others. Rather, we are an evolving and vulnerable constitutional democracy with "...a sense of fragility, of susceptibility to the vicissitudes of time and chance, which Walt Whitman and John Dewey may never have

known" (250). In addition, our forward movement as a country, for Rorty, requires a new understanding of morality that moves away from instruction, abstract principles and salvation. Today morality must be "...thought of neither as a matter of applying moral law nor as the acquisition of virtues but as fellow feeling, the ability to sympathize with the plight of others" (249). In line with such a view, I now offer a couple of practical Rorty inspired suggestions that may facilitate a return to fraternity. First, collective actions must begin at the local level. People of different backgrounds, education and vocations need to pool their talents and labor, pulling together around matters that concern their local communities before elevating issues to a higher level as necessary. As a glimmer of hope, actual examples abound throughout American communities. For example, my own town (Smithtown, New York) has an Anti-bias Task-force that advocates for diversity, tolerance, unity, education and community harmony. Local groups throughout the U.S. coalesce around concerns for a healthy and beautiful natural environment, around crime, the scourge of drug abuse or corruption and waste of tax payer monies. Every group, large or small, reflects common experiences and concerns for the well-being of the community, of others, and not just select individuals. To this extent, a sense of fellow-feeling and fraternity is created and encouraged to grow. As some have claimed, all politics is local, all change takes root in immediate everyday experiences, struggles and victories.

Second, Rorty believes that a sense of fraternity—a feeling for the other's suffering and pain—may well result from reading what he calls inspirational literature. The stories of people's hardships, sufferings and human achievements—of their common plights—assist in cultivating a sense of fraternity leading to moral growth and progress. As Rorty says, "...only those who still read for inspiration...are likely to be of much use in building a cooperative com-

monwealth" (AOC, 140). On this point, his essay, "The Inspirational Value of Great Works of Literature", I believe should be required reading for every American worried over America's present and future.

- 5) My final item on the Rorty "wish list" concerns a restoration of national pride and patriotism. This is an aspiration maligned and misunderstood I believe by some critics of Rorty. The first line of the essay, "American National Pride: Whitman and Dewey" announces that "National pride is to countries what self-respect is to individuals: a necessary condition for self-improvement" (AOC, 3). Absent self-respect an individual can never understand herself or move forward. Absent a sense of national pride a country can never correct its ways, reform or advance itself. For Rorty national pride is not the hollow pride of one-upmanship or callously regarding ourselves the most powerful, the most advanced economically and technologically. Pride in one's nation grows out of the common struggles and achievements of the people and their history, our honest recognition of the nation's flaws and mistakes while, also, appreciating the progress made in terms of opportunities and rights, legal reforms and cultural achievement. Likewise, patriotism, for Rorty, is not blind love of country, militaristic in nature or demanding simple obedience to the call. Patriotism grows naturally from the pride a people have for their country's history, its big ideas, ideals and aspirations. Pride and patriotism, in this sense, signal that improvement in social conditions and people's lives can happen and will happen if people bind together in collective prideful, yet realistic, pursuit of the country's professed values and ideals. On this theme, Rorty's essay, "The Unpatriotic Academy," strikes me as a remarkably succinct and clear-headed reflection on American pluralism, pride, national identity and patriotism. In it he points out that, despite the outrage some may feel, most Americans still identify with their country. "We take pride in being citizens of a

self-invented, self-reforming, enduring constitutional democracy. We think of the United States as having glorious—if tarnished—national traditions” (PSH, 252). In effect, he argues that pride in a shared national identity need not be an evil. Some on the left who promote the politics of difference tend to belittle the very notions of national identity and pride, but as Rorty says, “There is no incompatibility between respect for cultural differences and American patriotism” (253).

In reality, no nation can ever hope to reform itself and live up to its ideals without taking some measure of pride and rejoicing thoughtfully, and critically, in what the country has been and can still be. Such were (and are) the dreams of Emerson, Whitman and Dewey, of Martin Luther King and Cornel West. And such demonstrates how pride and patriotism in a Rortyan sense can help to engender some hope for a better tomorrow.

#### IV

From the perspective of many millions of Americans, myself at times included, the United States appears to be coming apart at the seams. Maureen Dowd was right in saying that all the guardrails are off. We are, indeed, in many respects off the rails, seemingly rudderless and searching frantically for direction and hope as a country. I submit that even those millions who presently think they are content and pleased with the “outsider” disruption that grips our great nation, will eventually be forced to wake up and realize that a disease has overtaken us and needs to be purged. Our present situation has been decades in the making, but its pace and severity is being savagely hastened by our current government and political parties. As I see it, the ruptures and seething wounds are almost entirely self-inflicted. As examples, we are witnessing on a daily basis growing intolerance for anyone other than white, Christian males of European descent, a denigration of constitutional rights and norms such as free and fair electoral and judicial systems, along

with a free press, selectively self-serving attacks on the rule of law and law enforcement, a giving up on human and civil rights at home and abroad, and a near total reversal of our responsibilities for the natural environment that sustains us. The only thing that now seems to matter is money, winning and pursuit of power at any cost. Any reasonable sense of the common good is withering on the vine of indifference. Elective office now goes largely to the highest bidder, while hateful speech, personal attacks and uncivil behavior is publically applauded. Sadly for me, much of the gains (political, legal, moral) America has made during my lifetime (roughly seven decades) are now being systematically threatened while our parties and leaders care only about catering to their so-called base. On the presumption that the onslaught cannot and will not last forever (this, too, shall pass) it is my firm conviction that it will, nevertheless, likely take decades, if not a generation or more, to repair the damage already done. And perhaps the greatest damage results from the loss of the soul, the indifference to morality and basic decency. These, along with trust and national confidence, will be the hardest to recover.

Improvement is difficult, though perhaps not impossible, to envision. Philosophers concerned with social and political issues, with ethics and morality, have always in their particular time and place sought to offer diagnoses of the problems and prescriptions for hoped-for amelioration. In that spirit I have here set forth some of what I consider Rorty’s most important ideas and suggestions for possibly making our crisis situation a bit better. At the least, perhaps he can help us get our bearings as we struggle to make sense out of the largely senseless. Perhaps he can help us set a course and direction, though I admit to being less than sanguine. No one in America, or in the world at large, should hold their breath in anticipation that we will one morning wake up and realize that this was all just a bad dream. In my final note below<sup>6</sup> I offer what I call “Hart’s top ten wish list,” a

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<sup>6</sup> HART’S TOP TEN NON-PARTISAN WISH LIST FOR AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

collection of concrete proposals in the spirit of Rorty which, though they will likely never all come to pass, I am thoroughly convinced would help restore American democracy to greater health and vitality. While our

country may see, to be approaching life-support, miracles in medicine and history have been known to occasionally happen. Along with Rorty, let us hope.

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- 1) Make third party politics viable—two party rule is simply not working.
  - 2) Get big money out of politics—reverse “Citizen’s United”—the most damaging Supreme Court decision in decades.
  - 3) Set strict time limits on campaign seasons (no more than a few months)
  - 4) Seriously curtail all instances of electoral gerrymandering
  - 5) Reform the Electoral College—make state electors awarded in a fashion proportional to actual popular vote.
  - 6) All candidates for ANY elective office of public trust must
    - divulge tax returns
    - demonstrate no conflicts of interest
    - pass a security clearance test and possibly a mental health exam
  - 7) Build from the local to the national, e.g. support the Parkland, FLA survivor kids and MeToo victims
  - 8) Set strict term limits for all elected officials
  - 9) No lobbying activities allowed (ever) by anyone following government service.
  - 10) Figure out a way, as a society, to transform virtue and goodness (compassion, tolerance, cooperation), neighborliness and civic participation from sentimental platitudes to “cool” values reflected in persons deserving of respect and admiration, indeed, as things necessary for national survival.

## AGENCY AND SOVEREIGNTY IN AMERICAN INDIAN

### PHILOSOPHY

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**ABSTRACT:** An American Indian philosophical tradition has stood against colonialism and genocide in the United States since at least the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition, in contrast with particular tribal traditions, emerged at the border between Native and European America as a pan-Indian response to the coming of “settler society.” What had been a porous boundary earlier in American history where conflicts between whites and Indians occurred alongside significant moments of mutual influence was replaced by a new conception of difference defined by the transition from savagery and civilization. New theories of human development and the new economic and social conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century set aside wars of displacement and led to new systematic practices of genocide that included the imposition of the reservation system, the establishment of Indian boarding schools, the implementation of the Allotment Act, and, finally, the passage, in 1924, of the American Indian Citizenship Act. Against these practices emerged a series of indigenous philosophers who offered a variety of responses, most of which shared philosophical commitments to a relational ontology, the importance of “power and place,” and to ontological, epistemic, and phenomenological pluralism. In order to introduce this tradition, I will consider several of its central figures and then focus on a conception of agency or personhood that is a product of these commitments. I will then consider three implications of the philosophical position developed by this pan-Indian tradition. The first two implications challenge central commitments of dominant western philosophy and the third adds a conception of sovereignty that resists the “progress” of settler society and can serve as a starting point for a politics of place.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Sovereignty, Native American/American Indian Philosophy, Settler Colonialism, Agency, Agent Ontology

An American Indian philosophical tradition has stood against American colonialism and genocide since at least the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This tradition, in contrast with particular tribal traditions, emerged at the border between Native and European America as a pan-Indian response to the coming of settler society<sup>1</sup>. What had been a porous boundary earlier in American history

where conflicts between whites and Indians occurred alongside significant moments of mutual influence was replaced by a new conception of difference defined by the transition from savagery and civilization. New theories of human development and the new economic and social conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century set aside wars of displacement and helped to establish systematic practices of genocide that included the imposition of the reservation system, the establishment of Indian boarding schools, the implementation of the Allotment Act, and, finally, the passage, in 1924, of the American Indian Citizenship Act. Against these practices emerged a series of indigenous philosophers who offered a variety of responses, most of which shared four philosophical commitments.

The first commitment was to the idea that things are relational—that is, things exist only in and through relations with other things that are also relational. Such relationality gave rise to the second commitment: the importance of place, that is, the particular relations that characterize individuals and their groups. Third, placed relations were not given or static but imbued with what is often called “power”; not power as “force” in the ordinary sense nor power as the product of systematic domination, but power as an individuating and connecting motive that seeks to fulfill purposes. And fourth, as a consequence of the resulting diversity of powers marked by different relational locations, this philosophical tradition was committed as well to ontological, epistemic, and phenomenological pluralism. In order to introduce this tradition, I will consider several of its central figures and then focus on a conception of agency or personhood as a product of these four commitments. I will then consider three implications of the philosophical position developed by this pan-Indian tradition. The first two implications challenge central commitments of the dominant western philosophy, in particular, the received conceptions of necessity and possibility and the standard principles of non-contradiction, excluded middle and identity. The third implication adds an alternative notion of sovereignty that can serve as a starting point for a politics of place.

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<sup>1</sup> I use “settler society” to name what might be called the European-descended dominant society in North America, also called “white society.” This use follows Franz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth* and, more recently, Taiiiake Alfred (2005).



## 1. Agency and America

In 1911, a Lakota man, called Charles Eastman in settler society, published a volume, *The Soul of the Indian*, whose title recalled W. E. B. Du Bois's book published a few years earlier, *Souls of Black Folk*. Ohiyesa was a Boston University-trained physician who had grown up with his Lakota grandparents on the northern plains after his mother died and his father fled to Canada in the aftermath of the "Great Sioux Uprising" in 1862. In 1873, his father returned and urged his son to become western educated. After attending Beloit, Knox and Dartmouth Colleges, Charles Eastman received his medical degree in 1890. *The Soul of the Indian* offers a philosophical framework used by indigenous people in their stand against empire. Central to this framework was the conviction that "every creature possesses a soul in some degree, though not necessarily a soul conscious of itself. The tree, the waterfall, the grizzly bear, each is an embodied Force, and as such an object of reverence."<sup>2</sup> In a world in which every creature, that is, every created thing, has a "soul," Eastman argued that people behave differently and with respect. Framing the resulting way of life as "religious," Eastman explained, "Every act of [an Indian's] life is, in a very real sense, a religious act. He recognizes the spirit in all creation, and believes that he draws from it spiritual power."<sup>3</sup> Thanks are due to the creatures with whom one interacts and freely giving back to those creatures makes reciprocal relations also mutually constructive. This ontological view of relational beings also provided a critical perspective on settler society. "As a child," Eastman said, "I understood how to give; I have forgotten that grace since I became civilized. I lived the natural life, whereas I now live the artificial. Any pretty pebble was valuable to me then; every growing tree an object of reverence. Now I worship with the white man before a painted landscape whose value is estimated in dollars! Thus the Indian is reconstructed, as

the natural rocks are ground to powder, and made into artificial blocks which may be built into the walls of modern society."<sup>4</sup> Even as he framed a conception of indigenous life, however, he also made room to acknowledge western religion and is able to harness both indigeneity and Christianity a critical tool. "There is no such thing as 'Christian civilization'," he concludes. "I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and irreconcilable, and that the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same."<sup>5</sup>

Eastman became part of the Pan-Indian movement that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the work of a number of American Indian intellectuals, many educated in boarding schools.<sup>6</sup> The signal organization for the movement was the Society of American Indians, founded in 1911 two years after the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Among the "associate" (non-Indian) founding members were co-founder of the NAACP W. E. B. Du Bois, social gospel movement leader Lyman Abbott, and Cornell University philosopher, Frank Thilly. The SAI's program was never clearly settled, but the work of several of its leaders adopted views that followed the path set by Eastman.

Arthur Parker, a Seneca Indian, who also served as the editor of the SAI journal, both affirmed the need for American Indians to "assimilate" to the dominant economy and at the same time made a case for sustaining aspects of Indian culture as a means of combating the evils of industrial capitalism. In his first address to the SAI on education, Parker concluded "The true aim of educational effort should not be to make the Indian a white man, but simply a man normal to his environment."<sup>7</sup> Here, standing against empire—"commercial greed" and the "sordid ... conventional ideas of white civilization"—

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Hertzberg, Hazel W., *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Parker, Arthur C., *The Philosophy of Indian Education, Proceedings of the First Conference of the Society of American Indians*, Washington, D. C., 1912, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Eastman, Charles, *The Soul of the Indian*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

required the opposite movement. “[Indians] should cease to struggle against [the culture that engulfs them], that [they] should become a factor of it [so that they] should use [their] revitalized influence and more advantageous position in asserting and developing the great ideals of [their] race for the good of ... all [hu]mankind.”<sup>8</sup>

This view of indigenous activism, he argued in a 1916 paper published in the *American Journal of Sociology*, stood explicitly against aspects of the new system of genocide that developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. “In the beginning, there was an endeavor to occupy the land forcibly and by various means to exterminate its barbaric owners. ... The idea of extermination persisted for a long time, ... but there was enough sentiment to bring about a new course—that of segregation.”<sup>9</sup> For Parker, segregation was not a program designed to foster tribes but was rather a continuation of the system of genocide that began with the process of displacement and removal. “Segregation,” he concluded, “did more to exterminate the Indians than did bullets. Rigorously guarded reservations became a place of debasement.”<sup>10</sup> The practices carried out, Parker charged, “[have] permitted the soul of a race ... to sink beneath the evils of civilization into misery, ignorance, disease, and despondency.”<sup>11</sup> The correct response, Parker argued, was to demand that settler society “return” certain stolen or destroyed aspects of indigenous life that could support the renewal of tribal cultures and the possibility of reciprocity with other cultures. These included indigenous intellectual and community life, and economic independence.<sup>12</sup>

Outside the SAI other native thinkers also challenged settler society. Luther Standing Bear, a member of the Oglala Lakota, was among the first students taken to the Carlisle Boarding School in Pennsylvania, where he was trained as a tinsmith.<sup>13</sup> When he returned from

Carlisle he worked for a time as a teacher and a shopkeeper at the Pine Ridge reservation. In 1905, he was elected chief of the Oglala and, after much controversy and conflict with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, left South Dakota in 1912 to become an actor, first with the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and then in Hollywood movies.<sup>14</sup> Late in life he became an activist against the conditions imposed on the Lakota and wrote four books. In his last, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* published in 1933, Standing Bear diagnosed the failure of white society. “The White man,” he said, “does not understand the Indian for the same reason he does not understand America. He is far too removed from its formative processes. The roots of his tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and soil.”<sup>15</sup> In contrast, “in the Indian the spirit of the land is still vested; it will be until other men are able to divine and meet its rhythm. Men must be born and reborn to belong. Their bodies must be formed of the dust of their forefathers’ bones.”<sup>16</sup> Like Kicking Bear, Standing Bear was clear about the future of life in North America. “[It] is now time for the destructive order to be reversed... [In] denying the Indian his ancestral rights and heritages the white race is but robbing itself. But American can be revived, rejuvenated, by recognizing a nature school of thought. The Indian can save America.”<sup>17</sup>

## II. Agent Ontology

By the 1960s, this tradition of American Indian philosophy that stood against empire found new voice in the work of Vine Deloria, Jr., whose grandfather had been a co-founder of the SAI and whose aunt, Ella Deloria, a Columbia-trained ethnographer, served as the secretary for the SAI’s successor organization, the National Council

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>9</sup> Parker, Arthur C., *The Social Elements of the Indian Problem*, *The Journal of American Sociology*, 22, 2, 1916, p. 252.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 252-3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 258-9.

<sup>13</sup> Standing Bear’s brother, Henry, was one of the founding

members of the SAI and was apparently a resident of Hull House in Chicago at some point.

<sup>14</sup> Hale, Frederick, *Acceptance and Rejection of Assimilation in the Works of Luther Standing Bear*. *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, Series 2, 5, 4, 1993, pp. 25-41.

<sup>15</sup> Standing Bear, Luther, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, (1933) 1978, p. 248.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

of American Indians. Deloria, like his predecessors, offered both a critique of the dominant European-descended culture in North America and a vision of an alternative world framed by place and peopled by diverse agents—human and otherwise—understood as persons.

For Deloria, the central element of what he offers as American Indian philosophy is a particular conception of personhood, one that rejects the idea that the world is reducible to passive matter or to substances like matter and mind. Instead, he offers a view founded on what he calls a “simple equation”: “power and place produce personality.”<sup>18</sup> Put another way, persons (or agents as I will call them) are both relational and purposive.<sup>19</sup> As relational, as placed, persons or agents are like points in geometry formed by the intersection of lines. Without the lines, the point—the person—does not exist. However, the example of a point is an insufficient analogy since points are easily seen as passive constructions of someone else’s activity. Agents, things that can act with a purpose, are more than just relational beings; they are also modal, acting toward a possible future that is as yet unfulfilled. This aspect of personhood—power—involves both a determinate past and possible futures that are indeterminate. To say of a tree that it has power is to say that its past is one of tree activity. Its future will at once be constrained by its past. The product of relations with other agents and its own responses form a starting point. Depending on its activities and those of the agents it next encounters, it could become lumber, for example, or shade for someone on a hot day, or an inspiration or an adviser for someone who encounters it in need of their own sense of direction. Our tendency in the west is to attribute whatever possibility a thing like a tree has to the possibilities of the human beings (or at least the “higher” animals) it encounters. But this is to miss the

ontological point. Trees (as well as humans and higher animals and larger systems like rivers, waterfalls, and ecosystems) are relational—placed. A tree’s past and present is an intersection of activities where human purpose is only part of what has established the possibilities that exist for it in its next days or seasons. The ontology of individuals (and groups) is a matter of relations and power—that is, they are, to borrow a phrase from John Dewey, active doings and undergoings such that *what* they are is better taken as *who* they are. In sum, Deloria says, “every entity [has] a personality and [can] experience a measure of free will and choice”<sup>20</sup>.

If ontology is the starting point, then the size and duration of agents are not given in advance but are characteristics of the place and power at hand. Individual human beings as individual agents live in relation to others—human and otherwise—and seek to fulfill their purposes as those around them do likewise. As Deloria observes, the planet itself is an agent and “nurtures smaller forms of life—people, plants, birds, animals, rivers, valleys, and continents”<sup>21</sup>. From the perspective of the “smaller forms of life” as members of larger ones, individuals are not independent but rather are parts of larger agents who also seek to fulfill purposes and who persist as agents even as their members die and new members become parts. Tribes and peoples are themselves agential wholes acting in a context of other such agents sustained by their parts but not reducible to them. Just who, then, count as agents? The answer may not be known in advance; since agency is relational it can make itself apparent only in the process of relating to others. The result, for Deloria, is that “In the moral universe all activities, events, and entities are related, and consequently it does not matter what kind of existence an entity enjoys, for the responsibility is always there for it to participate in the continuing creation of reality.”<sup>22</sup>

If the world is composed of agents as Deloria sug-

<sup>18</sup> Deloria, Jr., Vine and Daniel R. Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, Golden, Co.: Fulcrum Publishing, 2001, p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Pratt, Scott L., *Persons in Place: The Agent Ontology of Vine Deloria, Jr.*, *APA Newsletter on American Indians in Philosophy*, 6, 1, 2006, pp. 4-9.

<sup>20</sup> Deloria, Jr., Vine, *Spirit and Reason: the Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*, Golden, Co.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999, pp. 52-3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

gests, there are three further implications to be considered that relate to the character of the world. The first revises the western conceptions of necessity and possibility, while the second marks the recognition of boundaries, vagueness, and chance as “real.” The third implication points toward a conception of politics that begins with the recognition of collective agency or what may also be called sovereignty.

The first implication is that if there are agents of the sort proposed, then the universe is one in which real possibilities exist. When, for example, one faces a choice, there is, in at least some cases, no set of determining conditions that guarantee a particular choice; the judgment of an agent intervenes in the course of affairs established by the relations in which the agent exists. Agents order not just their own experience, as some might conclude, but order the world so that the purposes they chose and the choices they made are ontologically significant. At the same time, should agents become constrained by the relations that frame them, they can fail to recognize alternatives or come to believe that they do not have an ontologically significant role. Received conceptions of agency and received purposes can affect this narrowing so that even as agent ontology like DeLoria’s affirms the reality of alternative possibilities, it also can provide a critical framework for identifying the ways in which agency is narrowed or denied.

The second implication is that agent ontology and its notion of ordering also leads to the recognition of boundaries, vagueness, and chance. Between alternatives there stands an agent whose character or disposition to act is continuous with both alternatives. At the moment of choice, the person or agent in its relation is a contradiction whose logical character is formally indeterminate. Such formal indeterminacy applies not only to individuals but agents of greater complexity and size, collective agents, long persisting agents and so on. When a community faces alternatives for going forward, for example, to ally with another community or oppose it, the community itself stands in a “space” between, at a boundary continuous with both sides or alternatives. It is

at the same time part of one side, A, and part of the other side, B. But since, as an agent faced with real possibilities, the agent is also neither A nor B. Since the agent is A and B and not A and not B, by the usual logical rules regarding conjunctions, one can conclude that the agent is A and not A (not to mention, also B and not B). The agent then is logically indeterminate as to its direction based on the relations that form it. And yet as an agent, it can nevertheless go forward by making a choice by carefully deciding, rolling the dice, or acting on a guess.

Further, from the perspective of an agent who is an observer, when an object on the horizon is vague or unclear (in what it is or what it will do), it is not only vague for the observer, but ontologically vague in anticipation of the settlement of its determining relations. Again, making a determination is not simply seeing what is already determined, but is an ontologically significant act. To recognize agent ontology is to affirm that the experience of vagueness is not simply a “subjective” state, but is characteristic of the world. Boundaries, with their indeterminate character, and vagueness in the connection between things, open the world to the emergence of something new—by choice or chance—and for ongoing growth and change through the actions of agents.

The ontological standing of boundaries and vagueness also lead to the rejection of a particular set of ordering principles that are at the heart of Enlightenment philosophy and central to how one understands relations between things, that is, the idea of borders. These common ordering principles are the principles of non-contradiction, excluded middle, and identity and are recognized as logical (or formal) as well as ontological and epistemic principles. In much of western culture, these serve as unspoken assumptions about what it is to be and to know.

In simplest terms, non-contradiction as a logical principle holds that a proposition cannot be both true and false. As an ontological principle, it holds that a thing cannot both be and not be what it is. The principle of

excluded middle formally holds that a proposition must be either true or false (and not something in between) and ontologically it requires that a thing either be something (a stone, a human, a Lakota) or not, thus rejecting the idea of something ontologically in between. The principle of identity in logic holds that a term is identical with itself, while ontologically identity means that a thing (or a person or a category) is identical with itself, that is, it remains the thing it is.

Agent ontology violates all three principles in each of their versions. Since things are relational and so subject to change as relations change, the principle of identity cannot hold. Since the universe of agents is one in which there are indeterminate borders, vagueness and chance, the principle of excluded middle is rejected. Since incompatible possibilities are “real” and manifested in the character of agents and boundaries, real or true contradictions are possible. According to the principles of agent ontology, the middle is not excluded; things change as a result of changing relations, and contradiction only marks practical conflict and not logical impossibility. The commitments that mark the development of a positive philosophy about what to expect also point to a critical philosophy aimed at challenging the underlying ordering principles of settler society. While agent ontology rejects the ordering principles of Enlightenment logic and ontology as first principles, it can nevertheless recognize them as describing a limited form of agency.

From the perspective of agent ontology, the “agency” of Enlightenment minds (rational individuals) is one that recognizes only certain forms of action as legitimate agency and categorizes other forms of agency as inferior or even as non-agential. The ordering principles of Enlightenment philosophy—non-contradiction, excluded middle and identity—should be seen as practical rules that govern not ontology or knowledge in the abstract, but serve as normative principles for action; that is, they mark a particular kind of agency. Such agency—settler agency—expects borders to be sharp divisions so that one can rightly say that everything must be on one side or the other of any given dividing line and that things

remain ontologically unchanging. From this perspective, there can be only one kind of legitimate agent—the sort that adopts non-contradiction, excluded middle, and identity as guiding principles. Agents who do not are problematic, limited and even irrational.

And so settler agency turns out to be only one way to be an agent, albeit a narrow and sometimes dangerous one. Other kinds of agency can operate by affirming betweenness both formally and ontologically and lead to the expectation of both a less clear-cut logical landscape and a more complex world of experience. Indigenous conceptions of agency that emerged historically in contact with European settlers utilize the wider notion and so are able to recognize the narrower form of settler agency as agency nonetheless. While settler agency and western ethics and epistemology sought legitimate agents in a world composed of non-agents—of passive rocks, mountains, trees, and animals operating by instinct—the alternate notion of agency recognized diverse agents and interests and a consequent need for respect and cooperation.

### **III Indigenous Sovereignty**

The third implication of agent ontology is a politics grounded on the recognition of collective agents—tribes, clans, and other sorts of communities—that also have the ability to act with a purpose. This capacity can be called “sovereignty” and can replace or redefine the notion of sovereignty received from dominant western philosophy. In the context of colonial displacement and the imposition of reservations, American Indian tribes as agents became bound up within the systems established by the U.S. government and predicated on a wholly different starting point. For the United States, American Indians were legally and systematically framed as dependent, first as nations and then, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as dependent individuals. With Allotment in 1887, native lands were to conform to a vision of individualism where people were only full-fledged human agents when they operated outside the shared commitments of a

group using a particular practice of rationality. From an established commitment to recognition of native peoples as members of nations, boarding schools sought to transform rationality, and citizenship sought to transform membership from tribal membership to membership in the United States and in humanity as a homogeneous whole. By the 1950s, the program of transformation entered what was to be its final stage with the passage of the first termination act by the U. S. Congress in 1953. Now, individual tribes would be legally dissolved leaving native people as proper individual agents unsustained by formative relations except the most abstract and without the sustaining powers of being, for example, Klamath or Chippewa.

In the 1960s, in response to termination and this history of systematic attempts to undermine and displace indigenous ontologies, knowledges, and culture, Deloria, and other activists stood against empire and called for the restoration of American Indian sovereignty. From the perspective of agency, the call for sovereignty became the effort to reestablish or reassert the agency of tribes, reestablishing their distinctiveness and making possible relations between tribes and settler society. But the call for sovereignty was not without risk. In *We Talk You Listen*, Deloria identifies the difficulties bound up with sovereignty. Oppression and persecution of minority groups carried out by the dominant society, of course, must be recognized to be stopped. "In order to validate the persecution of a group," however, "the persecutors must in effect recognize the right of the group to be different." At the same time, "if any group is different in a lasting sense, then it can be kept as a scapegoat for the majority."<sup>23</sup> In the latter case, recognition of sovereignty becomes an instrument of, rather than a challenge to, oppression.

Taiaiake Alfred proposes an alternative. Consistent with the concept of agency as a product of power and place, he argues that in rejecting the "classic notion of

sovereignty"<sup>24</sup> it is possible to "recognize our mutual dependency, to realize that indigenous and non-indigenous communities are permanent features of our political and social landscape, to embrace the notion of respectful co-operation on equal terms, and to apply the peacemaking principles on which were based both the many great pre-contact North American confederacies and the later alliances that allowed European societies to establish themselves and flourish on this continent."<sup>25</sup> Sandy Grande, in her book, *Red Pedagogy*, concludes that on Alfred's account "'sovereignty' becomes a project organized to defend and sustain the basic right of indigenous peoples to exist in 'wholeness' and to thrive in their relations with other peoples. Local (tribal) and global aims come together in solidarity around the shared goal of decolonization."<sup>26</sup> In the context of the recognition of agency, "indigenous perspectives," Alfred says, "offer alternatives, beginning with the restoration of a regime of respect."<sup>27</sup>

In the end, Deloria and Alfred argue for a similar approach to standing against empire. In each case, they are interested first in re-figuring the world in terms of its living agency. If sovereignty is taken as "the agency of a collective" then the alternative model emerges. In *We Talk You Listen*, Deloria concludes, echoing Eastman, that "America needs a new religion." Describing the activism of the late 1960s, he continues, "Nearly every event and movement today shows signs of fulfilling this role, but none has the centered approach that would permit it to dig its roots in and survive."<sup>28</sup> This "religion" is one that leads to "rigorous adherence to the values of racial and other groups." "If my conclusion is correct ... [f]urther generalization about how we are all alike—all people—are useless today. Definite points of view, new logic, and

<sup>24</sup> Alfred, Taiaiake, *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*, second edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Grande, Sandy, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004, p. 171.

<sup>27</sup> Alfred, Taiaiake, *Sovereignty, A Companion to American Indian History*, edited by Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, p. 471.

<sup>28</sup> Deloria, *We Talk, You Listen*, p.17.

<sup>23</sup> Deloria, Jr., Vine, *We Talk You Listen*, New York: Macmillan, 1970, p. 117.

different goals define us. All we can do is try to communicate what we see our group means to itself and how we relate to other groups. Understanding each other as distinct peoples is the most important thing.”<sup>29</sup> Sovereignty then becomes a politics of agency that stands against displacement and colonization and supports the coexistence of diverse logics and purposes.

This is the key. American Indian philosophy as it has emerged at the border—rather than being contained by colonial society has the perspective to see how colonial society is in fact a narrowing of the conception and logic of agency. Agency still exists in western philosophy but is has been narrowed so sharply that it has the potential to destroy not just indigenous cultures but European cultures as well. By starving agency in general, western people are less and less able to be, as Parker said, “normal to the environment”—to fit, to acknowledge and

foster growth and change. Narrowness limits responsibility, respect, vision and growth—and so overrides the concerns of those who do not count as legitimate agents in the dominant society. In contrast, Alfred observes, “Indigenous conceptions, and the politics that flow from them, maintain in a real way the distinction between various political communities and contain an imperative of respect that precludes the need for homogenization. Most indigenous people respect others to the degree that they demonstrate respect. ... And that is the key difference: both philosophical systems can achieve peace; but for peace the European demands assimilation to a belief or a country, while the indigenous demands nothing except respect.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>30</sup> Alfred, *Sovereignty*, p. 472.

## **DIMENSIONS OF BIOETHICS, THE RELEVANCE OF 'CONTEXT' AND THE 'PRAGMATIST TURN'**

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I will focus on the theoretical and methodological dimensions of bioethics and bioethical problems. Mainly, I will review theories, principles, rules, and methods of bioethics, and show the relevance of "context" in recent bioethical studies. Bioethical plights are diverse in terms of their appearance, and they are also complex to address them effectively. The reason can be related to the socio-cultural and economic factors or 'contexts' where the issue arises and the multifaceted nature of bioethical problems, which encompasses ethical issues in life sciences, medicine, technology, environment, and the life of human beings. Hence, considering the nature of bioethical problems, we may argue that bioethical problems require diverse and contextual moral reactions and responses. In this paper, I will give a systematic appraisal of the recently introduced context-sensitive methodologies, theories, and principles of bioethics in the 'global' "South" and "East" and argue in defense of the relevance of context-based bioethical research and bioethical deliberations. Justifications, deliberations and moral actions are contingent, dynamic and context-sensitive because judgments and decisions concerning specific bioethical problems are socio-culturally embedded and institutional. Thus, in the final part of the paper, I will assert that a pragmatist-empirical turn in bioethics is relevant both in the theoretical-conceptual study of bioethics and decision making concerning specific bioethical dilemmas under a particular context.

**Keywords:** Bioethics, Bioethical Theories, Context-Ethics, Pragmatist Bioethics

### **1. Introduction**

Bioethics is an interdisciplinary field which exhibits a complex and contested relationship to philosophical theory due to contributors' perspectivism and 'reliance upon high-flying ethical theory,' and skepticism of the applied nature of bioethics (Arras, 2016). Micah Hester argues, in part as a backlash, and in part as a continuous activity, bioethics has gone through a transformation during the past decades. Dominated in the 1980s principlism and other moral theories in philosophy, bioethics has turned to other perspectives and new approaches to

address moral problems in medicine and bioethics. For example, narrative ethics, casuistry, and the ethics of care (among others) each have made headway into the field (Hester, 2003).

Bioethics is commonly viewed as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that has emerged as an ethical enterprise in the second half of the twentieth century. The increasing diversity and complexity of ethical quandaries related to advance in natural science and technology and the new challenges to specific priorities and practices in medicine and life sciences have led for the traditional medical ethics to expand its horizon to bioethics which includes issues related to animal ethics and environmental ethics (Peppard, 2005; Düwell, 2012). The involvement of physicians, philosophers, lawyers, theologians, and others on the cusp of interdisciplinary dialogue to the issues emerging out of medicine in the context of science and society is also the reason regarding the emergence of bioethics as a field of study (Düwell, 2012).

Irrespective of considerable consensuses on its historical origin, contributors in the field provide different and often conflictual definitions and conceptions to bioethics, especially on its methods, theories, and area of concern. Marcus Düwell agrees with the contested terrain of bioethics. He maintains that the academic bioethics has an interdisciplinary character and that there is no agreement on what exactly bioethics is in the first place (Düwell, 2012). The absence of consensus on bioethics can also be related to the very fact that different ethicists and researchers on bioethics approach bioethical problems with different methods, theories, principles, rules, and a different logic of bioethical decision-making and justifications. Thus, we can find multiple conceptions of bioethics, different methodologies, and principles that contributors in the field have provided to do bioethical research, and making decisions on particular moral problems in a societal and institutional context.

In this paper, I will give a systematic review of these different theoretical and methodological dimensions of bioethics and bioethical problems. Mainly, I will discuss



the horizon of bioethics, and review some of the theories, principles, rules, and methods of bioethics with an emphasis on recently introduced context-sensitive theories and principles of bioethics in the 'global' South and East. Finally, I will suggest that the pragmatist turn towards bioethical investigations and deliberations are relevant both for the conceptual study of theories and to make morally "acceptable" decisions concerning specific bioethical dilemmas.

## 2. Bioethical Issues and the Horizon of Bioethics

Studies in bioethics categorize bioethical issues and dilemmas as "traditional" and "modern" problems of concern in ethics. The traditional issues of bioethics are inherited from the traditional issues of medical ethics; whereas, the modern bioethical issues are related to advance in natural sciences and technologies. The traditional bioethical issues include biomedical problems concerning the beginning and end of life, notably, issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and limiting the therapeutic life treatments and physician-patient relationships at micro-level healthcare systems and institutions. On the other hand, contemporary issues in bioethics include issues related to research on human beings, clinical trials, human genetics, and moral problems linked with misconducts on research on human beings in general. Also, ethical problems related to reproductive technology, organ transplantations, and healthcare resource allocations issues are emerging problems of bioethics in the recent past (Chillón & Marcos, 2019; Martins, 2018; Düwell, 2012).

The horizon of bioethics is not limited only to medical issues; instead, it includes provocative problems of environmental ethics and technology (Düwell, 2012; Peppard, 2005). Bioethical issues are complex, and the field of bioethics is robust and multidisciplinary in terms of its concern and approach of study. Thus, issues associated with rapid developments in natural sciences and technology and their undesirable consequence on the environment and human beings survival, such as nuclear

waste, water, and air pollution, clearing of the forest, large scale livestock farming as well as particular technological innovations like cloning and gene technology are also the focus of bioethical investigations. Furthermore, problems that stem from a concrete situation are concerns of the twenty-first-century bioethics (e. g. HIV/AIDS, genetically manipulated food, the boom in biomedical arsenals, human embryonic stem-cell researches and tropical and pandemic diseases (Pace, 2010; Peppard, 2005). In general, we can claim that current bioethical issues arise out of ethical problems of healthcare, life science, and biotechnologies.

Contemporary bioethical issues are, to some extent, cross-cultural and global in their scope of becoming the concern for the public and the academic scholarship. The moral concern of a specific region or society will become the concern of others, and later it will be a global problem of all of the world. This cross-cultural nature of bioethical problems can be related to the interactions between and within different cultures and civilizations, which is caused by the increasing interconnectedness of different cultures through globalization and metropolitanism. Despite the cross-cultural nature of bioethical issues, the degree of seriousness of bioethical quandaries differs from region to region, nation to nation, and society to society. These differences depend on the socio-economic, cultural elements, and technological levels and contexts. For instance, issues such as euthanasia, surrogate motherhood, organ transplantation, gene therapy, transhumanism, and other biomedical arsenals and other emerging problems dominate the concern of Western bioethics. However, these problems are pretty far to be concerned with "main problems" in the developing countries that have poor resources. However, issues of scarcity and sacrifices in healthcare, cross-cultural researches in healthcare and clinical trials, tropical and pandemic diseases, antibiotic resistance bacteria (among others) are more germane in developing countries (Olweny, 1994; Igoumenidis & Zyga, 2011; De Vries et al., 2011; Chen, 2019). Thus, we may argue that any efficient investigations, deliberations, and re-

sponses to bioethical problems must consider the local and global contexts and dynamics where the problem arises. Consequently, this may also lead us to think of the context-sensitive nature of theories and principles of bioethics as well as specific rules and codes of conduct for ethical deliberations and decisions.

### **3. Methods, Theoretical Dimensions, Principles, and Rules in Mainstream Bioethics**

Ethicists identify various reasons for the concern on methods, theories, and rules of bioethics, bioethical deliberations, and decisions. As Beauchamp and Childress claim, one of the reasons is that theories use to determine how it is best to guide human actions. This concern mainly signifies the consideration of how well a bioethical theory, concept, framework, or perspective guides actions, as well as the congruence with moral experience (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001; Childress, 2007). The concern of investigating and solving empirically pressing moral dilemmas under a relevant social context is also another reason for bioethicists' focus on the methods and theories (Dunn & Ives, 2009; Wangmo & Provoost, 2017). There are two kinds of categories about principal methodological approaches of these days of bioethical research and deliberations, namely, normative philosophical approaches and empirical approaches. The normative approaches of bioethics include consequentialist theory, deontological theory, pluralistic principlism, case-based methods, virtue ethics, ethics of care, communitarian perspectives, critical feminist perspectives, and rule-based theories (Childress, 2007).

On the other hand, the empirical approaches to bioethics are the result of contributors increasing sensitivity to contexts in bioethical researches and decision making. Hester and Wolf describe this empirical turn as a pragmatist shift in the study of bioethics (Wolf, 1994; Hester, 2003). Susan Wolf argues, "... bioethics and health law have always been "applied" or practical. But in shifting their respective approaches increasingly away from something principle or rule-driven to something

more inductivist and empirical, their approach to the practical becomes pragmatist" (Wolf, 1994).

The dominant theoretical perspective in this principle-based normative approach is principlism. It has got its name after Clouser & Gert's (1990) critique of a principle-based approach of bioethics introduced by Beauchamp and Childress in 1979 (Childress, 2007). Principlism is a theory developed after the Belmont Report in 1976, which in the report, the group of experts came up with three principles that guide behavioral and biomedical researches involving human subjects. Later, Beauchamp and Childress helped consolidate the principlism theory. They included three principles of the Belmont Report: respect for the person (autonomy), beneficence, and justice by adding the fourth principle of nonmaleficence (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). As Childress describes it, principlism is an ethical framework that incorporates consequentialist principles along with non-consequentialist ones without driving one set from others or reducing it to the other. As a result, the authors of this theory call it a 'pluralistic approach' of bioethics. Principlism is an applied ethics approach to the examination of moral dilemmas based upon the application of certain principles. A principle is a basic standard of conduct from which many other moral standards and judgments draw support for their defense and standing. Those four principles include several derivative rules such as; veracity, fidelity, privacy, and confidentiality, along with various rules such as informed consent and the duty to help others (Childress, 2007). Here, I want to extend further my discussion into these four principles of Beauchamp and Childress in order to give a background for my later discussions and critics against this approach in the upcoming sections of this paper.

Autonomy, as the principle of bioethics, refers to self-rule, free from control, and interference by others. Especially in clinical medicine, it refers to having information for meaningful decision and choice on the matter. In the negative terms, the principle of autonomy refers to having no control and constraints by others and

the absence of deprivation of freedom of others. Positively, it signifies respectful treatment in disclosing information and fostering autonomous decision making (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). The principle of autonomy, as Beauchamp and Childress note, includes various specific rules such as veracity, respect, confidentiality, consent, and the duty of helping others. Any proper investigation and decision concerning a particular moral problem should consider them. The second principle of bioethics in the principlism approach is beneficence. The principle of beneficence asserts the duty to help others further their significant and legitimate interest. Mainly in the area of medicine, the principle signifies that one ought to prevent evil or harm so that to promotes good. Beauchamp and Childress notes that the principle of beneficence includes specific rules such as protecting and defending the right of others, preventing harm from occurring to others, remove conditions that will cause harm on others, help persons with disabilities, rescue person in danger to promote the patient's welfare (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). As Beauchamp and Childress claim, ethical analysis of bioethical problems must consider these specific rules of beneficence to come up with judgment of its goodness or badness, rightness or wrongness and acceptability or non-acceptability of a certain issue at hand. The third principle is the principle of nonmaleficence. This principle is indirectly related to the principle of beneficence. It refers to the duty to refrain from causing harm, which is related to the age-old Hippocratic Oath of physicians and health workers. According to this principle, as a moral duty, one ought not to inflict harm on others. The principle of nonmaleficence includes several specific rules, such as do not kill, do not cause suffering or do not deprive pleasure, freedom, do not incapacitate clients, do not offend, and do not deprive others of the good of life (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001). The fourth principle of bioethical principlism is justice, which focuses on the distribution of social burdens and benefits. Under the principle of justice, several rules are included, such as equal sharing, a distribution based on the need, distribu-

tion, and sharing according to effort and contributions and distribution and sharing based merit (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001).

#### 4. The Need for 'Context' in the Normative Bioethical Researches

Morality is embedded in people's lives and the world they inhabit, and it is unbearable to relegate morality to an abstract theory or principles alone. Hester believes that, in the moral investigation, there is a clear danger in the beginning from high-level abstraction since at such a level no context exists. However, every bioethical problem that we confront always-already arises as a particular problem happening to particular people in some unique context. As Hester claims, inquiry in general, and ethical inquiry in particular, arises out of a given problematic situation which conditions our moral activities and decisions (Hester, 2003). Moral considerations and ethical deliberations are contingent, dynamic and contextual depending on the type of moral quandary lurking in a society. Likewise, in bioethics, justifications and deliberations are contingent, dynamic and context-sensitive since judgments and decisions concerning specific problems are socio-culturally embedded and institutional.

Scholars criticized those mainstream approaches of bioethical principlism and traditional moral philosophies on the ground of their abstract nature and lack of contexts on their application in bioethical research and practical decisions. They call for the need to contextual bioethics in the conceptual study of theories and principles as well as in the empirical-contextual investigations and responses to specific bioethical plights. One of the objections against traditional bioethics and principlism stems from the gap between normative theories and practices. This objection can be further instantiated into various challenges proposed from different approach of morals. For example, many authors claim that moral reasoning and the logic of ethics of medicine, bioscience, and technology does not necessarily involve a simple

application of a pure theory or single principle to specific moral problems or issues. In fact, the bioethical principlism and other theory-oriented approaches of bioethics have got severe criticism from pragmatism. For instance, pragmatist naturalists and evolutionist pragmatists believe that actual moral problems are "contexted" or embedded in states of affairs of our living. Thus, they reject the deductive justification of morals and the a priori metaphysics of moral principles (Moreno, 1999; Hester, 2003; Cooley, 2017; Ryan, 2000). For instance, Hester from the pragmatist point of view claims that it impossible to move from general principles if we are not first acquainted with the specific features of the problem at hand. So, he remarks that any applicable ethical principle must arise out of the context hence to have any meaning to the given situation (Hester, 2003).

Moral decisions are not in a straightforward way rule-governed, with straight forward deductive logic, nor can it be captured by an algorism. Instead, moral decisions are communally situated and intertwined with a multifaceted assessment of societal situations, rules, laws, traditions, religions, background philosophical beliefs, and specific situations. These contexts influence moral decision making and judgments (Steinbock, 2017). Besides, the fast development of technologies and associated complexities of moral problems in our society have led the task of ethical investigation very complicated by making bioethical problems incomprehensible with universal rules or codes of conduct. This unfathomable nature of bioethical issues induces us to go beyond the traditional moral bioethical theories and seek for solutions with a broader multidisciplinary approach and consideration of diverse social contexts (Hoffmaster, 2018). Thus, I agree with Hester that any use of principles or classifications, then, can only happen given a specific problem and context (Hester, 2003).

In the current discourse of bioethics, it is not surprising to see the labeling of the mainstream bioethics as the bioethics of the "Western." The "Western Bioethics" is often perceived as secular, individualist, rationalist and universal in its approach to ethics in general and bioeth-

ics in particular. This "Western" approach is contrasted with a different approach that aims at the integration of religious values, the particularities of human relationships, and regional or local perspectives. It is not surprising, then, that some "Non-Western" authors criticizing it as irrelevant or non-existent in their culture (Biller-Andorno, 2006). Authors, especially from Asia and Africa, criticize bioethical principles in principlism as they are not context-sensitive and have little effect on policy issues and ethical deliberation in these regions. For example, Azétsop and Rennie argue that autonomy-based bioethics of the West prioritizes medical individualism and 'market force-based' healthcare. And, these autonomy-based bioethics, according to them, is incapable of addressing some of the most pressing bioethical issues in healthcare service in the resource-poor countries. The authors argue, "the real need in resource-poor countries is not then to mislead people with unrealistic promises of autonomy that very few people can indeed achieve, to articulate moral principles and societal values that are oriented around the promotion of equitable access to care and which broaden the goals of medicine and public health" (Azétsop & Rennie, 2010).

As a consequence, many scholars have developed alternative principles of bioethics which are context-sensitive and uses to investigate bioethical problems based on the particular local and regional context where the problem arises. For stance, bioethicists, especially from the perspective of Asia and Africa, argue in defense of contextual bioethical theories and principles, and they suggest the relevance of context-based bioethical researches. They further claim that the predominant view of bioethical principlism is based on Anglo-American culture, and it has little role to solve particular bioethical problems in the non-western society (Tan Kiak Min, 2017; Tangwa, 2010; Behrens, 2013).

In the context-based re-orientation of bioethical theories and methods, we can identify two significant positions on the relevance of "context" on bioethical principles and theories and bioethical research. In the first position, ethicists (e.g. Coleman (2017), Andoh

(2011), Tangwa, (2010), Azétsop and Rennie (2011), Behrens (2013)) believe on the complete regionalization or cultural and societal specificity of bioethics. Whereas, in the second position, authors (e.g., Ssebunnya (2017), Fayemi (2016), and Tan Kiak Min (2017)) believe in the universality of bioethics. However, they suggest the synthesis between the mainstream approach and some contextual, cultural elements. In the first orientation, researchers draw different theories and principles that guide bioethical analysis and deliberations by showing the regional specificity of bioethics as African bioethics, Asian Bioethics, Western Bioethics, and other specific cultural groups. In this respect, authors sort out different theories of ethics other than the dominant theories and principles of bioethics developed in the 1970s. For example, some bioethicists in Africa claim the need for the African framework of resolving moral dilemmas arising in biomedical sciences and technology. Authors criticize the mainstream theory of bioethics as a model and framework developed from the Western cultural context. Thus, they develop an alternative African bioethical framework from the standpoint of African cultural elements (Coleman, 2017; Andoh, 2011; Tangwa, 1996; Azetsop, 2011; Behrens, 2013). For example, Andoh and Tangwa pointed out that unlike the individual-centered culture of the West, African culture is community-centered. Thus they argue about the need to move away from the individual based bioethics of the West to the community-based bioethics of Africa (Andoh, 2011; Tangwa, 2010). Andoh claims;

A major recurrent feature of moral thought in sub-Saharan Africa is the general maxim, "A person is a person through other persons" or "I am because we are." The traditional African concept Ubuntu "I am because we are. I can only be a person through others implies that one's identity as a human being causally and even metaphysically depends on a community. Also, in a morally grounded prescriptive sense, one ought to support the community (Andoh, 2011).

Similarly, Behrens argues against the mainstream autonomy-based bioethical principlism of the West. He argues that those four principles of Beauchamp and Childress

are incapable of addressing some of the most pressing bioethical issues in Africa. Instead, Behrens argues that when it comes to Africa, a principle based on the perspective of African communal solidarity ethics should guide African bioethics, which he claims the principle of harmony is a primary principle (Behrens, 2013). Also, Chukwunoko and his colleagues, based on the study of the traditional Igbo society in Nigeria, posited communal living, respect for life and personhood, solidarity, and justice as the hallmarks of principles of African bioethics. They argue that bioethics is part of the communal morality and not individual morality, which is based on the human relationship in African culture, cultural reminiscence, norms and habits, tradition and custom (Chukwunoko, et al., 2014). Likewise, Margaret Lock, on her ethnographic study about brain death in Japan, associates the resistance of the use of the recently dead for organ donation to the cultural element of the Japanese society. Lock claims that in Japan, the self is relational, and not individuated and atomized as in the West, with death viewed as an evolving process in which the family participates (Lock, 2002). The seriousness and controversial nature of specific bioethical dilemmas in particular regions of the world also demonstrate the contextual nature and regional distinctiveness of bioethics (Fayemi, 2016; Miles & Laar, 2018). For example, Fayemi identifies the uniqueness of African bioethics in terms of its focus on moral issues around socio-economic problems, poverty, and other health-related problems (Fayemi, 2016).

However, different from the those who reduce bioethical methods and principles to specific regions, other ethicists insist on the need to integrate contemporary bioethical principles with other contextualized cultural elements of specific regions of the world (for example, (Ssebunnya, 2017; Fayemi, 2016; Tan Kiak Min, 2017). These bioethicists analyse the context of African and Asian bioethics, and they interpret the 'four autonomy-based Principles of mainstream bioethics in light of the communal culture of societies in these regions. For instance, Ssebunnya (2017) argues against the motive

for distinct African bioethics proposed Tangwa (1996), Behren (2011) and other "ethno-centrist" bioethicists, and he urges for African bioethics to incorporate the universal elements and specific insights from regional contexts through empirical turn to bioethics. Ssebunnya claims;

It is indisputable that bioethics as a discipline is essentially a universal pursuit that emerged out of concerns about the unprecedented biotechnological threats to the dignity of the human person. Thus, primarily, bioethics has a moral imperative and must be conceptualized and grounded in a matrix of moral values. Secondly, bioethics is actualisable through an action-guiding analytical framework that underlies empirical research ethics. This is the essential two-dimensional nature of bioethics that demands sustained reflection and articulation in light of lived human experience (Ssebunnya, 2017).

I want claim that the truth of moral reality, the epistemic ground of moral judgments or decisions, is subject to specific situations and contexts. Even though we share the basics of morality in common as humans (because our brains are structured similarly as a result of evolutionary adaptation) (Cooley, 2017), I believe that the truth of morals, their acceptance and denial is conditioned by the socio-cultural contexts they attempt to operate. As regards, those earlier theories which are proposed in defense of regional specificity of bioethics have the truth about bioethics because they allude to the imperative of cultural specificity as a hallmark of the morality. Thus, apart from the dominant bioethical theories and methods, alternative suggestions inspired by the contextual analysis of bioethical concepts and problems in specific regions should be voiced from within a discourse on bioethics both for its pragmatist advantage to solve practical problems at the local level and to strengthen cross-cultural dialogues. Cooley, in his approach called multicultural pragmatism in bioethics, remarks, "to make better decisions and take more effective action when it comes to dealing with other nations and cultures, for instance, it is necessary to sufficiently comprehend them [alternative moral theories]" (Cooley, 2017).

## **5. Contextual Bioethics and the Pragmatist Turn**

As I claimed elsewhere in this paper, justifications, deliberations and moral actions are contingent, dynamic and context-sensitive, because moral judgments and decisions concerning specific problems are embedded in the socio-cultural and institutional milieu. The recent emphasis on context in bioethical scholarship is, therefore, a turn to the empirical dimension of morality, which informs researchers to reconsider the social context and dynamism in ethical research. The philosophical background of "context-ethics" lies under the expanse of the pragmatist turn to bioethics. Of course, like other bioethical approaches, pragmatist bioethics is criticized as it is subject to methodological and philosophical perspectivism (Arras, 2016), but I claim that because pragmatist bioethics alludes to find a workable morality with methodological flexibility and consideration of the social context and human evolution, it passes the criticism. Thus, in this part of the paper, I want to discuss the relevance of context in ethics in general and in bioethics in particular with an emphasis on pragmatist bioethics. Specifically, I will examine pragmatist bioethics from the "philosophical pragmatist" approach of Hester (2003) and Cooley's "evolutionary adaptation and neurophysiological" approach of pragmatism (2017) and show how the truth of morals operates in the communal forces, that is, in our everyday living in the society. Finally, I will indicate how bioethics rests in the pragmatist epistemology, and I will show the relevance of the pragmatist turn to bioethical researches.

The emphasis in context aims at reorienting bioethics which has been situated in the a priori metaphysical theory of pricipism and other moral philosophies of mainstream bioethics into the world of human experience. It is aimed at looking morality, moral judgments and decisions, and the believes and values underpinning them under the framework of social-institutional environments and the dominant societal moral norms (Hoffmaster, 2018). Manifold contexts such as social, legal, economic, political backgrounds and encompassing

worldviews have potential to inform abstract principles into workable practices (Musschenga, 2005). So, an emphasis on context in bioethics has a double advantage, that is, in the theoretical-conceptual research, to find out a workable principle concerning bioethical problems in certain context, and in our everyday life, to make a workable decision concerning moral dilemmas in a specific society. In fact, the double advantage of context is grounded in the complimentary nature of normative and empirical ethics. The moral question that confronts us "how ought to be" in normative ethics needs an empirical data that reveals "how something is", especially for bioethical dilemmas which are societal and institutional in nature (Dunn & Ives, 2009). Besides, context also helps determine our moral obligations especially in the situation what is an evident duty in one state of affairs is not at all apparent under another (Moreno, 1999), which I believe that this is a challenge of moral absolutism of mainstream bioethics.

In the study of bioethics, the emphasis on context is rooted on the pragmatist nature of the epistemology and ontology of morality in general and bioethics in particular. In the pragmatist bioethics, we can find different approaches to bioethics, which for me these approaches are complimentary at least under their general aim and theoretical underpinning of the discourse of bioethics. Pragmatist bioethics is empirical, not metaphysical. It eliminates a priori deductive reasoning, which create standards that reflect more of the individual's abstract values and principles than they do really in our communal life (Cooley, 2017). That is why the pragmatist method for moral problem solving is described as highly inductive in contrast to the more conventional use of principles in a deductive and "mechanical way" (Ryan, 2000).

Hester (2003) approaches bioethics from the aspects of philosophical pragmatism of John Dewey, William James, and C.S. Peirce. In light of these philosophical backgrounds, he approached morality and bioethics on the categories of the role of intelligence and habits. On the other hand, Cooley (2017) looks pragmatist bioethics

from the inter-cultural bioethics' perspective with the approach of evolutionary adaptation and advantage, neurophysiology, and social science. Habits are pervasive functions of experience which they range through the aspect of living. They are tendencies to act build through accustomed responses to ever-changing the environment. Habits help us live our life efficiently. However, they also blind us to recognize the particular feature of experience that makes our current situation different from the past situation. But the focus on our purpose helps us counteract the dangerousness of habituations. Recognition of purpose in life helps make habits intelligent by transforming our experience through exposing our practice to contexts hence situates the meaning of our terms and experiences (Hester, 2003).

A priori categorical logic does not shape our intelligent purpose; rather, it relies on the past experience in order to help determine possible consequences in life in light of the uniqueness of the current condition and future projections of our lives ends (Hester, 2003). Our minds/brains are structured with habits because of the evolutionary adaptation and social conditionings. Our values, feelings, tendencies, judgement outcomes are conditioned by the social atmosphere or the contexts where we are situated as a social being (Cooley, 2017). Thus, most of the time our intelligent purpose is not private projection to live best our life, especially when it comes to morality the world of actual human affair requires social intelligence (Moreno, 1999). Morality is based on the central desires and needs, arising from a special type of social existence (Cooley, 2017), and the good is not a mere static thing, but a project, that is undertaken not by isolated individuals, but by social individuals, generally persons working together (Moreno, 1999).

As regards to the basic pragmatist epistemology, morality relies in our habits and experiences, which are formed with the temporal existence of human beings. It also has a neurophysiological or biological foundation. The human brain and its natural working are the result of evolutionary adaption, and our morality is a byprod-

uct of evolutionary adaptation, which reflects socialization. As Cooley claims, our brain structures helps create and limit the morality we have, but the socialization and learning further refines and builds up our morality (Cooley, 2017).

There is no absolute or static good or bad in ethics and bioethics; goodness and badness are subject to evolution depending on the situation at hand. In the temporal nature of human existence, we face always a new good and bad which the moral worth of something in the current situation is evaluated based on our past experience and future projection in the context of the society we live our lives. Thus as Moreno claims, from the pragmatist stand point the "Good, that which is desirable, is an ideal that helps organize human energies, which are in fact engaged in continuous social reconstruction" (Moreno, 1999). The truth of morals in pragmatist aspect is subject to situations or contexts where it is challenged, scrutinized and accepted or denied by the cultures in which morality operates. Hence, in the case of moral deliberations and decisions, consensus is a central pragmatist activity (Hester, 2003), which is possible through social intelligence- "a social intelligent response to a problematic situation requires, among other things, reliable information, an understanding of the problem, a plan of action, a purpose or "end-in-view," and a willingness to engage in a further reconstruction if the hypothesized approach proves unsatisfactory" (Moreno, 1999).

I claim that this pragmatist view of morality places research in bioethics into a new level as compared to the principlism approach of bioethics which founded upon the atomistic view of individuals and discursive rationality as a source of morality. As Hester claims, with its emphasis on purposive inquiry and free and flexible habits its uses in the analysis of morality, pragmatist bioethics is methodological not metaphysical (Hester, 2003). As a methodology of bioethics then, pragmatist bioethics seeks for what works in a given situation with the ultimate goal of our or others flourishing. Many pragmatist authors, then, mentioned several pragmatist

considerations (frameworks) while doing bioethical researches and deliberations at different levels and contexts be it at academic level or in the political and institutional levels of moral deliberations. The following (among others) are mentioned by different authors: the societies rules, practice and custom; the social intelligence; habits regarding the problem; rules and responsibilities related to specific roles the agent is playing at the time; claims others have on the agent; the maxim developed out of the previous judgments of the agent or habits; consideration of conflicting situations and balance of other mediated consequences; measuring the importance of consequence in view of future projection; the social intelligence, habits regarding the problem at hand among others (Cooley, 2017; Hester, 2003; Moreno, 1999).

Finally, I conclude that pragmatist bioethics attempts to draw a moral system that works in a given circumstance with the consideration of socio-cultural dynamics and biological evolution. In this regard, the pragmatist-empirical turn in bioethics is relevant in the theoretical-conceptual study of bioethics and decision making concerning specific bioethical dilemmas under a particular context. However, I want to say that there are many things which are left to be done in the future regarding the conceptual study of pragmatist bioethics, mainly, in setting out pragmatist frameworks that researchers in certain contexts consider while doing empirical researchers.

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**PEIRCE**

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## PROLEGOMENA TO A PREHISTORY OF PRAGMATISM

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**ABSTRACT:** Pragmatism is said to be born in the early 1870s within the sessions of Cambridge Metaphysical Club, having as its foundation Peirce's 1877/78 papers "The Fixation of belief" and "How to make our ideas clear". However, as shown in this paper, pragmatist ideas published in these works had already been presented in Peirce's earlier texts. This paper is focused on Peirce's pre-pragmatist thinking presented in the "Treatise on Metaphysics" (1861, W 1: 57-84). This work, moreover, shows that the pre-pragmatist ideas are closely connected to metaphysics and stay therefore as basis of all scientific thinking. It will be shown that the later pragmatist texts use the exact same notions and ideas as the "Treatise" does, marked only by the difference in terminology.

**Keywords:** C. S. Peirce; metaphysics; pragmatism; belief

This paper aims to give account of Peirce's thinking before the birth of so-called pragmatism. In writing, the word 'pragmatism' was first used by William James in his "Philosophical Conception and practical results" in 1898 with the remark about Peircean origins of this word used during the Cambridge Metaphysical Club sessions of the early 1870s (De Waal 2001: 24). The Cambridge Metaphysical Club had among its members also Alexander Bain and Nicolas St. John Green, whose ideas are said to influence Peirce's conception of pragmatism, so that he later called Nicolas St. John Green the grandfather of pragmatism (Fisch 2005: 7; c. 1907, CP 5.12).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, by reading Peirce's earlier texts from the early 1860s, it becomes obvious that the main line of thinking of pragmatism was expressed even before the Metaphysical Club began to meet.

The origins of pragmatism are said to spring up from late 1870s' papers "The Fixation of Belief" (1877, EP 1:

109-123) and mainly "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878, EP 1: 124-141; Goodman 2005: 2). There, Peirce links 'meaning' and 'practice' together: "there is no distinction of meaning so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice" (1878, EP 1: 131). In the latter paper Peirce also formulates his "pragmatic maxim" by stating that meaning of a conception is depended on practical bearings the object of the conception has.<sup>2</sup>

These are the so-called origins of pragmatism. But by studying Peirce's early texts, we can find that pragmatist ideas linking meaning with practice presumably originating in the late 1870s, are presented even in the 1860s. This is most particularly the case of Peirce's "Treatise on Metaphysics" (1861, W 1: 57-84), to which we may now turn our attention.

### I.

In the "Treatise on Metaphysics", Peirce defines metaphysics as the analysis of conceptions (1861, W 1: 63). Metaphysics so conceived is that which precedes all science, does not come from experience and is focused on knowledge of primal truths, which are fundamental conditions of all the science (1861, W 1: 59).

The value of metaphysics lies in its practical usage, which Peirce calls the knowledge of the Perfect<sup>3</sup> (1861, W 1: 62). Such knowledge cannot be gained by any other science but metaphysics since metaphysics does not derive its conceptions from any system but "from the thoughts as they presented in their logical form". Metaphysics therefore is the study of logical relations of conceptions, therefore it is the analysis of conceptions (1861, W 1: 63).

Because metaphysics is the analysis of conceptions and its value lies in its practical usage, we can accept

<sup>1</sup> According to Fisch (2005: 23) Peirce was acquainted by Alexander Bain even before he finally started with his pragmatist way of thinking. In "Cognition series" papers from 1868 some links may be detected, but they were not developed. Historically, Peirce's thinking in late 1870s could really be influenced by Bain's publications or thinking but considering the period of early 1860s, which this paper would be primarily focused on below, it is at least doubtful since both worked simultaneously. Nicholas St. John Green started to publish his work in 1870.

<sup>2</sup> "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." (1878, EP 1: 132)

<sup>3</sup> The knowledge of the Perfect is a knowledge which, writes Peirce, we do not have *à priori* nor we had obtained it *à posteriori*, therefore, we could not have a representation of it – it is in our immediate consciousness accessible for uncovering only by metaphysics (1861, W 1: 62).

Peirce's criticism of the anchoring of words to fixed meanings by definitions (which are said to be propositions signifying what the thing, or its meaning, is [1861, W 1: 58]). Peirce claims: "I believe in mooring our words by certain applications and letting them change their meaning as our conceptions of the things to which we have applied them progress" (ibid.).

This concept of, let us say, applied meaning, is closely related to the theory of faith. Peirce, in the context of his definition of metaphysics, expresses the importance of faith since, according to him, "the faith is inherent in the very idea of the attainment of truth" (1861, W 1: 78) - and metaphysics is the knowledge of primal truths. There is a relation of interdependence between knowledge and faith: "Wherever there is knowledge, there is Faith. Wherever there is Faith (properly speaking) there is knowledge." (ibid.). It seems that the faith is the guarantee of the truthfulness of meaning.

All knowledge is hence relative, we know things by their relation to us, to our faith. Therefore, in every act of knowledge, the inference is present. Inference is the means of thinking, knowing, containing premises, and for accepting any premise as true faith is required (ibid.). Peirce considers faith as "the recognition by consciousness of itself (ibid.), and

there can be no true without judgment, and no judgment without the conscious act of judging and assenting. By itself the mere procedure of reasoning cannot generate truth. Premises must be supplied to be reasoned upon, and in the very process of investigation commitment must be made to the working criteria of intelligibility." (Esposito 1980: 39)

This perspective, that the founding premises must be based on faith, is called metaphysical fideism (Esposito 1980: 38; De Tienne 1989: 393). The crucial point following from this perspective is, that since each act of knowledge is based solely on inference, our knowledge cannot be absolutely certain (Peirce finds this even in Kant's theory of judgment [1861, W 1: 75]). Why:

Relative cognition is the recognition of our relations to things. All cognition of objects is relative, that is we know things only in their relation to us. Every cognition must have an object (the subject of the proposition). The faculties whereby we become conscious of our relation to things are known as perceptions or senses. Therefore, every cognition contains a sensual element. Now, the information of mere sensation is a chaotic manifold, while every cognition must be brought into the unity of one thought. Therefore, every cognition involves an operation on the data. An operation upon data resulting in cognition is an inference. (ibid.)

The statement that our knowledge is not certain because it is based on inference is in fact not axiomatic nor demonstrable, because it is itself the result of a chain of inferences based on hypothetical grounds,<sup>4</sup> therefore the contrary can be possibly established – this is what constitutes the validity of faith (1861, W 1: 76). In summary, we can assume that because faith is required by every premise, it is present in every premise. Therefore, faith is the assumption of knowledge, because knowledge is based on the inference drawn from premises. But because faith keeps the possibility for premise being otherwise, all our knowledge is only probable and potentially open to doubt.

Peirce defines faith as (1861, W 1: 78):

- (i) the recognition by consciousness of itself; [...] the strength of the faculty by which abstractions are conceived;
- (ii) the hearing of the testimony of consciousness, which develops into trust in every man till there is reason to distrust and a spirit of obedience to the Law of God;
- (iii) the vigour of that part of the mind which is in communication with the eternal verities.

He also claims that the "study of consciousness is the examination of abstractions by analysis of conceptions" (1861, W 1: 79). There is a close relation between ab-

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<sup>4</sup> According to Esposito, early Peirce considers faith as an act of hypothesizing, which is necessary for the attainment of so-called "man's truth". (Esposito 1980: 40)

straction and conception since abstraction is accessible only by the analysis of conceptions. Conceptions are derived from thoughts considered in their logical forms (1861, W 1: 62), i.e. in abstractions. Because faith is the recognition by consciousness of itself, because it is the hearing of the testimony of consciousness, we need faith to be able to study abstractions in their manifestations, in thoughts, since “abstractions are revealed in consciousness” (1861, W 1: 72).

We can therefore say that if we need faith to study abstractions in their concrete manifestation, then, because the analysis of conceptions is the study of these concrete manifestation, faith is required for this analysis itself. Hence, since the analysis of conception is metaphysics, therefore, metaphysics requires faith.

Faith, on the one hand, stands as a ground of all knowledge, while, on the other hand, it comes to be known by metaphysics itself. Faith is not immediate or ungrounded – there is always some reason to believe: In “Treatise on Metaphysics”, Peirce postulates two reasons for believing in a statement: “[i] because there is something in the fact itself which makes it credible; or [ii] because we know something of the character of the witness”<sup>5</sup> (1861, W 1: 78).

## II.

Now, what happens if we replace the word “faith” with the word “belief”? Clearly, we are getting to the conception of Peirce’s pragmatism as presented in his later texts usually considered to be the beginning of pragmatist thought.

According to Peirce, there are two main functions of pragmatism: (i) to give an expeditious riddance of all ideas essentially unclear; and (ii) to lend support, and help to render distinct, ideas essentially clear, but more or less difficult of apprehension (1907, CP 5.206). Since

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<sup>5</sup> For comparison, in “The Fixation of Belief” (1877, EP 1: 109-123) Peirce postulates four ways of fixation of belief, while the first two (method of tenacity and authority) could be subsumed under the (ii) knowing something of the witness, the last two (*à priori* and scientific method) under the (i) credibility of fact.

pragmatism is not a doctrine but a method for rendering ideas distinct (De Waal, 2001: 26), it fulfills the same function which Peirce in the “Treatise” ascribed to the metaphysical analysis of conceptions.

In “How to make our Ideas Clear” (1878, EP 1: 124-141) Peirce presented his pragmatic maxim:

Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object. (1878, EP 1: 132)

In fact, it tells us that any conception used in philosophy, science or whatever, “cannot mean anything other than the totality of the practical consequences we can conceive the object of that conception to have. ‘Practical consequences’ mean experiential effects that can influence future rational or deliberative conduct.” (De Waal 2001: 25). Therefore, it is a maxim of normative logic.

Pragmatic maxim is clearly focused on the meaning of a conception, which we are conceiving the object of the conception to have. It is solely a criterion of meaning. The meaning is not just “given”, it is “nothing but conceivable practical effects”, and these are conceived according to the belief we have.

Meaning is such as to involve some reference to a purpose. But meaning is attributed to representamens alone, and the only kind of representamen which has a definite professed purpose is an “argument”. The professed purpose of an argument is to determine an acceptance of its conclusion, and it quite accords with general usage to call the conclusion of an argument its meaning (1907, CP 5.175).

The conditions of all thinking – drawing conclusions from premises – and acting in accordance with it, are beliefs, which are fixed, and the impulse for their change is the irritation of doubt. Belief therefore makes the uncovering of conception’s meaning (by thinking) accessible for us. Therefore, it stands as a base for the analysis of conception.

A belief has three properties: (i) it is something we are aware of, (ii) it appeases the irritation of doubt, (iii) it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of

action. "Belief is only a stadium of mental action, an effect upon our nature due to thought, which will influence future thinking." (1878, EP 1: 129)

Faith, says De Tienne, is a grounded belief: "all that consciousness has to do is to recognize itself and accept its own testimony" (De Tienne 1989: 394). Faith stands as a ground of all knowledge and comes to be known by metaphysics itself. Faith is a complex state of mental actions constituting one's own beliefs. We are able to change the belief after the irritation of doubt quite easily, but to change faith as a complex system that our knowledge is based on requires more than that – it requires to change the whole system of thinking, the whole metaphysics we employ, since it is the faith that is grounding our beliefs, including the metaphysical ones.

### III.

Anyway, it seems that even though in Peirce's early texts, pragmatism is not explicitly named or defined, the ideas presented there are based on the same ground as in later so-called pragmatist texts, although they are not as sophisticated as that later, for example in terminological anchoring. But the importance of belief, that is not given but anchored by specific methods, is accented in both periods.

If we would have imagined the situation without having a belief, we would not be able to uncover the meaning of conceptions, which is being set according to the situation when the conception is used. Therefore, the semiotic thinking necessary for living, surviving and cooperating in human world would be impossible – we would not be able to understand not only each other, but even ourselves, since we would not be able to think at all. It is not possible to think without signs (1868, EP 1: 30), and for being able to think in signs, we have to be able to analyse conceptions of signs we use when thinking. Therefore, belief is the necessary condition for thinking.

These ideas resulting from Peirce's pragmatist texts on the one hand, and from his early texts on the other, more importantly, must be taken as the basics of whole

Peircean philosophy, because they stand as a ground for his logic, semiotics, and metaphysics.

The aim of this paper was to show that Peirce's ideas of pragmatism presented above result from much older ideas belonging to the very beginning of Peirce's thought. And, most importantly, I would say that without these earlier works, Peirce would probably never be able to begin conceiving pragmatism as a method presented as so important for attaining knowledge, because he would not have the ground of his theory enabling him to do so. In the "Treatise" he presents the importance of faith as a ground of metaphysics. By considering all the theses emerging from metaphysics as faith-grounded, then, all his work, including sign-constitution theory, pragmatism, objective idealism etc. is based on his faith, which is, I would say, well-grounded by a precise faith-grounded methodology.

We considered Peirce as the "father of pragmatism", but for some reasons we hardly ever try to seek for beginnings of pragmatism in his earlier thinking.<sup>6</sup> I claim that we should consider early 1860s as a real birth date of pragmatism, and not the late 1870s as we do now and as we are said to do by Peirce himself. Therefore, even though Peirce considers others as grandfathers of pragmatism, we should admit, that older Peirce could have easily, and maybe more deservedly, considered younger Peirce to be the grandfather of pragmatism.

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## REVISING THE INDISPENSABILITY ARGUMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** Pragmatists have tried to account for the truth of mathematics by way of making it dependent on its success in the applied sciences, the so-called “indispensability argument” proposed first by C. S. Peirce. The key line of attack against indispensability is that it leads to an overblown ontology. It was contended that we can usefully reformulate the indispensability argument in a way that avoids the pit-fall of assenting to the mind-independent existence of abstract objects. In so doing, pragmatists’ oft-used tack to deal with the exact sciences is rendered plausible. Some consequences for the exact sciences of the revised indispensability argument were discussed.

**Keywords:** indispensability argument; mathematical realism; pragmatism; abstract objects

Truth, from the pragmatist point of view, is what works within the totality of the collective enterprise of science. The idea is captured by C. S. Peirce's notion of “abduction,” which could be formulated thus: If our best scientific theories of  $q$ , presupposes the existence of  $p$ , then observations of  $q$  gives us good reason to believe  $p$ .<sup>1</sup> The indispensability argument, roughly put, is the idea that mathematics is true because it is indispensable to scientific descriptions, which are already taken to be so.<sup>2</sup>

The indispensability argument has been attacked for a variety of reasons (some of which I consider in § 3), but the thorny issue remains inferring the mind-independent existence of abstract objects, like numbers. Ontology is considered over-blown if it requires positing the mind-independent existence of objects

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<sup>1</sup> See: (Putnam 1971, 73-4).

<sup>2</sup> There is a historical precedent for the pragmatists. G. Frege writes, “It is applicability alone which elevates arithmetic from a game to the rank of science” (Frege 1970, 187). Gödel held that view (Gödel 1990b, 269), and more recently, Maddy (Maddy 1992, 275). Also see: (Kitcher 1980, 219). Finally, P. Garden remarks, “[Jean Baptist Joseph Fourier (1768-1830)] was first and foremost a physicist, and he expressed very definitely his view that mathematics only justifies itself by the help it gives towards the solution of physical problems...” - from the introduction (Cantor 1918, 1). Brown defines applicability: “Mathematics hooks onto the world by providing representations in the form of structurally similar models” (Brown 1999, 49; also see 46-9).

that serve no useful epistemological end (and it is not clear how they ever could). My purpose is to reformulate the indispensability argument in a way that avoids the pit-fall of assenting to the mind-independent existence of abstract objects.

I shall proceed as follows. The first half of the essay is exegetical, and the second portion develops my ideas. In the first two sections, Quine's and Putnam's reasons for advocating the indispensability argument are considered. In the third section, reasons to reject the indispensability argument are criticized. In the final section, a revised version of the indispensability argument is defended.

### 1. Quine

Foundational epistemology, according to Quine, attempts to justify knowledge on a model akin to an axiomatic system like that of Euclid. In the foundations of mathematics, for example, he distinguishes the conceptual from the doctrinal; the former concerns meaning (clarifying and defining concepts) and the latter concerns truth (establishing laws by proving them) (Quine 1969, 69).<sup>3</sup>

Quine says that the two tenets of empiricism are unassailable. One, the inculcation of the meanings of words (the conceptual) must ultimately rest on sensory evidence; two, whatever evidence there is for science is empirical (the doctrinal) (Quine 1969, 75). He contends that science—specifically, empirical psychology—explains how one acquires basic concepts, which serve

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<sup>3</sup> Logicism attempted to reduce mathematical concepts to logical ones, which was supposed to have a doctrinal pay-off. Similarly, for the logical positivists, natural knowledge was to be based on sense experience (Quine 1969, 71). Quine writes, “Just as mathematics is to be reduced to logic, or logic to set theory, so natural knowledge is to be based somehow on sense experience. This means explaining the notion of body in sensory terms; here is the conceptual side. And it means justifying our knowledge of truths of nature in sensory terms; here is the doctrinal side of the bifurcation” (Quine 1969, 71). Quine writes, “To endow the truths of nature with the full authority of immediate experience was as forlorn a hope as hoping to endow the truths of mathematics with the potential obviousness of elementary logic” (Quine 1969, 74). It was not that experimental implications were too complicated to trace. The problem was that large blocks of a theory may match sensory statements, but individual statements in the block may not (Quine 1969, 79).



as the foundation of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> There is still what is foundational (acquired, basic concepts) and what rests upon that (the doctrinal).

Utilizing science to explain the connection between evidence and knowledge seems to beg the question about the reliability of empiricism per se. Quine says the worry of circularity is annulled "once we have stopped dreaming of deducing science from observations" (Quine 1969, 76). As he puts it, "Better to discover how science is in fact developed and learned than to fabricate a fictitious structure to a similar effect" (Quine 1969, 78). He goes on, "Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence natural science" (Quine 1969, 82).<sup>5</sup> His naturalized epistemology starts with science because it the best (i.e., the most successful) theory available (Quine 1969, 69-90; 1992, 19). According to the pragmatist, a reason that the scientific methodology produces successful. As Sellars explains:

For empirical knowledge, like its sophisticated extension, science, is rational, not because it has a *foundation* but because it is a self-correcting enterprise which can put *any* claim in jeopardy, though not *all* at once. (Sellars 1997, 79)

Scepticism functions as part of the scientific methodology.

Quine's argument for the indispensability of abstract objects requires the following standard of ontological commitment:

[A] theory is committed to those and only those entities to which the bound variables of the theory must be capable of referring in order that the affirmations made in the theory are true. (Quine 1953, 13)

<sup>4</sup> It can be argued on behalf of the naturalized epistemologist, in the case of basic arithmetic for instance, the logic of discovery (e.g., as explained by P. Kitcher 1984).

<sup>5</sup> Just as one's eyes are irradiated in two dimensions and we see in three, similarly, concepts are used in constructing the world (Quine 1969, 84). Quine even suggests that some structural traits of colour perception - and induction itself - may have an evolutionary explanation (Quine 1969, 90). Also see: (Maddy 1990a, 620).

When the terms of one's theory quantify over some objects, they must exist. As he writes:

When we say, for example,  $(\exists x)(x \text{ is a prime } \cdot x > 1,000,000)$ , we are saying that *there is* something which is prime and exceeds a million; and any such entity is a number, hence a universal. In general, *entities of a given sort are assumed by a theory if and only if some of them must be counted among the values of the variables in order that the statements affirmed in the theory be true.* (Quine 1953, 103)

Quine is not, for example, advocating that when one tells the story of Cinderella, she must exist. He says that one must distinguish between explicitly presupposing X and not explicitly presupposing X (Quine 1953, 102). Quine writes, "What there is does not depend on one's use of language, but what one says there is does" (Quine 1953, 103).

Quine, also, is not slipping into some sort of linguistic or methodological idealism.<sup>6</sup> He writes:

It is no wonder, then, that ontological controversy should end in controversy over language. But we must not jump to the conclusion that what there is depends on words. Translatability of a question into semantical terms is no indication that the question is linguistic. To see Naples is to bear a name which, when prefixed to the words 'see Naples', yields a true sentence; still there is nothing linguistic about seeing Naples. (Quine 1953, 16)

Numbers' existence is explicitly presupposed. As he writes, "For I deplore that facile line of thought according to which we may freely use abstract terms, in all the ways terms are used, without thereby acknowledging the existence of abstract objects" (Quine 1960, 119). For him, the existence of arithmetical objects is justified because they are quantified over in a theory, which is indispensable to scientific practice.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Quine notes, for Dewey, knowledge, mind and meaning are part of the same world (Quine 1969, 26). Yet talk of a system, holism, and so on, can give the impression that Quine is lapsing into idealism. See, however, Quine's remarks: (Quine 1953, 16).

<sup>7</sup> Hacking has employed the phrase but my usage is completely independent of his.

Quine's argument for the indispensability of abstract entities is modeled upon the process by which one assents to the existence of objects in everyday life. According to him, humans assent to the existence of physical objects because they are basic to our language; the focus of successful communication and they allow for fairly direct conditioning (Quine 1960, 234, 238).

Physical and abstract objects seem to be on the same footing insofar as both are common to linguistic practices. But the suspicion, as he points out, is that physical objects are "better attested to" than abstract ones (Quine 1960, 234). Quine, however, notes that in order to assent to the existence of an object, one needs, first, comparative directness with sensory stimulation and second, utility for theory. For example, he says that when one points to a rabbit and announces "rabbit", a non-English speaker cannot know if we are referring to the rabbit or rabbit parts (Quine 1969, 46). This example of radical translation was supposed to show that sensory stimulations alone are not enough to know something. To pick out a rabbit requires a shared meaning embedded in language that supervenes upon sensory stimulations. One way to put it is that connotation is required for denotation. As Quine writes, "Talk of external things, our very notion of things, is just the conceptual apparatus that helps us to foresee and control the triggering of our sensory receptors" (Quine 1981, 1).

His argument for the indispensability of abstract objects depends upon his epistemological holism. Epistemological holism can be understood as the idea that theory helps in decisions about the acceptance and interpretation of data as much as data helps in choosing a theory (Quine 1981, 1). As he says, "Physical objects are postulated entities which round out and simplify the flux of experience just as the introduction of irrational numbers simplifies the laws of arithmetic" (Quine 1953, 19).

On Quine's analysis, the (epistemological) difference between physical and abstract objects is "illusory" (Quine 1981, 16). Empirical science is supposed to provide the explanatory bridge between how one gets from

sensory stimulations to the recognition of objects (Quine 1981, 2, 22-3). According to Quine, the process by which one comes to know tables and chairs applies, more generally, to abstract arithmetical objects. As he puts it, ontology is an "outgrowth" of lay culture (Quine 1981, 9). He portrays our epistemic situation thus:

The naturalistic philosopher begins his reasoning within the inherited world of theory as a going concern. He tentatively believes all of it, but believes also some unidentified portions are wrong. He tries to improve, clarify, and understand the system from within. He is the busy sailor adrift on Neurath's boat. (Quine 1981, 72)

Knowledge of abstract objects is merely a further extension of science. As Quine writes:

At any rate the ontology of abstract objects is part of the ship which, in Neurath's figure, we are rebuilding at sea. (Quine 1953, 16)

The ontology of abstract objects is part of the ship too. (Quine 1960, 124).

More specifically:

[S]ince mathematics is an integral part of this higher myth, the utility of this myth for the physical sciences is evident enough. (Quine 1953, 18)<sup>8</sup>

Epistemologically these [mathematical objects] are myths on the same footing with physical objects and gods, neither better or worse except for the difference in degree to which they expedite our dealings with sensory experiences. (Quine 1953, 45)

Arithmetical objects, according to Quine, fair no worse than everyday objects; they are all relative to our epistemological point of view, our "interests and purposes" (Quine 1953, 18-19). If one pictures knowledge as contained in a circle, one can say that the core contains solidified parts of the theory, which is indirectly assumed (stimulus-analytic statements), while the circumference is in contact with experience.

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<sup>8</sup> Quine writes: "The reason for admitting numbers as objects is precisely their efficacy in organizing and expediting the sciences. The reason for admitting classes is much the same" (Quine 1960, 237). In fact, he notes that mathematics did develop along side science (Quine 1981, 154).

Quine concedes, in fact, that there are degrees of closeness to experience. According to him, abstract objects exist because the language of arithmetic, for example, commits one to the numbers, which it quantifies over (Quine 1992, 30-1).<sup>9</sup> Mathematics, on his account of it, is empirical by its application in science (Quine 1992, 55). Decisions about what counts as real are made from within a theory, and this is supposed to be as true of physical objects as it is for abstract ones (Quine 1953, 102). Quine leaves decisions on what abstract objects to reify up to mathematicians and scientists (Quine 1960, 275).<sup>10</sup>

Stretched to its limits, it is Quine's holism that saves the unapplied parts of mathematics. (See §3.) The unapplied parts of mathematics are true because they are "couched in the same grammar and vocabulary that generate the applied parts of mathematics" (Quine 1992, 94).

The talk of epistemological holism, however, indicates anti-realism because proponents of that doctrine emphasize the idea that truth is linked to certain methods. Yet Quine avoids extreme conceptual relativity (any view of the world is as good as any other) and the idea that as one's methods change so does truth. As he writes, "'Truth' is one thing, warranted belief another. We can gain clarity and enjoy the sweet simplicity of two valued logic by heeding the distinction" (Quine 1992, 94). Suffice it to say that he is committed to the mind-independent existence of abstract objects like numbers.

## 2. Putnam

In the wake of Quine, it is useful to consider Putnam's views. First, Putnam, like Quine, is an anti-foundationalist. In "Mathematics Without Foundations" (1979a)

Putnam expresses scepticism about foundationalist epistemology. Putnam's view is epitomized in his claim that when science and philosophy meet the latter changes, not the former (Putnam 1979a, 44). Science is more secure than epistemology (Putnam 1979a, 73). According to Putnam, one must begin with the truth of scientific and mathematical knowledge (Putnam 1979a, 11). Putnam writes:

We will be justified in accepting classical propositional calculus or Peano number theory not because the relevant statements are 'unrevisable in principle', but because a great deal of science presupposes these statements, and because no real alternative is in the field. (Putnam 1998, 175)

According to Putnam, we have the right to take mathematics to be true because it is required for scientific practice.<sup>11</sup>

Second, however, Putnam's and Quine's employment of the indispensability argument differs in terms of their respective ontological commitments. Quine reifies mind-independent abstract objects and Putnam does not. Putnam accounts for mathematical necessity without platonism. According to him, the focus is upon "the truth of  $p$ " (not the mind-independent existence of numbers). Putnam gave up an earlier view where he held that mathematical entities are mind-independent (Putnam 1971).

Third, like Quine's efforts in the "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1953), Putnam criticizes the distinction between analytic-synthetic statements. He takes his departure from attacking the positivists' verificationist doctrine. Positivists, such as Carnap, had distinguished mathematical assertions from empirical ones, which are supposed to be verifiable by experience (Carnap 1935, 36).<sup>12</sup> Putnam rejects the idea that there is, on the one

<sup>9</sup> Quine writes: "But to view classes, numbers, and the rest in this instrumental way is not to deny having reified them; it is to explain why" (Quine 1981, 15).

<sup>10</sup> Quine writes: "Each reform is an adjustment of the scientific scheme, comparable to the introduction or repudiation of some category of elementary physical particles" (Quine 1960, 123). The same values that care for ontological economy in science apply to mathematics (Quine 1960, 269).

<sup>11</sup> Putnam remarks, the axiom of choice was defended because it was widely used (Putnam 1979a, 66-7, 76). Also see (Putnam 1978, 76; 1981, 73). Rather than viewing science as one block, Quine says, "more modest chunks suffice" (Quine 1981, 71). So, one can say some parts of knowledge are more closely tied together (say, within one domain), than the entire picture which may be not as closely conjoined.

<sup>12</sup> Mathematical statements, Carnap says, do not "possess any

hand, empirical knowledge and, on the other, the formal sciences (which are *a priori*) (Putnam 1979a, 1).

Putnam's attempt to follow practice results in an epistemologically egalitarian outlook. Ultimately all knowledge must be justified in the same way, that is, by describing how it is acquired. Moreover, the acquisition of knowledge is dependent on an entire world-view, which is just another way of saying that data is theory-laden (Putnam 1981, 215).<sup>13</sup>

Finally, like Quine, Putnam's epistemological holism—his internal realism—seems anti-realist. Truth and falsity function within different theories that provide various descriptions of the world. According to Putnam, there are different ways to conceive the world. As he writes, however, "But the question 'which kind of 'true' is really Truth' is one that internal realism rejects" (Putnam 1990, 96). Nonetheless he writes:

There is only one possible explanation [why there is a great deal of epistemic consensus]: human interests, human salience, human cognitive processes, must have a structure, which is heavily determined by innate or constitutional factors. Human nature isn't all that plastic. (Putnam 1978, 56)<sup>14</sup>

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factual content" (Carnap 1939, 2); for example, they do not yield any predictions as to be testable. Yet positivism suffers from several generic problems (arguably, from taking their thesis too far): (1) Claiming their division - the meaningless, analytic, and empirical - is semantic; rooting verification in a theory of meaning (statements about the past, future, present, and even concerning the external world once one dies) may be deemed vacuous (Reichenbach 1938, 73, 135). (2) They may have a simplified notion of science that excludes speculation as meaningless. And, (3), they abandon the realist hypothesis because it is empirically unverifiable. Finally, their own thesis seems empirically unverifiable, i.e., meaningless.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Putnam notes, inductive logics all depend on some *a priori* ordering of hypothesis (e.g. by simplicity). In mathematics the analogy would be, say, the axioms of set theory. As he notes, in Newton's *Principia*, "rule 4" tells one that when there are two hypotheses one should choose the one that is accepted and *a priori* more plausible (Putnam 1979a, 66-7, 75).

<sup>14</sup> Putnam writes, "And I argued that being rational invokes having criteria of relevance as well as criteria of rational acceptability, and that all of our values are involved in our criteria of relevance. The decision that a picture of the world is true (or true by our present lights, or 'as true as anything is') and answers the relevant questions (as well as we are able to answer them) rests on and reveals our total system of value commitments. A being with no values would have no facts either" (Putnam 1981, 201).

Putnam's internal realism and his attack upon metaphysical realism are often seen as a radical break with his earlier, realist views (1979a). Suffice it to say that, the indispensability argument, and hence his early views, are consistent with aspects of internal realism.

What the pragmatists are up to can be explained thus. One can distinguish between two levels of justification. The first-level of justification concerns the content of a discipline.<sup>15</sup> At the first-level of justification an epistemological account must be faithful to practice. It would be peculiar to propose an epistemology completely at odds with epistemic practices.<sup>16</sup> (For example, if one proved mathematical theorems by flipping a coin, it could easily render false what would otherwise be true.)

The second-level of justification concerns the foundations of the first principles or methods required for practice. At the second-level, different types of justification for arithmetic, for example, both platonist and formalist, make "no difference to their [mathematician's] practice" (Maddy 1990, 3). That is, for example, whether one accepts the Peano axioms because they describe the nature of mind-independent numbers or as conventions makes no difference. What matters is that one accepts them.

According to H. Reichenbach, and more generally, epistemology has two features. One aspect requires describing how knowledge is acquired. The other aspect requires criticizing practice, i.e., laying out how it ought to be justified (Reichenbach 1938, 3). Reichenbach's distinction parallels a separation between the context of discovery from justification that goes back at least to Frege. According to Frege, one must separate how one discovers X (the descriptive task) from how one justifies X (the critical task) (Frege 1953, §3). Traditional foundational epistemologies, like Frege's, lead to the claim that

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<sup>15</sup> See Brown's discussion (Brown 1989, 133-151); he claims that history can be a guide to a normative methodology (Brown 1989, 151).

<sup>16</sup> In the case of mathematics, the first-level of justification "asks about the mathematics required to do science, the other asks about the foundational underpinnings of said mathematics" (Peressini 1997, 217).

describing how the Peano axioms are acquired is not to offer a justification for them. The descriptive and critical tasks must be separated for both levels of description.

Separating the context of discovery from that of the context of justification, however, may lead to problems (Sellars 1997, 13). First philosophy has often been described as leaving one with the problem of trying to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps. For instance, according to the foundationalist, the methodology that one takes to be the ground of knowledge cannot be justified by its employment. They cannot utilize method *P* to justify *P*. Traditionalists reject the notion that how one acquired the first principles can speak to their justification.

The pragmatists' solution is to reject the distinction between the context of discovery from justification at both levels of justification. They hold that there can be nothing deeper than describing how the methodologies one employs are acquired. They are motivated by a desire to escape foundational epistemology by emphasizing practice. Instead of trying to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, pragmatists explain how one bought the boots.

### 3. The Redemptive Function of Authoritarian Languages

It is worthwhile considering some classic problems with the indispensability argument, which has been raised by P. Maddy, a proponent of set-theoretic realism. Her criticisms must be refuted if the indispensability argument is to be a viable option. In offering replies to Maddy, I shall often show how they are inconsistent with her own project; I do not intend to take on each claim on its own, but highlight the high cost of endorsing her claims against the indispensability argument. Maddy asks, first, if there is such a thing as an accepted theory—science—which arithmetic could be indispensable to? (Maddy 1992, 280)

Yet Maddy assumes certain scientific standards of evidence (e.g., the causal constraint requirement) that she seeks to extend to sets. She cannot call into question

the idea that there is such a thing as scientific standards of justification without undermining her set-theoretic realism. Her criticism is self-defeating.<sup>17</sup>

Second, according to Maddy, being useful is not equivalent to being true (Maddy 1992, 281). Mathematics' successful application in scientific inquiry may not warrant an epistemological pay-off. More generally, one cannot identify *P*'s success, with *P*'s truth. Maddy writes: "In short, legitimate choice of method in the foundations of set-theory does not seem to depend on physical facts in the way indispensability theory requires" (Maddy 1992, 289).<sup>18</sup>

Maddy contends, however, that mathematics' applicability is an argument against considering it a formal game (Maddy 1992, 275). According to her, mathematics' applicability is a reason to believe that one cannot make up mathematics anyway one wants. Mathematics' applicability is a reason to be a realist. She, therefore, must agree that being useful is a quality that is at least indicative of truth. Her criticism, once again, is at odds with what is required to motivate her set-theoretic realism.

Third, both Quine and Putnam must confront the issue of the unapplied parts of mathematics. As Maddy points out, justification in terms of abduction does not extend to the unapplied parts of mathematics (Maddy 1992, 278). She writes:

The trouble is that this [the indispensability argument] does not square with the actual mathematical attitude towards unapplied mathematics...Here simple indispensability theory rejects accepted mathematical practices on non-mathematical grounds, thus ruling itself out as the desired philosophical account of mathematics as practised. (Maddy 1992, 278-9)

In addition, A. Peressini contends that one cannot know if the indispensability argument works even for the applied parts of mathematics until it is made clear what

<sup>17</sup> See: (Quine 1969, 87; Putnam 1981, 55; 1990, 178).

<sup>18</sup> Quine writes, "The fundamental use of natural numbers is in measuring classes; in saying that a class has 'n' members. Other serious uses prove to be reducible to this use" (Quine 1981, 15).

"units (theory, object, theorem, axiom)...what parts of pure mathematical theory are confirmed" (Peressini 1997, 216-7). He writes:

It is not clear, however, that unitary operators have the same 'indispensable' status as do Hermitian operators, since unitary operators do not correspond to an aspect of physical reality in the way Hermitian operators do. (Peressini 1997, 221)

Quine can respond to these concerns. He clarifies an earlier view that would render the unapplied parts of mathematics unjustified. In recent writings, Quine casts the net wide, including the unapplied parts within the already utilized sections. According to Quine, non-applied parts of mathematics are true by inference. That is, if one part of mathematics is true (the terms it quantifies over exist), it is safe to say the rest is (the rest of the terms germane to the unapplied parts refer). As Peressini himself, notes, for Quine, mathematics get to be part of the boat, as it were (Peressini 1997, 226).

For Putnam, the non-applied parts of mathematics are true because they could be possibly applied (they could be applied for the same reason as Quine) (Putnam 1979a, 60). Putnam says, for example, that he regards sets of very high cardinality as "speculative and daring extensions of the basic mathematical apparatus of science" (Putnam 1979a, 56).

In addition to Maddy's criticisms, a number of more recent concerns have been raised with the indispensability argument and I shall consider them next. Fourth, as Peressini explains, for a pragmatist, scientific methodologies must be more secure than mathematical ones. After all, mathematics' principles can be justified by their employment in scientific theory (but not vice versa). As Peressini remarks, however, when scientific theories are discarded, the mathematics thus employed remains. The notion that scientific knowledge is more secure than mathematics is counter-intuitive and is therefore a reason to reject the indispensability argument (Peressini 1999, 258).

Yet, in the pragmatist's defence, it can be argued that we must distinguish between epistemological and

metaphysical security. Even though mathematics is justified by way of its application in science that does not makes its truths less secure. Domains about which we are a realist have an equal claim to necessity. What differs between the two is the priority of justification—how one justifies one by way of the other. Yet the mathematical and scientific truths are, it can be argued, metaphysically on a similar footing in terms of the uniqueness of their respective bodies of knowledge.

Fifth, E. Sober, in an interesting attack on the indispensability argument, notes that mathematics has been used for a variety of theories, ones that are true and ones that are false (Sober 1993, 43, 55; Maddy 1997, 143). He explains, "It is less often noticed that mathematics allows us to construct theories that make *false* predictions and that we could not construct such predictively *unsuccessful* theories without mathematics" (Sober 1993, 53). Sober claims that mathematics is the background and cannot inherit support from the theories it participates in (Sober 1993, 53).

M. Colyvan, however, has responded to Sober by pointing out that since mathematics is not responsible for giving rise to false predictions or hypotheses, it can share in the credit for correct ones (Colyvan 1999, 330). Colyvan illustrates his point with an analogy:

Blaming the mathematics is like a programmer blaming the programming language. And similarly, claiming that mathematics cannot share in the credit is like claiming that the programming language cannot share the credit for the successful program. (Colyvan 1999, 329)

One must distinguish between the fault of the scientist in coming up with a false theory, and the credit to be given to mathematics in the case of a successful scientific theory that utilizes mathematics.

Finally, and more generally, the merit of the indispensability argument has been undermined because of nominalists have also been able to account mathematics' applicability (e.g., Field 1989; Feferman 1998, 207). Yet, and in a nutshell, Field's program, for instance, is unacceptable until he can refute Shapiro (1997), and show

how his account can eliminate reference to abstract objects. Since the language of arithmetic in the twentieth century has been in terms of set theory, Feferman's alternative, for instance, is not constraining. There is no compelling reason to accept a nominalization. Indeed, the motivation for considering a nominalization is undercut, since, in the next section I provide a defence of a revised version of the indispensability argument that does not entail an over-blown ontology.

#### 4. Revision

Thus far, the indispensability argument has been defended. Several further criticisms, by Peressini, however, require at least revising the indispensability argument, and they shall be considered next. If abduction is to apply generally it may allow for the countenancing of improper mathematical or scientific theories. We may want to note that sometimes, improper mathematical theories, for example, are also found useful in science:

Newton introduced fluxions to perform the seemingly impossible role of being both zero and not zero: he had to assume that a variable was not zero in order to avoid dividing by zero, but then assumed that it was zero to get his results for instantaneous velocity...[Also, Dirac's delta function] was nonsense, and yet in spite of this it worked brilliantly in a successful physical theory [quantum mechanics]...These techniques actually 'fly in the face' of pure mathematics in the same way that dividing by zero 'flies in the face' of ordinary arithmetic. (Peressini 1997, 224)

Successful application of Newton's calculus would lead us to believe in the mind-independent existence of infinitesimals.

Peressini explains, in another criticism of indispensability, why the use of abduction in science differs from that in mathematics. He notes, "The physical application requires empirical bridge principles to underwrite physical interpretation" (Peressini, 1999, 214).<sup>19</sup> When deciding to assent to unobservables, for instance, rules of

inference relating to some observations are necessary. Since physical objects causally function in explanations, a description of those objects are provided in scientific theories, but the same is not true, say, for the number three. Mathematics does not yield predictions (" $124 \div 4 = 31$ " is not a prediction) nor (for Quine) do their entities stimulate our sensory receptors.

In fact, as Peressini points out, indispensability proponents who faithfully follow the analogy between science and mathematics must justify mathematics internally (as was the case in science) (Peressini 1999, 267). Numbers, for example, are often derived from premises not new observations (Field 1980, 10-11, 40). As Sober remarks, in a different context, therefore, "Indispensability is not a synonym for empirical confirmation, but its very antithesis" (Sober 1993, 44).

Justifying the existence of arithmetical objects in terms of abduction gives rise to the existence of mathematical objects that are epistemologically irrelevant.<sup>20</sup> The indispensability argument, in fact, would not lead one to know what mathematical objects are only that they exist (Feferman 1998, 297).

To avoid Peressini's attack, abduction should be reformulated thus:

If our best scientific practice  $q$  presupposes  $p$ , then  $q$  gives one good reason to believe  $p$ , only if *the practitioners in the relevant field countenance  $p$* .<sup>21</sup>

Scientists are likely to have a great deal of consensus over unobservables (eventually). Conversely, arithmetical objects would not fare well because consensus upon,

<sup>19</sup> Parson 1983, 195.

<sup>20</sup> B. Russell's words, written in a different context, express the doubt of inferring the existence of mind-independent abstract objects: "[The indispensability argument] has many advantages; there are the same as the advantages of theft over honest toil" (Russell 1919, 71). Benacerraf adds, "For with theft at least you come away with the loot, whereas implicit definition, conventional postulation, and their cousins [like the indispensability argument] are incapable of bringing truth" (Benacerraf 1973, 679).

<sup>21</sup> J. Azzouni's distinction between thin (e.g., mathematical) posits and thick (e.g., scientific) posits is another way of drawing the same line between when abduction should be utilized and when not (Azzouni 1994, 65).

for example, countenancing the mind-independent existence of numbers would likely not obtain.

The revised formulation provides a way to avoid assenting to the mind-independent existence of abstract objects. Furthermore, the revised formulation is faithful to Quine's intentions. Quine had claimed that decisions on what abstract objects to reify would be left up to practitioners (Quine 1960, 275). According to him, for example, practice is the final court of appeal. Quine, however, had also decided that numbers should be reified (Colyvan 1998, 50). Quine was not as faithful to practice as he could have been.

If we were to radically follow practice, only mathematicians would decide if numbers exist. Upon the revised formulation of abduction, arithmetical knowledge, for example, receives an internal justification since one follows the practice of mathematicians, not scientists or philosophers. Allowing mathematicians to be arbitrators, stands to immunize the indispensability argument from the charge of countenancing improper mathematics, and assenting to the mind-independent existence of abstract objects. Sure there will be matters of debate, as there are in all areas of science. Some will be worked out over time, and ontological ones are of no obvious consequence to mathematical knowledge in any case. Believe in the mind-independence of numbers if you will! For my part, I have argued we need not.

We may wish to recall that the problem of an overblown ontology is a challenge, posed to Quine because he attempts to infer the existence of abstract objects. Putnam's tack, however, allows us to evade the problem of an over-blown ontology because he does not posit the existence of abstract objects. Following suit, I have revised the indispensability argument to exclude inferring the mind-independent existence of arithmetical objects, while still providing a basis for arithmetical realism. And, once again, the decisions about what counts as mathematics is something to be left to mathematicians.

At base of the pragmatist outlook is the idea that knowledge is developed to some end. In the case of the sciences generally, we have to put faith in the enter-

prise, its practitioners, to let science do the talking. It has become all too apparent that philosophers should not revise science, determine what exists, or construct elaborate stories of justification that are at odds with practice. Philosophers can still serve as social critics, historians of ideas, and perhaps offer clarity here and there; if they want to say something about already successful domains of knowledge, they should heed the pragmatist's tack, as I have attempted to.

In revising the indispensability argument I have attempted to immunize it from a number of key attacks, namely, that it is not clear what counts as mathematics and that pragmatists may commit us to an overblown ontology. Consolidating and revising the indispensability argument as it has been taken up by Quine and Putnam, I have reconfigured it to be more faithful to practice, and to shun commitment to the ontological reification of abstract mathematical objects.

At base, my argument is an articulation and defence of American common sense realism: if it works, it is likely true in some sense. In the case of the exact sciences, truth is, and must be, linked to our interests and pursuits, while at the same time being constrained by something beyond ourselves. The tension between construction and discovery is what I have tried to articulate within a realist, pragmatist framework. I have attempted to explain how the pragmatist can discuss "what works" in terms of "being true" for the exact sciences.

No easy feat, to be sure—that is good enough reason to have given it a shot. We need to continue to deepen our understanding of the socio-cultural context in which mathematics arises—the pragmatic impetus to developing mathematics—while at the same time being mindful of the seemingly mind-independence of mathematics.

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**SEMANTIC CONTENTS AND PRAGMATIC PERSPECTIVES: THE SOCIAL AND THE REAL IN BRANDOM AND PEIRCE**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper compares Charles Peirce's and Robert Brandom's conceptions of normative objectivity. According to Brandom, discursive norms are instituted by practical attitudes of the members of a community, and yet the objectivity of these norms is not reducible to social consensus. Peirce's conception of normative objectivity, on the contrary, is rooted in his idea of a community of inquiry, which presupposes a consensus achievable in the long run. The central challenge in both cases is to explain how the norms that all members of a community take to be correct differ from those that are correct *objectively*. I claim that Peirce's conception meets the challenge of reconciling the social character of knowledge and the objectivity of norms shared by a community of knowers better than Brandom's.

**Keywords:** Community; discursive norms; inquiry; perspectival objectivity; pragmatic maxim; realism; score-keeping

## 1. Introduction

It is often believed that the view of communication that considers what we *mean* in terms of what we *do* runs the risk of ruling out realism (see, e.g., McDowell 1984; Brandom 1994: 30-55). It seems intuitively obvious that, when meanings are construed entirely in terms of social practices, it becomes unclear under what conditions this takes into account the world the expressions conveying those meanings are *about*. Besides, this view implies that the fundamental normative relationship is not the one between an individual mind and the world, but between an individual and her community. Hence, the central challenge in this case is to explain how the norms that *all* members of a community take to be correct differ from those that are correct *objectively*. Robert Brandom believes that, to reconcile the social character of communication and the objectivity of meanings is to begin, not with the relationship between the individual "I" and the communal "We," but with the fundamentally cognitive relationship between "I" and "Thou." This approach cancels the privilege of the community be-

cause it presupposes that there is no bird's eye view over and above individual communicative perspectives, and that objectivity is a feature inherent in every such perspective due to the special way it relates to other perspectives. But having thus smudged the communal "We" out of existence, Brandom has to meet the challenge of explaining how exactly, given that individual attitudes are all there is to communication, these attitudes can obtain an objective status. To meet the challenge, Brandom offers a "perspectival" interpretation of the objectivity of norms based on his asymmetric double-entry bookkeeping model of communication. Charles Peirce, on the contrary, assigns a crucial role to the communal "We." Like Brandom, he recognizes the "I-Thou" relationship, but only in the restricted sense that the discovery of the fact that some of my beliefs are erroneous as compared to yours. This, according to Peirce, gives only an initial, negative definition of reality as something one can be mistaken about. The awareness of error as an outcome of the "I-Thou" relationship provides a link between objective opinions and the social character of knowledge, but errors committed by individuals, Peirce insists, can ultimately be corrected only by a communal inquiry carried out "sufficiently far" (Peirce 1982-, 3:274). Whereas Brandom makes the "I-Thou" relationship the basic atom of the global social-cognitive web of discursive practices, for Peirce the tension between *ego* and *non-ego* by itself amounts only to the recognition of the brute force of 'the other,' which stands in need of an additional link to the ultimate communal "We."

Both Peirce and Brandom insist on a connection between objectivity and modality. Brandom's modal thesis tells us that descriptive language does not constitute an autonomous discursive practice, and that a prerequisite for one's ability to make use of descriptions is the mastery of the practical skills needed for understanding modal talk. The meaning of an expression, according to Brandom, is defined against two interrelated sets: a set of counterfactual claims about the compatibility of the expression with the speaker's background beliefs, and a set of consequences of the expression's applications.

Similarly, according to Peirce, what constitutes the meaning of a statement is the sum total of the conditional propositions that describe “would be” results of the speaker’s interactions with the object, to which the concepts applied in the statement are ascribed (Peirce 1982-, 3: 266-267). Both Peirce and Brandom use their accounts of modal realism as tools devised to enrich the idea of normative objectivity. In presenting modal vocabulary as capable of specifying not only discursive norms, but also objective facts, Brandom attempts to show how our *recognitive* attitudes towards each other are interwoven with our *cognitive* stance towards the world. Peirce’s realism, in turn, is based on the distinction between “would-bes,” or “thirdnesses,” expressible in series of conditionals and related to each other by means of laws, and “secondnesses” understood as concrete realizations of the would-bes and related to each other by brute causal force (Peirce 1931-1956, 1:420). Consequently, Peirce attempts to show how the *reality* of laws is interwoven with the *actuality* of facts and events.

In this paper, I claim that Peirce’s approach to normative objectivity, combined with his modal realism, meets the challenge of reconciling the social character of knowledge and the objectivity of norms shared by a community of knowers more effectively than Brandom’s. Brandom insists that what is *ultimately* the case is out of our expressive reach, and that the unrestrained fallibility of our individual acts of knowledge does not constitute any threat to the perspectively construed objectivity. Prima facie, this is also the case with Peirce, who claims that what we think is correct at any moment of our inquiry, is correct by our best lights only. I will argue, however, that Peirce’s idea of a community of inquiry reconciles the fallibility of our beliefs and the objectivity of norms, while Brandom’s perspectival approach cannot guarantee the same result. I will begin by identifying a problem within Brandom’s account. I will then show that, although Peirce’s regulative idea of the end of inquiry amounts only to rational hope (Peirce 1931-

1956, 1:405), it is supported by a statistically construed method, which at least it tells us something important about the role statistically interpreted errors play in our obtaining reliable experience-based knowledge about the world.

## 2. Perspectival objectivity and conceptual articulation

According to Brandom, norms we rely on when participating in discursive practices are already implicit in those practices. Yet the norms can be made explicit by being inferentially articulated in judgments we make. Every judgment constitutes a move in what Brandom, using David Lewis’s seminal idea, calls the “scorekeeping game” (Lewis 1979). Making judgments is inseparable from tracking other players’ moves and, as every judgment entails accepting some new normative commitments and rejecting some previously made ones, it inevitably changes the score the participants of the game keep on each other and on themselves. Keeping track of what a claim represents, therefore, involves keeping track of how the claim shifts from perspective to perspective (Gibbard 1996: 703; Scharp 2012: 117-122; Wanderer 2008: 41-48). Brandom’s inferentialist semantics is thus an account of “how propositional content incorporates norms of application as roles that are *played*, not as roles that are *described*” (Shapiro 2004: 149). Making a move in the game is *doing* something in a social environment.<sup>1</sup> The trick, according to Brandom, is

<sup>1</sup> Brandom considers this attention to actions as opposed to descriptions an overarching pragmatist aspect of his theory as a whole. In *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* (2009) and *Perspectives on Pragmatism* (2011), Brandom describes this aspect as a result of his reinterpretation of Kant’s constructivism in light of his Hegelian view of social communication. It has been claimed that Brandom’s transition from Kant to Hegel opens access to the problem of objectivity most effectively (Bransen 2002; Prien 2010; Prien and Schweikard 2008: 89-114). However, in reading Kant and Hegel, Brandom ignores certain core elements of their thought that do not fit his own project. This makes both Brandom’s Hegel and Brandom’s Kant subject to a wide range of criticisms (Habermas 2000; de Laurentiis 2007; Pippin 2007; Rockmore 2001). Due to the unresolved difference in opinions among scholars, I chose to discuss the problem of the objectivity of discursive norms in Brandom

to see the game as a rule-guided activity without presupposing a normative grid of explicitly stipulated rules that sits outside of actual discursive practices. The social dimension of the game, he insists, is constituted in its entirety by individual practical attitudes. In communicating with each other, all we have is interrelated practical assessments made from a variety of individual perspectives. It is this intersubjective exchange, not an overarching communal “We” that, in Brandom’s jargon, allows us to treat communication as “the social production and consumption of reasons” (Brandom 1994: 474).

Each scorekeeper keeps two sets of books, the first one containing commitments undertaken by other scorekeepers according to her, the second one containing those actually acknowledged by other scorekeepers (646). Conforming to the first set, a scorekeeper accepts responsibility for the inferentially embedded collateral commitments which, according to her counterpart, she should acknowledge, but which she does not necessarily actually acknowledge.<sup>2</sup> Being entitled to attribute a commitment thus has priority over undertaking one. Undertaking may be understood in terms of being entitled to attribute, but *not* vice versa: One can count as having undertaken a commitment whenever others are entitled to attribute that commitment (596). And it is the *asymmetry* this stance entails—the one between being entitled to attribute a commitment and undertaking one—that allows Brandom to finally take account of the objectivity of discursive norms. What is objectively correct, he says, is what is taken to be correct by the scorekeeper who is entitled to attribute a commitment—as opposed to what is acknowledged by the one to whom this commitment is attributed. As attributions and undertakings are mutual, we can construe the difference

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without making much use of the transition in question.

<sup>2</sup> To take a well-known example of Brandom: Senator McCarthy believed that the specter of communism was haunting Europe, but had no knowledge of the fact that this is exactly what the first sentence of Marx and Engels’ *Communist Manifesto* says. Consequently, had someone asked him whether he believed any of the claims of the *Manifesto*, McCarthy would have denied it (MIE: 516). Meanwhile, he should have undertaken a commitment to this belief even though he had no idea what the first sentence of the *Manifesto*, in fact, says.

between objective normative statuses and our subjective practical attitudes as a social-perspectival distinction between practical attitudes alone (597). Thus, although discursive norms support our capacity to distinguish correct performances from incorrect ones, they are not practice-transcendent (Wanderer 2008: 17-19). The distinction between correct applications of norms and those that are only taken to be correct is, according to Brandom, nothing but a structural feature of each individual practitioner’s perspective, or a social-perspectival *form* of it. Due to the implicit agreement that individual attitudes create, some of them project, as it were, beyond dispositions to apply them. To use a Wittgensteinian metaphor, Brandom’s phenomenalist solution of the objectivity of discursive norms looks like “a ladder that needs to be thrown away after one has climbed up on it” (Grönert 2005: 166). Brandom insists that we are capable of making the distinction between correct and incorrect applications of norms not because our discourse has an omniscient Master, but because the objectivity of those norms is a structural feature common to each perspective captured by the non-coercive authority of reasons interlocked by the mutual accountability of all participants (Brandom 1994: 595).

Many philosophers have considered Brandom’s account of normative objectivity controversial. Some treat Brandom’s phenomenism about norms as a version of semantic eliminativism, which, in prioritizing individual practical attitudes, simply explains norms away (Loeffler 2005: 58-59). Some others claim that if Brandom’s theory cannot find a proper ground for normativity outside individual assessments, his inferentialism results in indeterminacy of meaning (Whiting 2006). This criticism is supported by arguments showing the circularity of the relationship between objective normative statuses and subjective practical attitudes (Kiesselbach 2012; Lauer 2009). My own concern about Brandom’s account, although it echoes all of the above criticisms, is whether this account succeeds in reconciling the fallibility of individual perspectives and the objectivity of discursive norms. Brandom acknowledges that, as all scorekeepers

have different perspectives, there are always possible circumstances in which any application of a norm may be discovered to be incorrect. Although the very fact that we know what we know by our best lights only by itself constitutes no predicament for giving some sort of an account of normative objectivity, there is a problem. It is that Brandom's double-entry bookkeeping model stipulates nothing at all either about applications of norms, or about the way the scorekeeping game is generally played, that might prevent some of our applications from remaining ever unchanged—and therefore infallible—even though Brandom admits that they can be proven wrong in the long run.

Here is one way of seeing the problem. Brandom's asymmetric relation between being entitled to attribute a commitment and undertaking it implies that what allows me to take the commitment as objectively valid is its being present in the book containing commitments undertaken by me according to others. Now, although Brandom insists that objectivity requires something *in excess* of the sum total of the opinions of the others, there is nothing for me to rely on at any particular moment of the game except the status quo based exactly on the sum total of those opinions. In the absence of the communal "We," all I can hope for in fixing my beliefs is perspectival objectivity understood as some sort of interpretive equilibrium, which Brandom defines as a situation in which "external interpretation collapses into internal scorekeeping" (Brandom 1994: 644). The collapse of external interpretation into internal scorekeeping presupposes that there is an implicit normative residue in every act of giving and asking for reasons, i.e., something that I might not be aware of, but that I will have to acknowledge once it takes the form of an explicit statement that happens to contradict my beliefs. The very fact of the normative residue implies that there is a difference between how things ought to be and how all of us take things to be. The latter might not reflect the former, as all members of a community can go wrong. But how exactly what I learn from the book containing

commitments undertaken by me according to others can help me *now* if perspectival objectivity presupposes that all of us, at this particular moment of the game, can go wrong? Given that the scorekeeping community as a whole is ultimately nothing but a sum of individual perspectives, what exactly guarantees that a wrong opinion, which every member of the community is holding at the moment, will ultimately be corrected in accordance with some norm? True, the norms implicit in discourse might presuppose the possibility that, at some point in the game, a new fact will be discovered which would set our inquiry on the right track, even though everyone is wrong at the moment. But those norms by no means *guarantee* that such discovery will ever take place. The scorekeeping game itself prescribes no method that might ensure that an appropriate normative residue will ever be enacted in practice. The all-encompassing recognitive machinery of discourse embraces all individual perspectives. It precludes ascribing commitments by direct coercion, but it does not necessarily make discourse properly self-corrective. It can discipline the way we go about our beliefs, make our perspectives mutually adjusted, and help us get things right most of the time. What it *cannot* do though is guarantee anything beyond our capacity to persist in making the same mistakes over and over again. If *all* of us are wrong about something from the get go, whatever the norms we follow at the moment imply, there is no guarantee we will ever get it right.

An example might help. Suppose you and I share the view that my brother has committed a felony. In spite of our agreement, beliefs that constitute our respective networks of collateral commitments, and the way we act on those beliefs on occasion, might still be incompatible. From my perspective, the fact that I believe that my brother has committed a felony might not necessarily presuppose the legal consequences it would presuppose from your perspective if you were a judge. Brandom seems to imply that, due to the tight inferential connections between our uses of the word "felony," the mis-

match between our systems of collateral beliefs can never get big enough for the meaning of “felony” *not* to be shared by us. This might well be true; after all, there are norms which, when inferentially articulated, should make it explicit that my idea of “felony” is wrong. And yet it is quite possible that you and I keep using the term without a slightest trace of disagreement on a number of occasions when my particular attitude toward the relative is not explicitly involved. In fact, as the scorekeeping game implies a potentially unlimited number of contexts in which the term “felony” can be applied, it is theoretically possible that we spend a lifetime discussing/acting on our beliefs about “felony” without ever contradicting each other, given that our claims/actions do not involve the difference in our commitments.

This example is a simplification, but it can serve as a model for similar, yet more complex situations in which larger scorekeeping groups might get involved in much more than just an everyday confusion of terms. For instance, whereas “felony” represents a case in which, even though there is a discrepancy between our uses of the term, there are also norms that imply certain objective standards, the terms like “cold fusion” involve a more sophisticated scenario. True, “cold fusion” refers to many things that form a part of the already existent inferential web of the scorekeeping game. These include our general knowledge of nuclear reaction, the practical skills we need in order to conduct experiments involving [electrolysis](#) of [heavy water](#), and our expectations of how cold fusion, were it to occur, might change our ideas of matter and the laws of thermodynamics. However, as the very existence of the object of “cold fusion” is not a fact, not all possible uses of the term can be implied by existent norms. This creates an agreement that is much weaker than in the felony case. Hence, even if we are consistent in our uses of “cold fusion,” there is a real possibility that some of the key (albeit ultimately wrong) uses of the term will never be corrected. In cases like this, the game seems to require from scorekeepers something more than just being consistent. Namely, it seems to require some sort of *guidance*, especially in the

situation in which a discrepancy between different systems of beliefs is crucial for the principal aim of cooperation to be achieved.

It might be objected that, if we agree with Brandom that the objectivity of our concepts is anchored in the world that is itself conceptually framed, we should admit that the norms are always already there in discourse, waiting to be inferentially articulated eventually *in every case* (cold fusion included). But this objection implies two scenarios, none of which fits well within Brandom’s account. On the one hand, if the conceptual relations of the world merely ‘sit’ there waiting to be unfolded in the inferentially articulated structures of discourse, then we ultimately end up confronting the world that guarantees the objectivity of our norms before we even institute them as such (DeMoor 2011: 344; Habermas 2000: 340). If this is right, Brandom’s conceptual realism makes his idea of constructive human endeavor rather weak. We institute and acknowledge the norms that govern our thought and behavior, but, at the same time, we always already have a warrant of adequacy from the conceptually pre-structured world—which, to be sure, demotivates every one of our individual constructive efforts.

On the other hand, although in many cases we do reach a workable agreement on what our uses of a term imply, Brandom discards the idea of the end of inquiry (even in a purely regulative, Kantian sense), and so there is no guarantee it will ever happen in this or that particular case. Within Brandom’s model, the fallibility of our current beliefs, together with the fact that some of those beliefs can persist indefinitely in spite of their being wrong, is not compensated by the possibility of our knowing, at some point in future, that some of our assessments are correct. According to Brandom, our hope for correctness is only hope for the fact that our game of giving and asking for reasons is a structurally sustainable and a well-ordered one. But all we are able to acknowledge in this case is that a given conceptual content is applied correctly simply because it works *for now*. In spite of the normative residue, which supports the asymmetry between being entitled to attribute a com-

mitment and undertaking one, what all members of a community deem to be correct at any particular moment of the game may in fact be indistinguishable from what is correct objectively. When nothing prevents the whole community from holding a set of wrong beliefs indefinitely, the objective norms' being there might make little or no difference at all. What is thus acknowledged as correct (whether rightly or wrongly) is what is represented by a useful vocabulary—until this vocabulary is out of use (cf. Rorty 1998: 138-152). According to Brandom, to say that our communication is perspectival in its form is, therefore, simply to say that our rationality is inherently such that it organizes our reasons in an autonomous space, within which sometimes we *may* be able to understand others and hold each other responsible for what we say and do.

In *Making It Explicit*, and later in *Articulating Reasons* (2000) Brandom strengthens his perspectival construal of objectivity by claiming that individual perspectives are interlocked by 'anaphoric chains' and 'substitutional commitments.' Anaphoric connections link expressions that involve demonstratives, indexicals, and proper names into repeatable linguistic structures. These structures, says Brandom, "can express conceptual contents by being governed by indirectly inferential substitutional commitments" (Brandom 1994: 592; cf. Knell 2008; Armour-Garb and Beall 2005). Brandom's principal point is that the commitments can be cashed out grammatically through the difference between *de re* and *de dicto* content ascriptions.<sup>3</sup> But can the fact that, thanks to

<sup>3</sup> According to Brandom's example, if we translate the *de dicto* ascription "X believes *that* the inventor of lightning rod invented bifocals" into the *de re* ascription "X believes *of* the inventor of lightning rod that *he* invented bifocals," the ascriber's explicit acknowledgement of a commitment, which follows from the ascription, becomes a part of the meaning of the ascription (Lance 1997: 69-71). Such translations enable us to deal with ambiguities and to substitute one subsentential structure for another, making it clear, for instance, that by "the inventor of the lightning rod" we mean "Benjamin Franklin" (Brandom 2000: 178-183). Anaphoric uses of pronouns in *de re* ascriptions like "X believes *of* the inventor of lightning rod that *he* invented bifocals" initiate referential chains that tie different perspectives together and help us direct our intentions in understanding what we are talking *about*.

anaphoric chains and substitutional commitments, we are in agreement with others as to what we are talking *about*, tell us whether *what* we are talking about is not wrong? I think not. Anaphoric chains and substitutional commitments supplement the idea of recognition-based perspectival objectivity, but they cannot guarantee that our current mistaken beliefs will ever be corrected. Brandom implies that his inferentialism is not meant to equip us with instruments that could help us to sort out our substitutional commitments in every particular case. Once we succeed in mastering the dialectical relationship between the explicit and the implicit parts of discourse, we can explain our scorekeeping capacities by simply pointing at the way our linguistic rationality works. After all, it seems natural for a Wittgensteinian to answer the question "How do you know that this is red?" by simply saying, "I know English" (cf. Rorty 2000: 186). From the Brandomean perspective, we would do well simply by relying on the capacity of the scorekeeping game to fix inferential networks by means of implicitly established discursive norms. Yet this claim is between the Scylla of weakened constructivism (if we admit that discourse already contains norms that should be at work in every particular case), and the Charybdis of criteria for a workable agreement (if we admit that Brandom owes us an explanation of how exactly new norms are introduced).

In *Between Saying and Doing* (2008), Brandom makes an amendment to his thesis about anaphoric chains and substitutional commitments. He says that discursive practices are "*not* the kind of thing that can be separated from the objects they involve" (Brandom 2008: 177). Earlier in *Making It Explicit* he goes as far as calling the practices "solid" and even "corporeal" (Brandom 1994: 332). According to Brandom, discursive practices include not only what we say, but also how we interact with each other, as well as with facts and events of the world. But this amendment raises the same question: Can the Wittgensteinian claim that we don't use words in a vacuum and that our uses are constituted by



the situational interplay between language and environment, provide a proper support for the idea of objectivity, given that the very term “objectivity” is quite tellingly absent from the vocabulary of *Philosophical Investigations*?

### 3. The end of inquiry

What I suggest Brandom’s theory lacks is the regulative notion of a theoretically perfect intersubjective agreement obtainable under ideal conditions—a notion similar to Peirce’s idea of the end of inquiry. Peirce defines it in his “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities” (1868) as “a community without definite limits, and capable of indefinite increase of knowledge,” where “[the] two series of cognitions—the real and the unreal—consist of those which, at a time sufficiently future, the community will always continue to reaffirm; and of those which, under the same conditions, will ever after be denied” (Peirce 1982-, 2:239). What underlies the idea of the end of inquiry is *statistical reasoning*. As Peirce explains, “judging of the statistical composition of a whole lot from a sample is judging by a method which will be right on the average in the long run” (Peirce 1931-1956, 1:93). No matter where different members of a community may begin, as long as they follow a certain method, the results of their research should eventually converge toward the same outcome. The method is formulated in Peirce’s maxim of pragmatism: “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object” (Peirce 1982-, 3:266). This formulation suggests that our idea of an object is ultimately our idea of the expected experiential effects of this object, and that meanings of our ideas depend on our capacity to predict practical outcomes of our experiments with the objects of those ideas.

Brandom famously claims that ‘experience’ is not one of his words. He sees the idea of experience as a needless non-inferential intermediary between facts

available in perception and linguistic reports of those facts (Brandom 2000: 205-206). Contrary to Brandom, Peirce treats experience not as a useless intermediary between the world and our discourse about it, but as an integral part of our inferentially framed constructive efforts to create a living connection between our practical ends and the way the world really is. The idea of practical bearings, as it is used in the maxim, finds its expression in a set of conditional statements about what *would* happen, given that such-and-such reasonable experimental conditions are in place. Consequently, accepting the truth of a proposition amounts to acquiring a habit of using a variety of conditionals the expression entails. On this view, the meaning of a proposition “spells out how acceptance of the proposition would affect conduct, and indicates what circumstances are relevant to evaluating an assertion of the proposition” (Hookway 1985: 240). If we are persistent enough in following the maxim as a method of reasoning and acting, our results will always be a distribution of statistical errors, which, as our experimentation goes on, always converge to an approximation.

The advantage of Peirce’s maxim, as compared to Brandom’s perspectival approach, is that, in affecting and correcting our habits, the possible future implied by the maxim introduces an element of self-control both to our thought and to our conduct. For instance, if our study of the relationship between temperature and pressure of an ideal gas, heated in a closed container, showed that the equation  $pV = nRT$  does not hold, we would have to look for what might have introduced an error. In this case, referring to our judgments’ sharing some core discursive feature, and to our perspectives being interlocked by our mutual accountability, would not suffice. We would have to make changes to the initial setting, check the equipment, reevaluate some of our basic assumptions about residual properties, repeat the experiment and, if nothing else works, introduce a new hypothesis, or even take a guess. In this example, our predictions of practically significant *experiential* outcomes, irrelevant in Brandom’s case, are not external

to our conception of an ideal gas. They are the essential constituents of this conception. Moreover, the fact that future experiments may change this, as well as any other conception we happen to form and act upon, entails that both our ideas and laws of nature these ideas are about are general objects subject to constant change and growth (Hausman 1993; Pihlström 2010: 55).

According to the statistical construal of the maxim, it is rational to act only if the single case we are preoccupied with currently is considered a member of an infinite sequence of comparable cases that display the tendency to converge to a result narrow enough to establish a new norm (Peirce 1931-1956, 1:400-409). Neither any particular instance of the “I-Thou” relationship, nor any finite number of such instances can actually confront the sequence as a whole. Neither you nor I, therefore, are being rational unless, in every decision we make, we identify ourselves with a communal “We” understood as an *infinite* community of future decision makers (Peirce 1982-, 2:239-242). The community, every member of which follows the maxim, by definition exceeds any particular set of members in its reliance on future opportunities to correct their current beliefs. The idea of such community is thus in compliance with Brandom’s stipulation that objectivity is not reducible to what any and all scorekeepers may think at any particular moment in the scorekeeping game. But it also adds something to this stipulation. What it adds is a statistically construed procedure that, even if all of us are wrong on occasion, will not allow us to hold on to our errors forever. It will ultimately convert a distribution of those errors into a reliable and experimentally provable result (Peirce 1931-1956, 2:775-777). Unlike Brandom, who claims that there cannot be any finally adequate set of perfectly determinate concepts, Peirce insists that the very way we go about our experience suggests that the idea of a final opinion is indispensable. To summarize, the indispensability of this idea is due to three facts. First, the maxim of pragmatism tells us that the meaning of any proposition consists in a set of counterfactual expecta-

tions. Second, according to the statistical construal of the maxim, every concept we use by necessity presupposes a reference to the possible future. Third, in order to secure the self-corrective character of inquiry, the reference to the possible future presupposes the regulative idea of ultimate communal “We.” Without having this idea in mind, we cannot go on with our inquiry. The final opinion, thus, “is an ideal, regulative, normative notion, providing a reason—an irreducibly normative reason—for continuing inquiry” (Pihlström 2012: 243). The notion is regulative in that it both motivates our inquiry and guarantees its result in the long run. On the level of local social practices, it cannot secure anything except approximation. The approximation, however, does help us in sorting out our disagreements about the meaning of practices we share. Back to the “felony” example, like the Brandomian appeal to the inferentially construed normativity, which is inherent in our rational capacities, Peirce’s maxim-based inquiry cannot provide an absolute guarantee for the compatibility of beliefs that constitute our respective networks of collateral commitments. What, unlike Brandom’s perspectival approach, it *can* do though is exclude the situation in which the compatibility is left to chance or cannot be achieved at all.

It might be objected that it is not clear how the scientific method, suitable for defining the properties of an ideal gas, can be applied to resolve our disagreements about the meaning of “felony” or some other term in everyday communication. After all, Peirce himself describes the method of science as only one of four methods of fixing beliefs, admitting that “the other [three] methods do have their merits” (Peirce 1982-, 3:257). But he takes it to be an important advantage of the method that, whenever it is applied, reality is no longer determined by individual will, a priori rules, or even social contract. It is determined by the fact that every human being is a truth-seeker by nature. Science, in its pragmatist understanding, is nothing other than an extension of this natural human disposition, or a more sophisticated

expression of it. What it adds to this disposition is the idea of a method that provides statistical tools to enhance our natural inclination towards making right decisions. In this respect, Peirce's maxim may be seen as an improvement on the scorekeeping game, playing which, according to Brandom, is simply synonymous to being rational. Peirce stresses the fact that our rational capacities have a history, and that, in the case of science, this history is attached to a particular set of social institutions, which have so far made the best possible use of these capacities (253-256).

Peirce do not stop at showing how the statistical reading of the maxim reconciles the fallibility of our knowledge and the regulative idea of the end of inquiry. He also shows how it yields realism. When, following the maxim, we define the meaning of a concept, we do it in terms of our capacity to predict practical experiential outcomes of our interaction with the object to which the concept applies. Taking into account possible outcomes of actions one is prepared to perform, affects one's conduct not simply causally (in the way *actual* objects and persons affect each other), but in terms of correcting one's habits—not just actions, but general modes of conduct. Peirce makes a clear distinction between *actuality*, which pertains to the universe of "I-Thou" relations, facts and things which exist here and now, and *reality*, which pertains to "would-bes" expressed in conditional expectations. Actual objects, facts, and their relations to each other are characterized by brute causal force. Objects and facts are existent in their reactive effects, which by themselves do not constitute any rational constraint. Would-bes, on the contrary, are real as far as they are characterized by a law-like behavior (Hausman 1993, esp. 167-168). A stone, when released, is bound to fall in a predictable manner because it has a general property of being so disposed. The law-like behavior of the stone is due to a set of features that define its *real* nature, and not merely its *existence* as a member of some actual causal chain (Margolis 1993: 295-300; Haack 1992: 28-29). Reality, thus, is something that consists in laws and regularities, where the laws'

being real means appropriate counterfactuals' being true. Laws do not exist as such, but they are operative in existent things as their concrete realizations (Peirce 1931-1956, 8:12). In representing law-like regularities, would-bes cannot be reduced to any finite collection of actual facts or events: "No collection of facts can constitute a law; for the law goes beyond any accomplished facts and determines how facts that *may be*, but *all* of which never can have happened, shall be characterized" (1.420). Reality in the form of a law is always present in the way actual events interact, but it cannot be exhausted by all interactions that did, or ever will, exemplify it. According to Peirce, (1) a law goes beyond any collection of facts because it represents a general rule that relates known facts to their possible future interpretations, and (2) the maxim, which guides us in establishing new laws based on those interpretations, has predictive power because this relation presupposes the idea of the end of inquiry. Consequently, no "would-be" has a normative force without (1) and (2) being true. Brandom's account pays no attention to this feature of generality. He only says that a scorekeeper is confined in her interpretations by the normative force of whatever implications her current move has relative to the current status quo of the game. Although there are norms implicit in discourse, which preclude some of our applications and licence some other, those norms provide no guidance as to where our rationality will ultimately lead us.

Throughout his writings, Brandom also pays great deal of attention to modal talk. Referring to Sellars, he calls the language of modality a "transposed" language of norms (Brandom 2008: 100). For the reason that our capacity to apply concepts presupposes the mastery of every concept's inferential relations to other concepts, inferentialist semantics requires that every time we apply a concept we must be able to sort out what would and what would not follow in case our application of the concept brought about such and such inferential consequences. In "Modality, Normativity, and Intentionality" (2001), Brandom even borrows Peirce's famous diamond example to illustrate this point. To understand what it

means for a diamond to be 'hard,' given that the diamond was crystalized in a bed of cotton wool and then burned without ever being pressed by an edge or point, the question is "not what *did* happen, but ... whether that diamond *would* resist an attempt to scratch it" (Peirce 1998: 354). As Rosen points out, "Brandom's main contention is that our best reasons for regarding the unreduced modal idiom as 'clear enough' are also good reasons for regarding the unreduced normative idiom as clear enough" (Rosen 2001: 612). However, for Brandom, this primarily means that we need a mastery of a modal *vocabulary* that could cash out inferential interdependencies between various claims. Peirce's principal concern is *experiential* expectations directed by a method that leads our self-corrective efforts towards a predestined result and, in doing so, provides external constraint on what we can think and do. Unlike Brandom, Peirce insists that there is a strong link not only between two kinds of vocabulary, but also between (1) laws exceeding any finite collection of facts, (2) laws being real, and (3) our human capacity of making predictions according to the rule which organizes our experience with reference to the regulative ideal of the end of inquiry.

#### 4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to compare Brandom's and Peirce's approaches to normative objectivity. Let me now summarize the comparison. In trying to reconcile his inferentialist semantics and his normative pragmatics, Brandom faces an objectivity problem: Given that discourse is constituted in its entirety by the constructive efforts of individual scorekeepers, how can we proceed from what any and all of us take to be the case to what the case is objectively? Brandom believes that his social-perspectival account of discursive norms provides whatever is necessary for some of our beliefs to be not just coherent, but objectively correct. But because Brandom's objectivity functions solely as a form of communi-

cation and does not define the character of conceptual contents *qua* contents, his normative pragmatics lacks some tools. It can only help us build our responsibilities toward each other into the overall cognitive structure of discourse, but it cannot prevent some of our beliefs from remaining ever unchanged. As Levine (2010) points out, in *Making It Explicit* Brandom accounts of "a *hygienic* notion of objectivity," which contains no traces of foundationalism or representationalism of any kind (Levine 2010: 584-586), but which does not do enough in terms of elucidating how objectivity operates in real inquiries. While the goal of the Brandomian scorekeeper is to show how to build her commitments into the already existent scorekeeping system, the Peircean inquirer is preoccupied with tracing how to falsify the already established status quo. One, after all, cannot but acknowledge that there is a difference between preparedness to defend the inferences implicit in one's assertions and preparedness to refute one's beliefs in view of new experience.

Given that Brandom's account dismisses the possibility of the end of inquiry and, at the same time, allows for some of our beliefs to be reinstated indefinitely, the idea of something that exceeds a limited communal agreement cannot be cashed out properly. In cases when nothing prevents the whole community not just from holding wrong beliefs, but from holding those beliefs indefinitely, the existence of objective norms implicit in discourse seems to make little difference. Perspectival objectivity makes us mindful of each other's reasons and lays constraint on our navigating between different perspectives. Yet the only safe conclusion one can make based on this conception is that it "*leaves room* for an admission of objective deontic statuses" (Grönert 2005: 169; emphasis added), but does not necessarily *require* objectivity of any kind. It might be said that, in referring to the long-run convergence of the community, Peirce's maxim represents at best a 'rational hope' for achieving ultimately correct beliefs, but at least it tells us something important about the role statistically interpreted

errors play in our obtaining reliable experience-based knowledge about the world. In referring to the account of meaning as the sum total of practical effects, the maxim represents the method, about which we *know* that it will be right on average in the long run. Explaining the relationship between what we mean and the modes of action that lead to the acknowledgement of what we mean by others, requires some additional criterion. I claim that Peirce provides such criterion by introducing a regulative ideal of the end of inquiry. This ideal is supported by a method that links our future expectations with our motivation to go on with our inquiry, and represents experience not as a non-inferential intermediary between facts and linguistic reports, but as an integral part of our meanings.

One of Brandom's worries is that the notion of a community, which is implied by the ideal, grants priority to the "I-We" relationship over the "I-Thou" relationship, and that in this case the individual is ultimately bound to be "overwhelmed by the collectivity" (Habermas 2000: 344). According to Brandom, what we should place above our limited selves is a self-regulating game where the mutual distribution of commitments assigns normative force to our claims, but says nothing about what is actually at stake in every particular move. Thanks to the recognitive symmetry between "I" and "Thou," every scorekeeper can navigate between different perspectives, and due to the priority of being entitled to attribute a commitment over undertaking one, every scorekeeper perceives certain norms implicit in the game as laying external constraint on what can be said and done. The worry about overwhelming collectivity is a legitimate one. According to Peirce, what we place above our limited selves is not a self-regulating game, but a *universal rule* of action that fuses reasons and reality into the method-driven human effort addressed to the future. But if the point that objectivity is something more than a mere agreement here and now is at issue, from a Peircean perspective, to make this point, we at least do not have to worry about how to proceed from individual ascriptions to objective assessments,

because science shows us the most effective way to transcend subjective beliefs in a communal inquiry.

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## ARTICULATE REASON AND ITS ELUSIVE BACKGROUND

### NOTES ON JOSIAH ROYCE'S LATE READING OF PEIRCE

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ABSTRACT: Hans Joas has recently discussed the theories of religious experience advanced by William James and Josiah Royce at the beginning of the twentieth century. In particular, he has placed much emphasis on Royce's recourse to Peirce in his criticism of the *Varieties of Religious Experience*. On this basis, the present article tries to delve deeper into Royce's late reading of Peirce. Royce is quite successful – this article maintains – in grasping the Peircean conception of reason as an articulatory faculty. But he does not do full justice to Peirce's remarks about the inarticulate and experiential ground out of which articulation unfolds.

**Keywords:** Josiah Royce, Charles S. Peirce, William James, Religion, Experience

*And as imagination bodies forth  
the forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
a local habitation and a name.*

William Shakespeare,  
A Midsummer Night's Dream

In his later years, the North American philosopher Josiah Royce published two books on religion – *The Sources of Religious Insight* (1912) and *The Problem of Christianity* (1913) – which show the traces of a renewed conversation with his long-standing pragmatist interlocutors, William James and Charles S. Peirce.<sup>1</sup> One of the leading motives of these works is an attempt to come to terms with James's psychology of religion. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James had suggested grounding the study of religion on the analysis of subjective experience. Royce fully acknowledged the merits of James's move but inveighed against his exclusive concentration on the individual and inarticulate dimension of experience. He thus set himself to formulate a more comprehensive view.

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1 Royce ([1912] 2001); Royce ([1913] 1968). For a comprehensive assessment of Royce's relation to the pragmatists, see Oppenheim (2005).

Royce's argument can be analysed as proceeding in two steps. First, in *The Sources of Religious Experience*, he sketched a view of religion as moulded by social interaction and by the influence of "articulate reason."<sup>2</sup> Then, in *The Problem of Christianity*, he explored the relationship between experience, reason and history, by asking how the avowedly eternal nature of the Christian message can be reconciled with its contingent and historical character. To answer this question, Royce developed a conception of reason as an interpretive faculty which resorts heavily to the writings of Peirce: a thinker with whom he had a lifelong intellectual exchange but whose philosophical significance he came to appreciate more fully right around the year 1912 (that is, in between the composition of the two books I am considering here).<sup>3</sup>

We owe to Hans Joas's *Die Macht des Heiligen* one of the most compelling readings to date of Royce's late exchange with James and Peirce, and of its relevance to both the philosophy of religion and social theory.<sup>4</sup> As Joas puts it, Royce's criticism of James helps us understand why the validity claims of religious experiences, although grounded on subjective certitude, cannot dispense with the historically contingent forms in which those experiences are socially articulated.<sup>5</sup> In turn, this idea is related to Joas's own conception of social values and religious doctrines as the articulation of specific experiences that have risen to prominence in the lives of individuals or communities.<sup>6</sup>

In the present article, I aim to follow up on Joas's discussion by focusing on some further aspects of Royce's late dialogue with the pragmatists. Above all, I would like to deal with the Royce-Peirce relation. However, I start with a preliminary discussion of Royce's misgivings about James's conception of individual experience (1). I then consider Royce's late reception of

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2 See, in particular, Royce ([1912] 2001, 90-91). The terms "inarticulate" and "articulate" were already used by James. See, e.g., James ([1902] 1985, 67).

3 See Oppenheim (2005, 29).

4 Joas (2017), Ch. 2. See also Joas (2016a, 67-70); Joas (2016b).

5 Joas (2017, 11-24 and 106-109).

6 See Joas ([2004] 2008), in particular Ch. 3, "On the Articulation of Experience"; Joas ([1997] 2000), in particular Ch. 3, on James. In these earlier writings, Royce does not play a role yet.

Peirce and, in particular, the role of semiotic considerations in his view of community (2). Finally, I pause on what is perhaps Royce's most original development of Peirce's semiotics, namely its application to a fully-fledged theory of historicity (3). My overall claim is that while Royce's reading of Peirce succeeds in bringing to the fore the latter's sophisticated understanding of reason as an interpretive and semiotic faculty, it fails to do full justice to Peirce's remarks about what we might call the *inarticulate and experiential ground* out of which articulation unfolds. This shortcoming reverberates in all three aspects of Royce's argument that I shall consider.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. Individual Experience

Let me start with *The Sources of Religious Insight*. Here, Royce makes a double move. On the one hand, he takes seriously the Jamesian conception of experience as a new basis for the study of religion. On the other hand, he seeks to expand it, by contending that religion is nourished not only by individual experience but by a plurality of "sources," seven in total, to which he devotes the seven chapters of his book. Taken together, these sources lead to what Royce calls religious "insight," that is, a kind of knowledge that is both synthetic and personal. "Insight is knowledge that makes us aware of the unity of many facts in one whole, and that at the same time brings us into intimate personal contact with these facts and with the whole wherein they are united."<sup>8</sup>

Hans Joas has advanced the suspicion that Royce's strategy might turn out to be little more than a "mere listing" of a plurality of factors in the study of religion, by definition less unilateral than James's analysis, but not derived by any systematic principle.<sup>9</sup> While this is indeed a difficulty of Royce's account, I believe it is possible to

detect a more systematic claim in his book. Royce's goal is not merely to criticise the unilateral character of James's work, but to put forth a decomposition of religious insight into its major components.

Let us see why. The first two sources indicated by Royce, "individual" and "social" experience, provide the starting point of the process through which insight is to be gained. In a sense, they fulfill the same function of doubt in pragmatist epistemologies: they represent a state of discomfort and malaise that sets in motion the whole process of inquiry. They do so, however, from different angles. While individual experience is by its very definition unstable "like the foam of the sea,"<sup>10</sup> and thus leaves us with the need for a higher and more stable dimension of reality, social experience presents us with a painful clash between the "chaos of needs" of ordinary life and the ideal of an ordered community of human beings who strive for collective salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Individual and social experiences, however, are just the first step in the process. In order to lead to genuine insight, they need to be complemented by a rational faculty that interprets or *articulates* them. "Articulate reason" is thus the third, and in a sense paramount, source of insight. But reason, too, is incomplete and powerless, as long as it is not aided by two more sources. One such source – the fourth – is the will, which guides and accompanies the exercise of reason. Another – the fifth – is "loyalty", i.e. the caring love for the community, which provides the horizon within which "the lessons that the preceding sources have furnished" are united.<sup>12</sup> Finally, two more sources close the picture: the experience of "sorrow," and more importantly, the "invisible Church," that is, the ideal and transcendent unity of all the faithful, which plays a regulative role in the whole process of insight formation.

Seen in this light, Royce's argument appears directed not so much against James's exclusive concentration on

<sup>7</sup> Auxier (2013, 71-73 and *passim*), has argued that Royce's way of dealing with the issue of immediacy, although engaging, is not altogether satisfactory. If I am not mistaken, my observations can be read as going in the same direction.

<sup>8</sup> Royce ([1912] 2001, 5-6).

<sup>9</sup> Joas (2017, 93, 97, and 103). Joas refers to Oppenheim (2005, 464 n15), who shows that "[Royce's] listing was not intended to be exhaustive".

<sup>10</sup> Royce ([1912] 2001, 30).

<sup>11</sup> Royce ([1912] 2001, 75). On this see also Royce ([1908] 1995).

<sup>12</sup> Royce ([1912] 2001, 166).



individual experience, but against his conviction that individual experience is the only element that plays a *constitutive part* in the justification of the religious faith of individuals.<sup>13</sup> In particular, James had ruled out the possibility that “intellectual operations” might have a substantial role in the experience of conversion. Even if “we cannot exclude the intellect from participating in any of our functions,” the intellect ends up playing the merely subsidiary role of ordering the material provided by inarticulate feeling.<sup>14</sup> And this is precisely the point that Royce’s insistence on the multi-layered character of religious insight is meant to disprove.

However, one difficulty arises here. If we look beyond *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, it is not difficult to find texts in which James puts forth a much more nuanced account of the relation between inarticulate feeling and articulate reason, thus potentially neutralising Royce’s objections. Joas has already pointed to one such work, the posthumous *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911), where James describes the act of writing as a process of progressive articulation of our still inchoate thoughts. “As I now write,” – says James, – “I ‘strive’ after words, which I *only half prefigure*, but which, when they shall have come, must satisfactorily complete the nascent sense I have of what they ought to be.”<sup>15</sup> Here the process of articulation, far from playing an ancillary role, represents the moment in which the thoughts I am trying to express find their effective realisation.

But by far the fullest account in this respect is contained in James’s psychological masterpiece, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). In particular, the celebrated chapter on the “Stream of Thought” aims at what James himself calls a “re-instatement of the vague to its proper place in our mental life.”<sup>16</sup> Thought, James claims, is made of “transitive” psychological states that surround more definite ideas as their “fringe” or “penumbra,” and in which other ideas are vaguely prefigured. Our mental life is full of such “rapid premonitory perspective views of scheme of thought *not yet articulate*,” which have “no definite object” yet, but already display a “sense of the direction” along which that object shall be found. James characterises the specificity of these elusive states of mind by insisting on the crucial difference between the “feeling of an absence” and “the absence of a feeling.” If, for instance, I have a vague sense of what I want to say before having precisely formulated my thought, this “feeling of an absence” is something entirely different from having no thought altogether. “Every one must know the tantalizing effect of the blank rhythm of some forgotten verse, restlessly dancing in one’s mind, striving to be filled out with words.”<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the coarser opposition between intellect and individual experience suggested by the *Varieties*, James’s subtle comparison of inarticulate states of mind to the “feeling of an absence” is quite compatible with Royce’s remarks about the structurally unstable nature of experience. Indeed, Royce was well aware of this fact. In the *Sources of Religious Insight*, he remarked that “James, as a *psychologist*, well knew this truth about the value and the limitations of private experience.”<sup>18</sup> However, his polemical objective on that occasion was not James the psychologist, but James the philosopher of religion. Thus, the possibility of a closer and more productive confrontation with James’s conception of the vagueness and inarticulacy of experience was left unexplored.

13 Thus, I do not fully agree with Joas (2017, 103), who distinguishes between two different lines of criticism that Royce addresses to James: “Man kann eine ausschließliche Berücksichtigung individueller Erfahrung entweder kritisieren, weil sie andere Dimensionen nicht berücksichtigt oder weil sie sogar das Wesen individueller Erfahrung verkennt. Die Aufzählung der Quellen religiöser Einsicht dient dem ersten Zweck, die semiotische, peirceanische Kritik an James dem zweiten.” I think, on the contrary, that Royce’s argument in the *Sources* can be grasped as already going in the direction of the systematic criticism fleshed out in the *Problem*, although in a way that is still not so heavily influenced by Peirce. This is another way of saying that I do not think that the renowned turning-point of 1912 should be taken as an absolute break in Royce’s thinking. For a similar attitude, see Auxier (2013, 62).

14 James ([1902] 1985, 342, 359-360).

15 James ([1910] 1979, 106), my emphasis. Cf. Joas (2017, 101); Joas ([2004] 2008, 41).

16 James ([1890] 1981, 246). Cf. Gavin (1992).

17 James ([1890] 1981, 240-246).

18 Royce ([1912] 2001, 30), my emphasis.

This is noteworthy also because that conception would have provided a link to the philosophy of Peirce quite different from the one on which he would insist a year later in *The Problem of Christianity*, and closer, rather, to the one highlighted by John Dewey with his notion of “qualitative thought.”<sup>19</sup> Both in his semiotics and in his theory of the metaphysical categories, Peirce insisted on the idea that immediate qualitative experience (the category of “Firstness”) pervades all processes of thought, but is intangible and ephemeral, and is thus in need of being complemented by two more dimensions: the dimension of physical resistance (“Secondness”) and that of semiosis (“Thirdness”). Inarticulate qualities are thus characterised by a metaphysics of potentiality. They are general elements *in potentia*, which need to be expressed in physical facts and embedded in semiotic structures in order to bear fruit. Otherwise, they remain “airy nothings.”<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Hermeneutics and The Doctrine of Signs

While substantially overlooking the implications of Peirce's philosophy for a theory of inarticulate experience, Royce was on the contrary quite perceptive of the latter's relevance to another major goal of his theory, that is, the description of “articulate reason” as a source of religious insight. In fact, Royce could only defend this idea by convincingly demonstrating that reason, far from being the purely analytical tool that James decries in the *Varieties*, can be a source of genuine novelty. And it is precisely here that his 1912 re-discovery of Peirce came to play a crucial role:<sup>21</sup> while the *Sources of Religious*

*Insight* cite Peirce only once,<sup>22</sup> the whole of the second part of the *Problem of Christianity* is devoted to an in-depth examination of his thinking.<sup>23</sup>

The crucial idea on which Royce bases his interpretation of Peirce may be expressed by saying that reason can have a genuinely synthetic or creative power, even if it is not construed as an intuitive faculty but as a downright *inferential* operation. Although he is sometimes untidy in his terminology, Royce correctly identifies the two aspects of Peirce's logic that deal with this point. The first is the concept of hypothesis, or “abduction,” as the only kind of inference that is inherently creative. The second is what Peirce would have called the “*theoremat-ic deduction*” of mathematics. This is a specific kind of deduction that, thanks to the operations we perform on diagrams we ourselves create, can bring to the fore some necessary implications of the problem that we could not have perceived otherwise.<sup>24</sup>

In *The Problem of Christianity*, however, Royce adds a further, crucial step. He comes to recognise that the Peircean conception of synthetic reasoning is inextricably bound up with his conception of reason as the faculty of producing and interpreting signs. In this way, the “articulate reason” already deployed in the *Sources* is substituted by the concept of “interpretation.” Correspondingly, the “will,” which in the *Sources* had the function of accompanying and guiding our rational faculty, is now referred to as “the will to interpret,” thus making even clearer Royce's strong but ambivalent relation to James. While both Royce and James place emphasis on the importance of volition, Royce makes clear that what he is looking for is not a “will to believe”

19 Dewey ([1930] 1984). See also Dewey ([1934] 1987); Dewey ([1935] 1987).

20 “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God” (1908), in Peirce (1992 [henceforth: EP2], 435): “Of the three Universes of Experience familiar to us all, the first comprises all mere Ideas, those airy nothings to which the mind of poet, pure mathematician, or another might give local habitation and a name within that mind.” Peirce is here referencing the Shakespearean verses I have chosen as an epigraph to my paper. Royce knew well this text, which is the central piece of his philosophy of religion. See Raposa (2010).

21 See above, fn. 3, and my comments on fn. 13.

22 Royce ([1912] 2001, 98).

23 After the publication of *The Problem of Christianity*, Royce sent a copy to Peirce, who at that time was already ill and approaching death. Peirce replied with an appreciative letter, which Royce read as a substantial approval of his interpretation of Peirce. But Oppenheim, who has found the letter Peirce sent to Royce, expresses some reservations about Royce's enthusiasm, on the basis of the scarce evidence provided by that letter. See Oppenheim (2005, 23).

24 Royce ([1912] 2001); Royce ([1913] 1968, 308-312 and 392-395). For Peirce's definition of “*theoremat-ic deduction*” (a term Royce does not use) see, for instance, his “Syllabus of Certain Topics of Logic” (1903), in EP2, 297-298.

but a “will to interpret.” The will does not represent a source of insight alternative and complementary to reason, as James’s argument on the will to believe might suggest. Rather, it guides reason in every step.<sup>25</sup>

*The Problem of Christianity* also goes back to some of the other sources of religious insights that Royce had identified in the previous book, such as loyalty and the church. But most importantly, it is the social dimension of experience that now comes to play an even more crucial role.<sup>26</sup> Royce explores the Peircean concept of interpretation not only from the angle of its epistemological implications, but above all from the angle of its relevance to an all-encompassing theory of communities and historical traditions.

Drawing in part on the anti-individualistic view of communities he finds in Wilhelm Wundt, Royce suggests that the act of interpretation is the medium through which communities live and structure themselves through time. In fact, he goes as far as to suggest that interpretation is virtually equivalent to the flow of time, because time is the movement through which “the present interprets the past to the future.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, a “community” is created out of a simple collection of individuals at the moment when that collection of individuals starts to share memories about its past, or hopes and expectations about the future. In other words, communities are held together by the fact that their members interpret their past or their future in overlap-

ping ways.<sup>28</sup> The acts of interpretation that are enacted by the community are always related to other acts of interpretation enacted by other people in the past. The community thus emerges out of a continuous stream of interpretive acts that relate to one another.

A crucial corollary about the very nature of “articulate reason” follows from this idea. The process of articulation can be directed not only to individual experience in the sense of James, but also to the symbols and signs that we derive from tradition. We articulate experiences but we also articulate the meaning of the past as is embodied in signs and, indeed, this is the only tool we have to make “some vast body of facts of experience” available to the limited compass of our individual life.<sup>29</sup>

Royce draws on these general considerations to describe the Pauline church as a community of interpretation constantly building on its own past and striving toward a more and more accurate interpretation of the Christian message. But he also makes clear that the church is only one among many historical traditions that make up the history of humanity. Other cultural formations, such as philosophy, science and art, can be analysed along the same lines:

Amos introduced into the controversies of his time the still tragic, but inspiring and mediating, idea of the God who [...] delights not in sacrifices but in righteousness. And by this one stroke of religious genius the prophet directed the religious growth of the centuries that were to follow. [...] Let the Sistine Madonna or Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony illustrate the same process in other forms of the artistic consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

Still, Royce is careful not to lapse into the ‘Nietzschean’ mistake of taking into account only the outstanding inventions of religious prophets, artistic geniuses or scientists as the kind of “interpretation” that makes up the fabric of human culture. On the contrary, he maintains that the “will to interpret” can take both the form of highly reflected intellectual articulations and that of

25 See Royce ([1913] 1968, Ch. 12). Joas (2017, 99), also mentions Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as possibly alluded to by Royce’s use of the phrase “the will to interpret.” This is, indeed, quite plausible: after all, in Royce ([1913] 1968, 351-354), James’s voluntarism is treated as a continuation of Schopenhauer’s. In doing so, however, Royce ends up underplaying some important differences between James and the Schopenhauer-Nietzsche tradition: differences pointed out by Joas ([1992] 1996, 116-126). On Royce, Peirce and Nietzsche, see also Fabbrichesi (2010).

26 For loyalty, see in particular Chs. 2 and 10; for the church, Chs. 2, 10, 15, 16; for social experience, p. 224: “The psychology of the origins of Christian experience is thus social, and is not an individual psychology.” Joas (2017, 97-98), reads the relation between the two books in a slightly different way, and sees a strong continuity only in Royce’s considerations about the church.

27 Royce ([1913] 1968, 344).

28 Royce ([1913] 1968, Ch. 9).

29 Royce ([1912] 2001 265-266).

30 Royce ([1913] 1968, 307). See also p. 332-333.

more unsophisticated attempts to make sense of ordinary experiences.<sup>31</sup>

Overall, what Royce is after here is a comprehensive *hermeneutic* approach to history and culture, i.e. to the different objectifications of the life of communities that are handed down from generation to generation. I call this approach hermeneutic, quite literally, because it is based on a general theory of interpretation. Only, this theory of interpretation does not have the classical European hermeneutic tradition as its primary source, but the semiotics of Peirce.

Herein lies one of the most original and compelling aspects of *The Problem of Christianity*. The book successfully shows how pragmatist philosophy can be brought to bear on some major problems of hermeneutics, the philosophy of history and the philosophy of culture. It elaborates on Peirce's theory of signs in the direction of an understanding of historical interpretations, while insisting that these historical interpretations should be anchored in the Jamesian dimension of subjective experience.<sup>32</sup>

This is a truly original development of Peirce's philosophy, for it pushes in new directions some insights that Peirce had only seriously articulated within the framework of science. Even Peirce's work as a historian and philosopher of history, although extremely significant in its own right, centres almost exclusively on the history of science. As a result, his account of religion, art and other aspects of human culture is left rather underdeveloped.<sup>33</sup> Why is this so? I think that one way of answering this question would be to say that Peirce was too sceptical of the possibility of bestowing the property of rationality on domains of human discourse that do not follow the scientific ideal. He took the possibility for people to reach consensus by means of disinterested

inquiry as one of the defining features of genuinely rational enterprises. He had, therefore, a hard time investigating those cultural domains that follow different dynamics.

However, Royce's use of Peirce's semiotics has its own problems: problems that are structurally analogous to what I have already said about the issue of inarticulate experience. In particular, Royce does not dwell on the inner differentiation of the concept of sign, and thus neglects a fundamental insight of Peirce's, i.e. the existence of less articulated but nonetheless thoroughly semiotic dimensions of experience. Peirce's famous partition of signs into icons, indices and symbols is meant to capture precisely this insight. This classification would have been very relevant to Royce, as it would have strengthened his contention that all forms of cultural production, from philosophy to art and religion (and indeed, even the thoughts that accompany our ordinary lives), are acts of interpretation or articulation.<sup>34</sup>

In the same vein, insisting on the existence of non-symbolic but, nonetheless, semiotic entities such as icons and indices may also help us formulate more precisely an idea that plays an important role in Joas's theory of articulation. I mean the idea that the articulatory process, as Joas has it, can "begin at both ends." That is, it is not always the case that we first have an inarticulate feeling which we then set out to express in words or actions. Rather, sometimes it is the action, the gesture or the word that comes first, and feeds back into the feeling.<sup>35</sup> But the existence of this feedback effect can only be truly integrated in a theory of articulation if we clarify in which sense a non-verbal entity such as a gesture or an action can be said to "articulate" a feeling – that is, to be a *semiotic translation* of that feeling.

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31 This thought comes out with particular prominence in Royce ([1912] 2001, 120-129).

32 See the emphatic allusion to James in Royce ([1913] 1968, 247): "The concept of the community [...] depends indeed upon an interpretation of the significance of facts, and does not confine itself to mere report of particulars; but it does not ignore the *present varieties of experience*" (my emphasis).

33 See, above all, Peirce (1985).

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34 Compare Joas (2017, 95). It is worth noting that Royce used to mention this aspect of Peirce's thought in his seminars. See Costello (1963).

35 Joas ([2004] 2008, 12).

### 3. History and Teleology

A last significant aspect of Royce's hermeneutics is its relevance to a new assessment of the relation between the historicity of religious traditions and their normative claims of validity (i.e. between "The Historical and the Essential", as the title of one of the book's chapters has it<sup>36</sup>). Indeed, answering this question is the one fundamental goal of *The Problem of Christianity*. Overall, the book aims to understand "how Christianity, considered as a body of religious beliefs, is related to the whole lesson of religious history".<sup>37</sup> Royce's strategy, here, is to look at Christianity neither "as the one true faith" nor "as an outworn tradition to be treated with an enlightened indifference, but as a central, as an intensely interesting, life-problem of humanity."<sup>38</sup>

Once again, the problem is closely related to Royce's criticism of James. While admitting that James's focus on experience helps circumvent a reading of Christianity exclusively in terms of its historical and institutional development, Royce insists that "Christianity is not merely a religion of experience and of sentiment" either.<sup>39</sup> Rather, it is a religion that pivots on tradition. This problem has important methodological implications. Royce is explicitly committed to finding a "union of historical summary with philosophical reflection."<sup>40</sup> He wishes to assess the Christian doctrine "partly in the light of its history, partly in the light of a philosophical study of the meaning and lesson of this history."<sup>41</sup> In this sense, he is once again recapitulating a classical desideratum of hermeneutic theories, i.e. to link a general theory of interpretation with an appreciation of the historical nature of interpretation itself.

In concrete, Royce seeks to strike a middle course between recognising the historical nature of the Christian doctrine and denying that this historical nature is tantamount to utter contingency. Christian religion is based on a number of "essential" ideas about the role of the Church, the moral burden of individuals, and divine plans for redemption.<sup>42</sup> On the one hand, these essential ideas are never directly and intuitively available but only accessible through their historical formation: "as symbols, as parables, as shadows cast by the things of some higher world."<sup>43</sup> But on the other hand, faithful individuals have to read these symbols not as fortuitous historical events but in light of the eternal message that they convey.

A structurally equivalent argument applies to the question whether the Christian doctrine is already entailed *in nuce* in the teaching of Jesus, or whether it needs to be completed by the subsequent theological doctrines that were elaborated by the Pauline church. Royce sides unambiguously with the second position, because the first "miss[es] the meaning of history to a degree unworthy of the highly developed historical sense which should characterize the 'modern man'."<sup>44</sup> The teachings of Jesus are, quite obviously, foundational to the Christian doctrine. But as they stand, they are incomplete, vague and unclear. Therefore, they call for various interpretations that aim at completing and making explicit their ultimate message. But once again, these interpretations are not purely contingent historical facts. Rather, they are the realisation of an eternal message: they "include doctrines which indeed supplement, *but which at the same time in spirit fulfill*, the view of life and of salvation which the original teaching of the Master [...] made known."<sup>45</sup>

Royce is thus advocating a position that, faithful to the tradition of hermeneutics, recognises a fundamental tension between the content of the Christian doctrine

36 See the title of Ch. 15 in Royce ([1913] 1968).

37 Royce ([1913] 1968, 64).

38 Royce ([1913] 1968, 61). Here, it is easy to note a relation to Hans Joas's idea of an "affirmative genealogy." See Joas ([2011] 2013, Ch. 4).

39 Royce ([1913] 1968, 230).

40 Royce ([1913] 1968, 74).

41 Royce ([1913] 1968, 65), where he also speaks of a "synthesis of certain philosophical and of certain historical problems".

42 Royce ([1913] 1968, 70-73).

43 Royce ([1913] 1968, 376).

44 Royce ([1913] 1968, 67-68).

45 Royce ([1913] 1968, 70), my emphasis.

and the historical manners in which that content has been conveyed – or between the “spirit” and the “letter,” to use the classical Pauline formulation. These “conflicts of spirit and letter [...] cannot be understood unless our historical sense is well awakened. On the other hand, they cannot be understood *merely* through a study of history. The values of ideals must be ideally discerned.”<sup>46</sup>

To use a slightly different terminology, making sense of the religious doctrine is neither about *discovering* something outside of history nor about *constructing* an intellectual content from scratch. Rather, it is about putting forth interpretations of historically given symbols (or of historical facts) in light of a value-laden assessment of their meaning. This midway point between discovery and construction, between a neatly a-historical attitude and a historicist form of reductionism, is conceptually equivalent to Royce's concept of articulatory reason, where a certain organic totality is given from the very beginning but needs to be further unfolded and developed.<sup>47</sup>

One may be tempted to push a comparison with Peirce's philosophy of science here. As I have already pointed out, science is the domain of human culture to which Peirce was philosophically most sensitive; and this applies also to his reflections on the relation between historical genesis and a-historical validity of scientific truths. Peirce's “fallibilism” claims that scientific theories are approximations to a truth that can only be seen as the regulative ideal of inquiry, to be reached “in the long run.” An immediate corollary of this idea is that no theory is ever conceivable as absolutely true: “what has been indubitable one day has often been proved on the morrow to be false.”<sup>48</sup> However, what does bestow objective scientific validity on each of the theories that follow one

another in history is the scientific “spirit” in which the inquiry is pursued, and those theories' ability to bring us closer and closer to the truth. Royce formulates a similar idea with regard to the development of religious communities over history. Among all the symbolic tools we deploy to make sense of the eternal teachings of Christianity, none is absolutely valid. But the truth of the religious message shines through the whole chain of historical interpretations.<sup>49</sup>

However, in spite of the relevance of Royce's ideas for an understanding of the link between historicity and interpretation, there remains a weak spot in his dealing with the problem of history: one that Hans Joas has already forcefully indicated. I mean the overly teleological account of historical progress. Royce is adamant that precisely in virtue of reason's ability to mediate between the past and the future, and in furthering the links between different ideas, it is possible to conceive of human history as the “process of the spirit,” in the course of which “to every problem corresponds [...] its solution, to every antithesis its resolution, [...] to every tragedy the atoning triumph which interprets its evil.” This closed and teleological character of history, Joas maintains, is emphatically at variance with one of the main tenets of pragmatism, i.e. the acceptance of the contingent and unforeseeable nature of human affairs.<sup>50</sup>

In closing this paper, I would like to stress that the teleology that characterises Royce's philosophy of history does not necessarily follow from its Peircean premises. On the contrary, it can once again be related to Royce's *failure* to take into account one specific aspect of Peirce's philosophy, namely the tight link between articulate reason and its inarticulate, experiential background.

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46 Royce ([1913] 1968, 79).

47 A contemporary theorist of articulation such as Charles Taylor has emphasised the same idea of articulation striking a middle course between discovery and construction (or invention). See, e.g. Taylor (2016, 146). On Taylor's reading of James, see Taylor (2003).

48 Peirce, “Consequences of Critical Common-Sensism” (1905), in Peirce (1931-1958, par. 5.514).

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49 Cf. the explicit analogy between the scientific community and the Pauline church in Royce ([1913] 1968, 333). One difference, however, would remain: while in the case of science what remains fixed over time is the adherence to a procedure, in the case of religion we can identify the persistence of a positive message, or content.

50 Royce ([1913] 1968, 381); Joas (2017, 104).

Royce's insistence on "the process of the spirit" reveals that he is still at least in part committed to an idea that Peirce himself had rejected some years before, in his review of another book by Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy* (1885). On that occasion, Peirce had used a memorable phrase – the "Outward Clash" of reality – to point to the unforeseeable and irreducible constraints of experience that he saw gravely underestimated in both Royce and Hegel.<sup>51</sup> Now, whether or not Peirce was right in reading Royce's early book through the lenses of Hegel, I believe that the substance of his criticism could still be levelled against *The Problem of Christianity*. Royce's understanding of the relation between interpretation and temporality, for instance, although undoubtedly comparable to certain Peircean ideas, fails to do justice to Peirce's conviction that the future is open and undetermined.<sup>52</sup> By the same token, Royce's understanding of the very concept of interpretation leans toward a conciliatory model that is alien to Peirce. Royce tends to equate every act of interpretation to the operation of producing a third element that mediates between two opposite ideas. But this is to mistake the species with the genus. The Peircean concept of interpretation is a much more general operation than the specific act of comparison and reconciliation.

It is, furthermore, important to realise that "teleology" is said in many ways. While it may be convincingly maintained that all hermeneutic arguments rest on a teleological structure that is embedded in the very act of interpretation, this teleology does not necessarily coincide with the idea of a fixed *telos* in human history. The teleology of hermeneutics descends from the renowned circular structure of interpretation. Every act of interpretation is accomplished in light of a general idea that is pre-existent to the interpretation itself; and conversely,

that general idea is further determined by the single acts of interpretation that are accomplished in its light.

In the same vein, the process of articulation I have been exploring in this paper presupposes the existence of a given element or an unarticulated totality, which orients the process by providing the direction along which articulation will unfold. But there is no internal reason why this hermeneutic or articulatory teleology should be projected onto a super-individual, historical scale – or worse, why it should obliterate the contingent and unforeseeable dimension of human action.

Peirce was a profoundly teleological thinker. His semiotics dictates that the way in which general signs influence the world of material individuals is subsumable under the category of final causation.<sup>53</sup> In particular, his account of intellectual evolution (interestingly called "agapasm", from Greek *agapē*: the same Christian love that Royce puts at the center of his concept of "loyalty") suggests that ideas can exert an "immediate attraction" on individuals and become the final cause to which habit-taking processes are directed.<sup>54</sup> However, this emphasis on final causation is closer to the hermeneutic or articulatory teleology I have just described than to the super-individual teleology that is involved in Royce's philosophy of history. Individuals can feel the force of a philosophical, scientific or religious idea because they are captured by it before they really possess it, like in "the conversion of St. Paul."<sup>55</sup> They thus orient their subsequent efforts to the development of that vaguely-felt idea. However, these dynamics should be understood in the light of another key idea of Peirce's account of intellectual evolution, namely, the reality of contingency and chance, and the consequent impossibility of predicting in advance what the final outcome of individual actions will be.<sup>56</sup>

51 Peirce, "An American Plato" (1885), in Peirce (1984-2010 [henceforth: W], vol. 6, 225): "The capital error of Hegel which permeates his whole system in every part of it is that he almost altogether ignores the Outward Clash."

52 See, e.g., Peirce, "Issues of Pragmaticism" (1905), in EP2, 357-359.

53 Short (2007, Ch. 5).

54 Peirce, "Evolutionary Love" (1892), in W8, 184-205.

55 Peirce, "Evolutionary Love", in W8, 196. Cf. what Joas says on Royce's loyalty in (2017, 92): loyalty is a "Hingabe an eine Sache, die man nicht einfach gewählt habe, sondern die einen ergriffen, die sich einem offenbart habe".

56 This paper is the English version of a German article that will be published in *Idealbildung, Sakralisierung und Religion. Im*

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**SEVERAL REGIMES OF SEMIOTICS: G. DELEUZE'S  
& F. GUATTARI'S RHETORICS OF AFFECTIONS**  
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ABSTRACT: G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (D&G) are challenging and dangerous authors mostly because of their polysemiotic, cunning rhetoric. Main aim of this paper is to explore selected D&G's rhetorical and methodological strategies of analysis of various sign systems connected to the general semiotics that is based on the idea of specific "pragmatics". The aim of this text is to decompose some figurations of D&G's philosophical discourse through theoretical instruments of general semiotics, semiotic theory of reading and theoretical rhetoric with respect to D&G's consideration of affectivity.

**Keywords:** Gilles Deleuze; Félix Guattari; Umberto Eco; Charles Sanders Peirce; Ferdinand de Saussure; Louis Hjelmslev; Semiotics; Rhetoric; Affectivity; Linguistics;

**The plane of non-writing? Rhetorics and figures of schizoanalysis**

First problem every reader faces, when he/she tries to understand D&G is their *non-specific* rhetoric. This rhetoric is affecting and forcing readers to invent *specific* strategy every time when they read/struggle with these ornamentally-written texts. The main challenge is that D&G's rhetorical figures and persuasive nature of their arguments are not constructed in the regime of explanatory discourse and logically formal argumentation. Methodological/rhetorical figures are not based on any standard epistemology. Their rhetoric is analogical to their understanding of world, which is not (if one roughly reduce it) hierarchically built up structure (cf. the "tree"), but much more is the quasi-Nietzschean space of reacting intensities (cf. the "rhizome").

On the other hand is fruitless to mark their philosophy as a kind of shamanism or "pseudo-scientific charlatanry" as some authors did (Sokal, Bricmont 1998; cf. Derrida 2005). Gilles and/or Félix are constructing logic and poetic of its own, sometimes described as thought

of impossible possibility and possible impossibility,<sup>1</sup> which has nothing to do with formal academic discourse (cf. Deleuze, Guattari 1995, 7). The main challenge for the reader is that D&G are not *interpreting* concepts, but *using* them and often reversing (not only revising) their original or standardized meanings, like in the case of 'rhetorical figure' itself (as we will see later).

The second main problem which this text tries to decipher is this: when we speak about Deleuze and Guattari's *translation* or more precisely their *rhetorical deterritorialization and reterritorialization* of various traditional philosophical problems (e. g. as rationalization and reification) into semiotic terms (Holland 1996, 241), what do we mean by these 'semiotic terms'?

It is obvious that D&G are using some terms connected to various paradigms of semiotic (e. g. from C. S. Peirce, C. W. Morris and L. Hjelmslev), but reinvent/abuse them as the parts of their "revolutionary-historical-materialist-semiotic-psychiatry: schizoanalysis" (Holland 1996, 242-243; cf. Brown 2010, 111).

This reflection of their writing/s has one very trivial presupposition: persuasion of D&G's texts is in some way composed – although their philosophical language is difficult, in my point of view their language does not dismantles specific informal argumentative form or at least it does not abandons the effort to persuade a reader. Then less trivial question is: how or in what plane is the persuasive effect of D&G's writings constructed.

Initial (and not satisfying) answer could be that the main structure of their seductive rhetoric, which is infused with many rhetorical surprises, is based on the conception of specific (philosophical) affectivity transcending and transforming boundaries between standard regions of knowledge (e. g. of an 'artist,' 'philosopher,' or 'rhetorician').<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> „Deleuze's work everywhere marks this difficulty of thinking which leads back to its own unthought, to its impossible possibility, towards the gaping of its piecemeal fibres and agitated neurons. This is where the whiteness bursts forth like the call of a sign, of an event tearing everything under the lash of its furious whip” (Martin 1996, 27).

<sup>2</sup> Which we could see as a form of developing trend in philosophy/epistemology of transgression also present in other text of French philosophy of the second part of 20th century, e.g. in the works of G. Bataille, P. Klossowski or M. Blanchot and has its

### Styles, figures and ornaments

We can provisionally call the plane where D&G's are constructing their persuasive effects as the double-bind rhetoric of immanence and immanent rhetoric that is (non)based on nomadic sign regime. As they stated: "[N]omadic waves or flows of deterritorialization go from the central layer to the periphery, then from the new center to the new periphery, falling back to the old center and launching forth to the new" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 74). D&G are not using standard and basic rhetorical figures as metaphors (metonymies, similes or ironies etc.) in a common ('resident's') sense, i.e. as a kind of transcendental ornament exploring the original sense of reality but in quasi-Nietzschean (Deleuze 1996, 3) sense. I. e. as the specific figures that produce process of reality and the reality of process of possible interpretations:

There is no 'like' here, we are not saying 'like an electron, 'like an interaction,' etc. The plane of consistency is the abolition of all metaphor; all that consists is Real. These are electrons in person, veritable black holes, actual organites, authentic sign sequences. It's just that they have been uprooted from their strata, destratified, decoded, deterritorialized, and that is what makes their proximity and interpenetration in the plane of consistency possible. A silent dance. *The plane of consistency knows nothing of differences in level, orders of magnitude, or distances. It knows nothing of the difference between the artificial and the natural. It knows nothing of the distinction between contents and expressions, or that between forms and formed substances; these things exist only by means of and in relation to the strata.*

(Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, 69-70).

What are 'stylistic'<sup>3</sup> correlations of the plane (of rhetoric) of Deleuze's and Guattari's writings? What stratifies their persuasion? As Jean Jacques Lecercle has shown, Deleuze's (and we can add Guattari's) rhetorical style:

various continuation till today (cf. Foust 2010). *You can never get rid of ants.*

<sup>3</sup> If one know, that "[W]hat is called a style can be the most natural thing in the world" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 97).

- a) Is not the style of the "explorer of heights" but the style of "pottering artisan";
- b) Primacy for them is not the "system" but the "plane of immanence";
- c) The interpretation of other authors does not operates as "assertive and critical reading." Deleuze and Guattari are going beyond and inside the authors and reinventing their concepts, similarly to growing rhizome in the tree roots;
- d) Deleuze and Guattari are not "putting theses" but much more showing heterogeneous correlations;
- e) Their style is not classical but baroque (cf. Lecercle 2002, 56).

We can illustrate their strategy in the case of mentioned (rhetorical) 'figures,' which are definitely not connected *only* with technical rhetoric as the theory of proper speaking (*ars oratoria; bene dicendi scientia*). Definitely are not connected *only* with baroque rhetoric of affections (*Figurenlehre*) which deals 'mainly' with 'emotions,'<sup>4</sup> i.e. figures are not the resemblance between musical *harmolody*<sup>5</sup> and movements of the soul, as D&G have stated:

Figures have nothing to do with resemblance or rhetoric but are the condition under which the arts produce affects of stone and metal, of strings and wind, of line and color, on a plane of composition of a universe. Art and philosophy crosscut the chaos and confront it, but it is not the same sectional plane; it is not populated in the same way. In the one there is the constellation of a universe or affects and percepts; and in the other, constitutions of immanence or con-

<sup>4</sup> It is important to say, that affects are not emotions, as B. Massumi (Massumi 1996, 221-222) stated, "an emotion is a subjective content, the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. It is crucial to theorize the difference between affect and emotion. If some have the impression that affect has waned, it is because affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable, and is thus resistant to critique."

<sup>5</sup> Term was coined by Ornette Coleman in the 1970s, see (Hamilton, Rush 2008, 24)

cepts. Art thinks no less than philosophy, but it thinks through affects and percepts.

(Deleuze, Guattari, 1994, 66)

We can see that 'figure' in the sense of D&G's point of view has its own ontological status as a general condition for generating affects. Figure is considered as something that aims beyond the art or creative process and beyond the situational affectivity, in other words beyond something as (rhetorical) 'figure.'

The second thing is that thinking does not belong only to the science and philosophy – we have to extend our thinking about thinking. If we try to understand what D&G wanted to say in this cryptic formulation, we can comprehend this perspective based on a figure of producing affects as an attempt to take the art (i.e. the poetic/creative processes) and philosophy 'seriously.' Seriousness is here articulated in counter-position to general idea of this word in philosophy. Art and creative process in general is not the medium of some intentional or, on the other hand, irrational action, which needs the Philosopher who explains to the artist and to the audience the reason of his/her work. D&G observed that it is important to take seriously the problem of affectivity, which can be articulated or more precisely sensible through art as an important part of philosophy or their original ontology. As they added: "[A]esthetic figures, and the style that creates them, have nothing to do with rhetoric. They are sensations: percepts and affects, landscapes and faces, visions and becomings" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 177).

This radical movement into the sphere of philosophical 'methodology' has nothing to do with any sort of mysticism, psychologism or irrationalism – we are facing the attempt to articulate radical and different perspective on traditional philosophical problems and also the attempt to invent different rhetoric constructed on different epistemological basis; rhetoric through which philosophy can speak and 'feel' about problems in different ways, not based mostly on binary schemes, invention of so called material-semiotic emphasizing the

actant-actor-net relations (Deleuze and Guattari are in Latour's bones<sup>6</sup>) over subject-object perspectives.

### Texts, semiotics and desires of signs and objects

We would like to show here that one of many instruments they use for analysis of these planes of interconnection between explanation and intensity of creative process is semiotics.<sup>7</sup> The first semiotic dictum of D&G's 'method' is that every concept is determined or conditioned by some sort of semiotic/rhetorical web (which is not the same as 'sociohistorical constructivism' based on structural linguistic/anthropological theories, which D&G refuses). Philosophical concepts are not speaking by neutral language (although they often desire it), i.e. "the rhetorical criterion in philosophy is undeniably sound and fury" (Descombes 1980, 3), as D&G noted:

First, concepts are and remain *signed*: Aristotle's substance, Descartes's *cogito*, Leibniz's monad, Kant's condition, Schelling's power, Bergson's duration [*durée*]. But also, some concepts must be indicated by an extraordinary and sometimes even barbarous or shocking word, whereas others make do with an ordinary, everyday word that is filled with harmonics so distant that it risks being imperceptible to a nonphilosophical ear. Some concepts call for archaisms, and others for neologisms, shot through with almost crazy etymological exercises: etymology is like a specifically philosophical athleticism. In each case there must be a strange necessity for these words and for their choice, like an element of style.

(Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 7-8)<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See (Iliadis 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. (Deleuze 1995, 143), (Charvát, Karfa 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. "The developmental or organizational principle does not appear in itself, in a direct relation with that which develops or is organized: There is a transcendent compositional principle that is not of the nature of sound, that is not "audible" by itself or for itself. This opens the way for all possible interpretations. Forms and their developments, and subjects and their formations, relate to a plan(e) that operates as a transcendent unity or hidden principle. The plan(e) can always be described, but as a part aside, as ungiven in that to which it gives rise. Is this not how even Balzac, even Proust, describe their work's plan(e) of organization or development, as though in a meta-language? Is not Stockhausen also obliged to describe the structure of his sound forms as existing 'alongside' them, since he is unable to make it audible? Life plan(e), music plan(e), writing plan(e), it's all the same: a plan(e) that cannot be given as such, that can only be inferred from the forms it develops

The *role of the reader* is then, in accordance to the part of their general 'program,' presented in *What is Philosophy?* Reader, despite various warnings from D&G,<sup>9</sup> has to invent the conceptual (or rather semiotic) strategy (Which signs/symptoms of the text are important? Why these signs have these and these effects? Why these signs are outrageous?). Reader has to sketch (not draw) out the map - how to approach divergent ideas enciphered in language full of voluntary contradictions, excesses and humour (cf. Williams 2008, 14).

If we follow D&G's 'method,' one can try to prepare some space for "meeting of the intensities;" the space for exploring multiplicity of distances between readers and their texts. This attempt can be signified as typical ("tree-based") philosophical disease, fundamental neurosis of mankind known as *Interpretosis* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 127).

The situation of the interpret is very similar to the situation when someone tries 'to interpret' Cage's *Silence*, or in the field of philosophy to explore and 'explain' e.g. texts of late F. Nietzsche or novels of F. Kafka: firstly; readers are not facing the standard philosophical texts, they are facing speaking of silence, philosophical "poems" or the *Castles* (or the Dens), which have many entrances and many exits (Deleuze, Guattari 1986). We could glimpse the resemblance between these labyrinths/situations and texts of D&G in two ways.

### 'Something' as semiotic counterproof

First (a) resemblance with this *Castle* is methodological and was mentioned above - reader is facing the "constant betrayal" of the subversive rhetoric, bringing into reading "shocking" or even "barbarous" words.<sup>10</sup> There

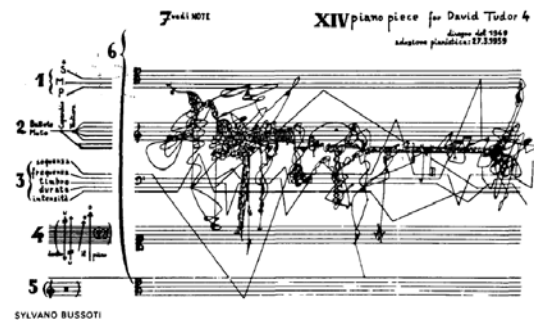
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and the subjects it forms, since it is for these forms and these subjects" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 266).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. "The present form is expressed thus: we have concepts! The Greeks, however, did not yet have them and contemplated them from afar, or sensed them: the difference between Platonic reminiscence and Cartesian innateness or the Kantian a priori derives from this" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 103).

<sup>10</sup> This line was strongly developed in (Vitanza 1997); cf. (Lauer, Pender 2004, 106): "Vitanza explained that instead of consen-

is no 'authority of Author,'<sup>11</sup> no foundational binary opposition (e.g. between subject and object but also there is no foundational opposition of 'tree and rhizome') or standard logic of argumentation. We have to meet and take seriously the border-line images like Bussotti's musical calligraphy (which opens first plateau<sup>12</sup>):



The 'reader' (and there is no such thing as 'general reader' but necessarily the *signed* reader) is in the situation, that 'his abstract machine of reading' has to 'fabricate' his positions and concepts toward these divergent labyrinths. When we are considering anything from works of D&G we must face the fact, that they are distorting reader's pre-formed knowledge of many 'standard' philosophical concepts. D&G are often using mostly dangerous and not very common philosophi-

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sus, Deleuze and Guattari focus on 'outsider thought,' 'nomad thought,' and 'schizo-dissensus'."

<sup>11</sup> "Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 3).

<sup>12</sup> "The score of *Piece Four* of Sylvano Bussotti's *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor* is the most important image in *A Thousand Plateaus*. It serves as a prefatory image not only to the Rhizome plateau, but also to the work as a whole. It functions as the book's musical score, guiding readers in their performance of the text. Embracing John Cage's graphism and aleatory practices, Bussotti created his own 'aerial' new music [...]. The visual elements of *Piece Four* include a deterritorialization of the standard piano score, a diagram of the composition's abstract machine, and a drawing that Bussotti had produced ten years before writing *Five Piano Pieces for David Tudor*. The drawing itself is a rhizomic artwork, with details that echo visual motifs throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. The superimposition of the drawing on the deterritorialized framework of the standard piano score conjoins the visible and the audible, faciality and the refrain, in a single artefact" (Bogue 2014, 470).

cal/rhetorical technique as humor, which can lead philosopher to certain death.<sup>13</sup>

But there is still 'something,' which affects the reader to fight with D&G's and reader's own concepts. What is this 'something?' We can analyze it from two perspectives: first (i) is processual: 'something' is *silent rhetorical dancing on the edge of the razor* – constant challenge to the reader to invent; texts of D&G are kind of a strong affirmation of the will to invent (not of the will to interpret, not of the will to knowledge, not of the will to power), desire to speak (or to write): "[P]hilosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1994, 2). Second perspective (ii) is semiotic in Peircean sense: D&G's texts are situated as objects, which affects their reader to produce specific semiosis. Which is, at the first glance, quite trivial.

We can develop this idea and borrow some thoughts from U. Eco's *Kant and the Platypus* from the chapter "1.1. Semiotics and the Something." Eco is dealing here with the question "What is that something that induces us to produce signs?" (Eco 2000, 12). As Eco noted:

Beyond a doubt the only person who made this problem the very foundation of his theory—semiotic, cognitive, and metaphysical all at the same time—was Peirce. A Dynamical Object drives us to produce a representamen, in a quasi-mind this produces an Immediate Object, which in turn is translatable into a potentially infinite series of interpretants and sometimes, through the habit formed in the course of the interpretative process, we come back to the Dynamical Object, and we make something of it.

(Eco 2000, 13).

D&G's rhetoric is sharing this perspective with Peircean semiotics considered in this way: on the first hand, text itself has to work as an object which is 'kicking' the reader, who is inventing potentially infinite series of interpretants and sometimes, through the habit formed in the course of the interpretative process, reader comes back to the Dynamical Object, but if we stress the Eco's

idea on the field of D&G's thoughts, these objects are not any 'things,' but generative, immanent processes. On the second hand, philosophy has to deal with this affective/pragmatic dimension of 'something' as the (non)base of philosophical thought.

This inherent ambiguity (of betraying reader and pointing on affectivity of the text and thought) is the advantage of their specific rhetoric, which is considering itself as non-specific.<sup>14</sup> This rhetoric of suddenness, self-subversive, Cynical writing which often reminds arrogant anecdotes, is guided by leading principle that there is no leading principle: and if anyone argues that this is an evident self-refuting paradox - let's distract (kick) him/her with disruptive (shocking, barbarous) effect (with some "*sinsignum*"), e.g. with the humorous abstraction as a plucked fowl<sup>15</sup> (shocking sign works as the 'antidote or counterproof'). Because "paradox appears as a dismissal of depth, a display of events at the surface, and a deployment of language along this limit. Humour is the art of surface, which is opposed to the old irony, the art of depths and heights. The Sophists and Cynics had already made humour a philosophical weapon against Socratic irony [...]" (Deleuze 1990, 9).

If someone says, that D&G are misinterpreting Freud, Peirce, Saussure or Hjelmslev - D&G just say: So be it, you did not get our position. The trick is that we have no 'position,' we are just speaking from various positions and switching between them if it is necessary – or if it is not necessary, figure of our writing is not condition of the general law – our aim is to provoke thought, because we adopted the idea of potentially infinite series of interpretants and also the idea that objects, which are demarcated with them, are not structured things, but multiplying processes of creative intensities (and it has nothing to do with 'deconstruction'). Final and first message to the reader is: *act!*

D&G are not a 'paradigm,' they are not an 'example' – if we borrow vocabulary from T. Kuhn – they are not:

<sup>13</sup> In the Nietzschean/Deleuzean point of view, the illustration is here the Plato's Socrates and his irony based on depth of metaphysical resentment. Cf. (Švantner 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. G. Lambert's/G. Deleuze conception of „non-philosophy“ (Lambert 2002).

<sup>15</sup> See (Deleuze 1990, 135).

"normalized" scientists, one cannot write a textbook about them. And in as much they are inconsistent and ironical, they are in the same way inspiring (in affecting their readers). Philosophy based on these position creating 'something' (which is kicking reader to invent/act) as a disturbing blind or scrawled map similar to mentioned 'aesthetic figures.' Silent/screaming maps as J. Cage's 4'33'', S. Bussoti's "music sheet" or F. Kafka's *Castle* can be put in contrast to standard and strictly hierarchized and arranged of normative and normal(ized) knowledge – as the map of e.g. Parsonian system theory, structural linguistic, psychoanalysis or even standard scripture of F. Carulli's *Rondo*. These objects can show us some unseen paths and lines for various escapes: can show us seemingly natural linearity of the 'lines.' Like e.g. the *Treachery of the Images* or the gap between musical sheet and performance or sociological theory based on the form of Neoplatonism built on foundational differences.<sup>16</sup>

#### Distance of the deciphering reader

Second (b) resemblance is 'figurative' (*metaleptic*) and is entangled with the first, perhaps as the symptom of the first case, because we can interpret through the instruments of semiotics once again. Reader is maintained in 'permanent distance' through the strategies that turns

<sup>16</sup> "[...] feature of Parsons' development of sociological theory was the introduction of the pattern variables. These patterns refer to the structure of role-definitions which are claimed to confront action as a system of conflicting choices. To take one example which is central to Parsons, a doctor, while following a professional-ethical code in the examination of a child, treats the child in a universalistic, neutral, and specific fashion. The doctor is, in principle, indifferent to the child's particular social characteristics (lower class, white, Catholic), because the doctor is guided by a professional interest in the child's symptoms. The child's mother, by contrast, is characterized by her particularistic, emotional and diffuse relation to the child. Parsons wants therefore to indicate in terms of values and actions the very significant differences between the family and the professional situation. They exhibit very different pattern variables, which in fact are related to the famous distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, which were first systematically described by Tönnies (1912). The pattern variables are claimed to be universal and inescapable: they are affectivity v. affective neutrality; self v. collective orientation; universalism v. particularism; achievement v. ascription; specificity v. diffuseness." (Turner 1991, xxvi).

him not to the 'fixation of his belief' but to persist in the agonistic or even polemic situation. To the situation when one must ask and *act*.

We can see here, why some authors talk about D&G's version of pragmatism<sup>17</sup> (and perhaps that is why the pragmatics is necessarily presupposed by syntactics and semantics<sup>18</sup>). This shift is possible when we adopt the Nietzsche's idea (which we can find in ancient rhetoric, as Lyotard noted<sup>19</sup>) that figurative (metaphorical or semiotic) side of language is not something that covers thought, but is its very source and base. This position is not some kind of language idealism or linguistics structuralism, but is much more close (if we stress this reflection) again to Peircean view, that language is a part of more general process of semiosis that incorporates speaking, acting and being.<sup>20</sup> In the perspective of D&G is semiosis process of becoming.

We can conclude that the cipher of D&G's philosophy is not leading us to deciphering chaos to universal order, like in the various forms of 'Platonism' where philosophy/dialectic is entrusted to 'decipher' the world of appearances and to find the ideal 'result' in perfect and eternal Being, which can bring up the idea of perfect philosophical language. Dialectic does not lead to the situation of enciphering/abolition of rhetoric. But it is important to say that there is no point in searching for foundational oppositions as universal/particular. In D&G's semiotic processualism the cipher leads to questioning/analyzing specific sign regimes/mixtures, which are facilitating and are facilitated through organi-

<sup>17</sup> See (Bowden, Bignal, Patton 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 86; 101).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. (Lyotard 1988, 25-26).

<sup>20</sup> D&G are often stigmatized by the mark of structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism or even post-linguistic - but they have almost nothing in common with semiology, which has guided early perspectives of all 'shamans of structuralism': M. Foucault in his historical epistemology, R. Barthes in analysis of culture and literature, J. Lacan in interpreting Freud and C. Lévi-Strauss in the anthropological method of research. I think, that the main problem is rooted in the history of French semiotics or to be more precise in French semiology and in neglecting Peircean tradition of semiotics in so called structuralism. It is not a coincidence that D&G are using more general conception of sign derived from C. S. Peirce, J. von Uexküll and in some specific way from hero whose be the one who could unified semiotics (at least in U. Eco's *Theory of Semiotics*) - L. Hjelmslev.

zations (diagrams), and thus allows ciphers to be deciphered.<sup>21</sup>

### Deleuze and Guattari against semiology: Hjelmslevian and Peircean Primacy

We prepared the roots for rhizomatic (dis)connections, we prepared the space for meeting the intensities of semiotic conceptions of D&G, who brought new perspectives into the discourse of French philosophy and semiology of that time. The main shift lies in their adoption of some ideas from C. S. Peirce (or rather C. W. Morris),<sup>22</sup> and re-invention of some ideas from Hjelmslev's glossematics (which can be considered as general semiotics).<sup>23</sup>

D&G have adopted nonstandard (for given intellectual environment) intellectual toolbox: French philosophical discourse about semiotics at that time was mostly guided by semiology strongly derived from F. de Saussure and 'early' R. Barthes. In France Peirce and his general semiotic was known for a long time only through very fragmentary, and in many ways misinterpretative/creative, works of R. Jakobson and J. Derrida, and from some remarks we can find in E. Benveniste's works.<sup>24,25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> It is obvious, that this is Foucauldian or archaeological/genealogical reading of this problem. Cf. "It is perhaps characteristic of secret languages, slangs, jargons, professional languages, nursery rhymes, merchants' cries to stand out less for their lexical inventions or rhetorical figures than for the way in which they effect continuous variations of the common elements of language. They are chromatic languages, close to a musical notation. A secret language does not merely have a hidden cipher or code still operating by constants and forming a sub-system; it places the public language's system of variables in a state of variation" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 97; 175).

<sup>22</sup> We mean the conception of syntactics, semantics and pragmatics, which is not analogical to Peirce's ideas of speculative grammar, critical logic and speculative rhetoric (methodeutic). Cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 586.

<sup>23</sup> For analysis of fragments one can find in D&G see (Williams 2015), for interpretation Hjelmslev's glossematics as general semiotics see (Trabant 1981).

<sup>24</sup> Even today, when Peirce studies has advanced considerably since its earliest days, many nonsenses persists and Peirce still sometimes misinterpreted e. g. as the "inventor" of absurd antimetaphysical doctrine based on simple scheme of icon, index and symbol. For Peirce receptions in France see e. g. (Lizska 1993).

<sup>25</sup> We are still able to find many people, who think that is

### C. S. Peirce

Of course that D&G were not the scholars we can mark as Peirceans. We can find in Peirce's texts many incompatible and contradictory ideas to D&G's perspective, as e.g. many aspects of Peirce's evolutionary metaphysics or the ideas on final and ultimate interpretants (cf. Short 2007, 57-58). We could even say that D&G are in many ways very far from his conception of meta-logic/semeiotic, sign classification and sign taxonomy, although Deleuze is using Peirce's categories of firstness, secondness and thirdness in *Cinema* books, and some distant ideas (sign as correlate of social convention, behaviour and acting<sup>26</sup>) from Peirce's philosophy can be found in *Proust and Signs*.<sup>27</sup> As J. Williams has stated, "for Peirce, the practice of thought in relation to signs is not an apprenticeship but rather a technical art that I have defined as an art governed by a method and a set of techniques" (Williams 2014, 48). As we stated above, this Peirce's pursuing of method (in the case of Peirce consisting of pan-logical view of the universe<sup>28</sup>) is not the way that D&G followed, because they built their own

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enough to say magic word "semiotics", which means something vague about signs and significations and this is what semiotics is. Cf. e.g. Massumi and his unclear distinction between semi-otic and semantic (Massumi 1996, 286)..

<sup>26</sup> Cf. (Smith 1996, 31): "In Proust, these signs no longer simply indicate contrary sensible qualities, as in

Plato, but instead testify to a much more complicated network of implicated orders of signs: the frivolous signs of society life, the deceptive signs of love, the sensuous signs of the material world, and the essential signs of an, which will come to transform the others."

<sup>27</sup> Cf. (Lecerclé 2002, 82): "Deleuze, so he claims in various interviews, discovered linguistics through Guattari (and did not like it). It is interesting, therefore, to go back to his earlier works to see his prelinguistic concept of sign at work. We do not have to go very far. He is, after all, the author of a strong reading of Proust entitled *Proust et les signes*. The concept of sign used in this book claims to be derived from Proust himself, and has nothing to do with the Saussurean sign: Deleuze deals with Proust as he deals with philosophers he extracts a problem from his works, and formulates the problem in a concept. In a nutshell, the concept of sign thus produced is a concept of generalised, as opposed to strictly linguistic, signs. That there is more to signs than the strictly linguistic variety is obvious to anyone who has read Peirce, whom Deleuze relies on in his later theory of the 16 varieties of signs, expounded in his books on the cinema. Here, however, the developments, being directly inspired by Proust, are more idiosyncratic, although the attitude towards the multiplicity of sign-types is the same."

<sup>28</sup> Cf. (Hausman 1993).

cosmology on deterritorializing and reterritorializing Peirce's concepts.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, D&G adopted two main points form Peirce:

a) Sign is not purely mental unit (connecting concept and the acoustic image) and we cannot subsume various forms of signs (e. g. signs produced by animals) under one underlying, human culture-centered system of structuralism. One reason is that this system, even if it looks like, is not abstract enough or is not general enough, but Peirce's classification and taxonomy is, because it incorporates the sphere of *acting* and also the sphere of *affectivity*. In other words: semiology and semeiotic are different regimes of signs.<sup>30</sup>

b) Sign is determined or affected by its object and affecting its recipient: the sign, considered as the primary element of sensation, riots the soul, renders it perplexed, as if the encountered sign were the bearer of a problem (Smith 1996, 32). Sign-production, *semiosis*, is not belonging only to human, but also to other spheres of the universe (animals, plants, mushrooms, machines, etc.); this general production of signs based on coopera-

tion and confrontation of intensities, which can be considered as (quali)signs or can be represented as more complex (legi)signs, permeates universe.<sup>31</sup> In D&G's methodology symptoms of this universal semiosis of intensities are "refrains" (*ritournelles*), which structure the affectivity with respect to given organization. As W. Smith described this process in post-Kantian (i. e. Peircean) fashion, "in empirical experience to be sure, we know only intensities or forms of energy that are already localized and distributed in extended space: intensity is inseparable from a process of extension that relates it to extended space and subordinates it to the qualities that fill space. But the corresponding tendency is no less true, since every extensity necessarily envelops or implicates within itself the intensity of which it is an effect. A 'sign', in its second aspect, is an intensity produced by the asymmetry of differential relations, whereas a 'quality' appears when an intensity reaches a given order or magnitude and these relations are organized in consciousness" (Smith 1996, 36).

#### Ferdinand de Saussure

Why D&G refuse semiology and Saussure's ideas and pick up some ideas from Peirce, Morris and Hjelmlev? First reason was political: Saussure was considered as founding father of various forms of structuralism, and D&G's 'reading' of Saussure is in debt to this tradition. Although for Saussure was not most important task to create general theory of all signs,<sup>32</sup> in this point of view he was considered as the main scholar who brought the theory of signs in the center of humanities. Saussure was and often is interpreted<sup>33</sup> as the scholar who was not interested in signs which are motivated by some "external objects", because these objects makes no sense in

<sup>29</sup> Cf. (Vellodi 2014, 80): „For both Peirce and Deleuze the diagram is the agent of the construction of reality. But there are two distinct conceptions of reality implicated here. For Peirce - committed logician and practicing scientist - reality is that mode of being asserted by a true proposition, regardless of what any actual mind thinks of it; reality is logical truth, independent of the actual experience or thought that is subject to empirical or dogmatic error. For Deleuze, in contrast, reality is that mode of being of material existence, in contrast to (logical) possibility. Furthermore the Deleuzian project is oriented not towards an already existing reality, whether actual or conceived, but towards the construction of 'new' reality that does not exist yet. So whilst for Peirce the construction of reality entails the acquisition of logical truths through a process of refining thought (through diagrams), for Deleuze construction involves the production of a new reality (through diagrams). Whereas for Peirce the function of a diagram is to aid thought's process of approaching logical truth; for Deleuze, diagrammatic construction is not grounded on what can—according to present criteria—be deemed truthful, but rather is directed towards the production of new values "not inspired by truth" and beyond any established measure.“

<sup>30</sup> It is important to say that there was a tendency, and we can trace it in many contemporary works, consider Peirce as the scholar who only added "object" to the signifier and signified and has invented putative theory of icon, index and symbol, or as the inventor of unlimited semiosis which is completely wrong in the case of sign theory and very unprecise in the case of theory of semiosis.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. (CP 5.448).

<sup>32</sup> Most important task was to discover general principles of linguistics and in the center of Saussure's interest was naturally the linguistic sign. Undeveloped science, called semiology could provide meta-theoretical tool for analyzing language as the totality of semiological facts, but in the *Course* is the semiology still more 'predicted' than explained, see (CLG, 34).

<sup>33</sup> See e. g. (Klinkenberg 2001).



his formal analysis of system of language where the primer is the "systemic motivation" (Thibault 1997, 85). It is necessary to say that there is a gap between the wide French adoption of some Saussure's thought inherited in his *Course* and interpretation of Saussure in the field of general linguistics. We can find many 'philological' commentaries, which are not only repeating encyclopedically layered simplified mantras, but trying to understand Saussure's work in its complexity. E.g. Saussure was not completely blind to motivation of signs in language and social aspects of communication (whole *Course* can be read as the project of construction of socio-semiotic theory).<sup>34</sup> But it is also true that Saussure's partial neglecting of signs motivated by 'outer' objects is excluding non-language signs and can cause some philosophical problems (which were not much important for the linguist) in wider application of Saussure's theory in philosophy and other social sciences. D&G's criticism in *Anti-Oedipus* and in the plateau called "Linguistic postulates" opens some of these problems and makes them visible.

In Saussure's view a sign is (on the one side) purely formal analytical category and is articulated through the negative relation to other signs in given semiological structure. On the other side sign is the instrument for communication and precisely in this aspect its function and value is positive. Sign is the unit which structure is arbitrary<sup>35</sup> articulated dyadic relation of signifier and

signified (Saussure 1962, 26). If Saussure describes sign in its quasi-empirical function, then the sign is psychological and internal unit coined by community of language users: "[T]hat is, signs are arbitrary when they acquire the status of general types in a system of value-producing relations. Both phonologically and grammatically they are replicable across many different occasions of use. Sign types do not, therefore, have a one-off status. They are fully generic, both phonologically and grammatically" (Thibault 1997, 280). As Saussure clearly stated; the one part of the sign is not a spoken word but an acoustic image, or image of acoustic sound which is 'chosen' through given code of language to be conventionally connected to the second part, which is the concept. As we can see, it has nothing in common with Peirce's symbol, which is the sign "embodying the 'ratio,' or reason of the Object that has emanated from it" (CP 2. 230).

The analogical reduction led Saussure to distinguish between two analytical dimensions of language (*langage*) in general: distinguish between language/system/code (*langue*) and speech/realization of parts of this system (*parole*). The aim was to build pure principles of linguistics in most reductive and scientific way; language in general has countless manifestations. If we want to analyze it in some sensible and scientific way, we have to reduce the field we are exploring. We have to reduce *langage* to two analytical dimensions and also we have to reduce the method of linguistics and define it in contraposition to other traditions examining language itself. According to D&G these could be *linguistic postulates*, but are not as 'fascist' as they said.

D&G's main problem with linguistics is that for it there is no need to bring up some affectivity or object-

<sup>34</sup> As did (Thibault 1997).

<sup>35</sup> The sign, as an abstract type, is outside meaning-making, *in this sense*, it is unmotivated. "In this perspective, signs cannot be motivated by any appeal to criteria which lie outside the province of *langue* for the simple reason that an analytical abstraction *per se* does not have a context-specific meaning. Only actual, concrete uses of signs do. Nor can the individual, by an act of free will or free choice, motivate the systemic relationship between signifier and signified. If this were so, then it would introduce an individualistic principle of anarchy and irrationality into the mechanism of the language system. Carried to its logical conclusion, this would subvert the systemic basis of *langue*. Consequently, no meaning would be possible because there would be no socially shareable criteria for making meaning in and through acts of *parole*. The notion of arbitrariness means, then, that the relationship between signifier and signified is established by *systemic*, rather than naturalistic, criteria. This means that a given sign type is recognizable as a semiotically salient difference in a given language (or other semiological) system. A signifier which

makes a difference in this way has a regular, patterned relationship with its signified(s) (Thibault 1997, 278). Cf. (Saussure 1962, 101): "The word *arbitrary* also calls for comment. It must not give the idea that the signifier depends on the free choice of the speaking subject (we will see further below that it is not in the power of the individual to change anything in a sign once it is established in a linguistic group); we mean that it is *unmotivated*, that is, arbitrary in relation to the signified, with which it has no natural attachment in reality."

motivated signs, which are most important for Peirce (at least as Eco noted above). From Saussure's purely analytical view,<sup>36</sup> consideration of these signs simply does not make a sense in his formal system. From Saussure's perspective we cannot construct any scientific method or system based on analysis of e.g. onomatopoeic expressions.<sup>37</sup> If we borrow here pseudo-Peircean language (Peirce has never considered dyadic structure of type and token, but triadic structure of tone, type and token), we cannot build the *science* of language on *tokens*, but only on *types*.

But what about the *tone*? What about signs of quality, or if we stress this idea further, what about signs of affections? As Peirce wrote: "A mere presentment may be a sign. When the traditional blind man said he thought scarlet must be something like the sound of a trumpet, he had caught its blatancy very well; and the sound is certainly a presentment, whether the color is so or not. Some colors are called gay, others sad. The sentiment of tones is even more familiar; that is, tones are signs of visceral qualities of feeling" (CP 1. 313).

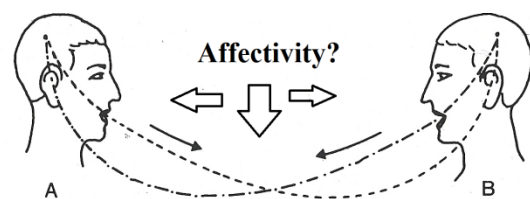
Structural linguistic is on one side 'omitting' these signs as something not important for formal analysis of language, but on the other side this exclusion brings problems if we want to consider this reading of Saussure's conception of sign as the base for any general semiotics. D&G are developing this line of criticism of formal analysis inherited in this fashion of interpretation of Saussure, but from another perspective. Firstly, they

<sup>36</sup> As (Thibault 1997, ch. 3) has shown we can find three views on system of language in Saussure: as a system of pure values, which is often taken as the main one, or at least most interpreted one; system of regular lexicogrammatical patterns; system of typical meaning making practices.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. (Saussure 1962: 102): "As for authentic onomatopoeia (those such as *glou-glou*, *tic-tac*, etc.), not only are they not very numerous, but their choice is already to some extent arbitrary, since they are only the approximate and already half conventional imitation of certain noises (compare the French *ouaoua* ['bow-wow'] and the German *wauwau*). Furthermore, once introduced into the language system, they are more or less entrained in the phonetic, morphological, etc. evolution which other words are subjected to (cf. *pigeon*, from the Latin vulgate *pipio*, itself derived from onomatopoeia): obvious proof that they have lost something of their initial character in order to take on that of the linguistic sign in general, which is unmotivated."

see the problem in unacknowledged postulation of "coded gap": to favor the signifier over signified leads the structuralism to prefer static system (where the signified finds itself by nature subordinated to the signifier) over the generic process. The static structure thus overcodes the great 'game' of language, which is every time brought into the idea of the relation between the 'speaking machine' and the environment (with its intensities), and the concrete regime of signs, which is limiting the given language situation and also opening various lines of escape. Saussure is considered as the author of a conception where the figures are "defined as effects of the signifier itself; the formal elements of the signifier determined in relation to a phonic substance on which writing even confers a secret privilege" (Deleuze, Guattari 1983, 242). This is also the moment where D&G are switching from Saussure to Hjelmslev, because they consider his theory of sign free of dominance of signifier (and we will examine it later).

Let's get back to the main topic, to the question if we can trace some signs of theory of affectivity in Saussure's semiology. Only one place where we enter to the plane of affectivity is in the simple circle-process of communication – when someone hear some articulated sound, which can start a process of understanding and speaking (cf. Thibault 1997, 294<sup>38</sup>).



Affectivity, as a passage between effects, is certain type of the effect, but for Saussure could be considered as secondary and not important for formal analysis.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. (Ibid., 337): "Acts of *parole* are, then, dually grounded in relation to (1) the phenomena of the world which are selectively contextualized as signified substance and (2) the bodily (kinetic) processes of phonation and gesticulation which are selectively contextualized as signifying substance. In the specifically linguistic sense, this may involve the use of deictics or indexicals to specify the relevance of particular entities, events and so on to the interaction, as well as particular bodily and affective states of the speaker-listener."

So, why was this theory marked by D&G as not abstract enough? We can sketch some answers:

- a) (Questionable) Exclusion of any language pragmatic and game processes of language.
- b) Incapacity to fully explain (pseudo/not strictly in Peircean sense) "indexical signs" (as we discussed in the excursus above about Peirce/Eco)
- c) Problem of dominance of signifier and problem of absolute and relative arbitrariness of the dyadic sign, which is redundant in 'double articulated' Hjelmslev's glossematic.

There are two other main problems concerning the method of linguistic structuralism described in "Linguistic Postulates." First problem is political again and is connected with notion of power: linguistic is not the set of neutral rules (neutral systems of signifiers), but the set of semiotic or more precisely "semiotic" orders forcing to listen. Important units for analysis are not phonemes, but short sentences, enouncements organizing life: *act*. "'Ready?' 'Yes.' 'Go ahead.' Words are not tools, but we give children language, pens, and notebooks as we give workers shovels and pickaxes. A rule of grammar is a sign of power before it is a syntactical sign" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 76). For D&G language is a 'chain of semiosis' – which is articulated as a system leading from one enouncement to another one, also segmenting the individuals moving them from one verdict to another. The second problem, which is more interesting, is methodological. In the critical perspective of D&G linguistic structuralism is wrong when is considering itself as speaking from some neutral zone of language - i.e. discourse of linguistic is itself a set of orders, regime of signs among others and is 'wrong' (in the D&G's perspective of pure abstraction) when someone conceives language as a code and as the condition of possibility for all explanation, and enouncements as communication of information. However D&G detours to different field - to Morris' semiotics which has not much or nothing common with structuralism. D&G are mixing

C. W. Morris (and his reductive reading of C. S. Peirce) to criticize a Saussure in very strange way – they are postulating or inscribing to linguistic ontological hierarchy, that every linguistic is going in direction from syntactics through semantics to pragmatics. It is not surprising that D&G reverse this order (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, 76).

In the defense of Saussure it is important to say, that he never fully distinguishes between social and individual plane: relation is more 'dialectical' or processual than D&G recognized. We can distinguish between language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*), because they are not essentially 'social' and 'individual' as D&G read it, they are general analytical categories – and there is not a paradox – there is praxis – after Saussure we can study the change in the grammar of German language in 19<sup>th</sup> century in our office same as we can study the language inside the community. On the other side, it is true that if we want to study language in community we can't subordinate it to prescribed code – but even Saussure was naive to think in this way.

#### Louis Hjelmslev

The second part of D&G's conception of 'general semiotics' contains the work of Louis Hjelmslev<sup>39</sup> from whom

<sup>39</sup> And his *Prolegomena to a theory of language* (Hjelmslev 1963). As D&G has pointed out: "Louis Hjelmslev's linguistics stands in profound opposition to the Saussurian and post-Saussurian undertaking. Because it abandons all privileged reference. Because it describes a pure field of algebraic immanence that no longer allows any surveillance on the part of a transcendent instance, even one that has withdrawn. Because within this field it sets in motion its flows of form and substance, content and expression. Because it substitutes the relationship of reciprocal precondition between expression and content for the relationship of subordination between signifier and signified. Because there no longer occurs a double articulation between two hierarchized levels of language, but between two convertible deterritorialized planes, constituted by the relation between the form of content and the form of expression. Because in this relation one reaches figures that are no longer effects of a signifier, but schizzes, points-signs, or flows-breaks that collapse the wall of the signifier, pass through, and continue on beyond. Because these signs have crossed a new threshold of deterritorialization. Because these figures have definitively lost the minimum conditions of identity that defined the elements of the signifier itself. Because in Hjelmslev's linguistics the order of the elements is secondary in relation to the axiomatic of flows and figures. Because the money model in the point-sign, or in the figure-break stripped of its identity,

Deleuze and Guattari borrowed many concepts and also ignored many of them. They 'reinvented' them in the way that has not much to do with Hjelmslev's original texts. First of all it is important to say that Hjelmslev's theory of sign has nothing in common with Peirce's semiotics, and D&G's ideas are not synthesizing these two authors but intentionally (ab)uses them. Hjelmslev in many ways developed and reinterpreted Saussure's ideas about general science of signs (*sémiologie*), which is not based only on structural, but also on immanent (and purely algebraic)<sup>40</sup> linguistics. Hjelmslev described this doctrine as glossematics and its main goal was to analyze main glossematic object, main sign system - language (*langue*). This 'language' Hjelmslev called "semiotic," and is analyzed through the scientific meta-sign-structure - "semiology."<sup>41</sup>

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having now only a floating identity, tends to replace the model of the game. In short, Hjelmslev's very special position in linguistics, and the reactions he provokes, seem to be explained by the following: that he tends to fashion a purely immanent theory of language that shatters the double game of the voice-graphism domination; that causes form and substance, content and expression to flow according to the flows of desire; and that breaks these flows according to points-signs and figures schizzes. Far from being an overdetermination of structuralism and of its fondness for the signifier, Hjelmslev's linguistics implies the concerted destruction of the signifier, and constitutes a decoded theory of language about which one can also say—an ambiguous tribute—that it is the only linguistics adapted to the nature of both the capitalist and the schizophrenic flows: until now, the only modern - and not archaic - theory of language."

<sup>40</sup> Cf. (Hjelmslev 1963, 106): "The theoretician's main task is to determine by definition the structural principle of language, from which can be deduced a general calculus in the form of a typology whose categories are the individual languages, or rather the individual language types. All possibilities must here be foreseen, including those that are virtual in the world of experience, or remain without a 'natural' or 'actual' manifestation and (Trabant 1981, 96): "As a science of general sign structures, glossematics is a science of theoretical possibilities and not of manifest realities. Hjelmslev's view of glossematics as a type of algebra should be viewed in this way, for like algebra, glossematics is a discipline of possible theoretical constructs that do not have to be made manifest in particular substances" (Deleuze, Guattari 1983, 242-243).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. (Trabant 1981, 106): "Hjelmslev relates substance analysis to the glossematic analysis of the pure forms of language and signs in a complicated way, namely via a third-level sign structure, the so-called *metasemiology*. Linguistics-glossematics as a scientific metalanguage, whose object-language is a sign system, is a *second-level* sign structure similar to the connotative sign. In contrast, however, to the connotative sign, in which the *expression-plane* is made up of signs (out of the substances or forms of the signs, or both), linguistics as a sign structure has a *content-plane* of signs, but only the *forms* of the signs, as the

This conception of semiotic is much different than in Peirce, where the semiotic is coenoscopic, general science about semiosis (cf. CP 1. 242; 1. 242). In Hjelmslev's conception the general "semiotic" is glossematic and its objects are various "semiotics". But it is important to say that Hjelmslev conception of general semiotic and "concrete" semiotic is not analogical to Peirce, where the semiosis is based on triadic structure of sign (and phaneroscopy) – i. e. where interpretants are becoming the objects of another signs, and objects of Peircean general semiotic (or semeiotic) could be also tokens and other phenomena, which falls in the sphere of *parole* (for Peirce is this strong borderline between system and its manifestations redundant, or treated from absolutely different perspective). If we use the pompous metaphor, then where Peirce is 'pansemiotic/pan-metalogic imperialist,' Hjelmslev's conception is in a specific way pan-linguistic. As we said above; D&G has no specific position and they are much more picking up ornaments and figures for their philosophical/rhetorical/semiological 'anarchy.' Let's explore some Hjelmslev's key concepts which are resonating (in intentionally distorted way) through the D&G's plateaus.

Hjelmslev is following Saussure's model and he insists that the object of general science about signs is not the *parole* but the language system, and tends to present the central ideas of glossematics itself as the fulfillment of Saussure's intentions (Trabant 1981). D&G are refusing this difference between *langue* and *parole* present in postulates of linguistic and structuralism, but developing other idea which can find in Hjelmslev's work. It is the idea of the movement or extension from *faculté linguistique* to a *faculté sémiologique*, i.e. the

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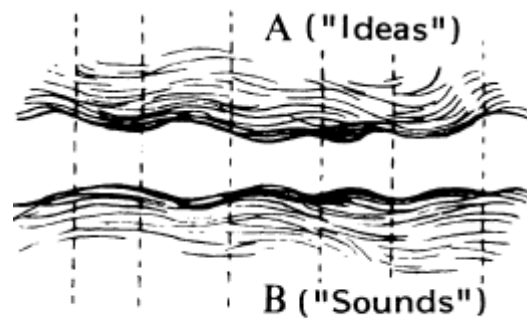
substances are by definition not a matter for linguistics. The scientific meta-sign-structure is called by Hjelmslev *semiology*." Cf. (Eco 1986, 4): "In order to make this point clear, one must distinguish between specific semiotics and general semiotics. I understand that this is a very crude distinction in comparison with more subtle classifications. I am thinking of Hjelmslev's proposal according to which there are a scientific semiotic and a nonscientific semiotic, both studied by a metasemiotic; a semiology as a metasemiotic studying a nonscientific semiotic, whose terminology is studied by a metasemiology. Since semiotics can be either denotative or connotative, there is also a meta (connotative) semiotic."

idea that the language is the general semiotic principle but not only as static structure based on binary oppositions, but as genetic structure with the multiplicity of relations (hierarchies, interdependences and intensities as the e. g. relation of linguistic structures to nonlinguistic structures). As J. Trabant noted:

“Saussure presented language as one particular sign system among many, and linguistics as one specific area within the proposed science of semiology. But he did not claim, as Hjelmslev does, that the linguistic language was only one manifestation of a very general langue. In the passage in the *Cours* [...] Saussure refers exclusively to the linguistic language. Saussure is still working here on the abstraction plane of species (linguistic) *langue*, and not on the higher level of semiotic structure in general. (...) The extension of the concept *langue* to mean specifically ‘semiotic structure’ is characteristic of Hjelmslev’s radical interpretation” (Trabant 1981, 91-92).

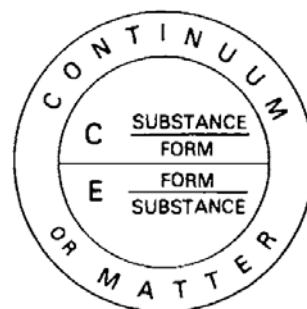
The second radical shift in Hjelmslev’s interpretation of Saussure is leaving aside the conception of sign considered as mental unit connecting acoustic image and concept (*signifié et signifiant*) in favor to the conception of sign considered as a function that subsumes “something” (Hjelmslev 1963, 57) from the planes of expression and content, every language then forms this matter in different ways, and imposes different limits (Trabant 1981, 96). In my point of view this postulate, despite the D&G’s reduction of this thesis, plays important role in general reflection on signs in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Where Hjelmslev interprets Saussure in a radical way, D&G radically ‘interpret’ Hjelmslev.

To understand why, we have to follow Saussure’s distinction between two formless substances of language, which Hjelmslev has developed. For Saussure the form of language consists of two planes, which are (i) the “amorphous mass” of our thoughts (content) and the (ii) “plastic matter” (*matiere plastique*) of sounds. Language (as a *langue*, code, “system/structure”) is forming these formless substances.



The important thing is that for Saussure language is *synthetic* form located between these two substances, but Hjelmslev pointed out on the importance of *differing* formation of these two planes, and expanded their range in the fashion of his general semiotic as two different planes, from which the sign-function is subsuming wide range of elements. The basic question for glossematic is how this function works. This differentiation leads Hjelmslev to following model of the sign, which includes “six major components: expression-purport, expression-substance (ES), expression-form (EF), content-form (CF), content-substance (CS), and content-purport. These can be represented in the following diagram (with the particular interdependences indicated by arrows): Expression-purport-ES→EF↔CF←S-Content-purport” (Trabant 1981, 99).

Or as Eco conceptualized (Eco 1986, 45):



This option includes another of Saussure’s maxims that the sole object of glossematics is the pure, non-substantial form. In fact Hjelmslev himself (1954) differentiates within the substances between a physical, a sociobiological, and a collective-appreciative level, whereby the physical level of the content-substance approximates to the reference, and the other two levels to different conceptions of meaning. In contrast, glos-

ematic content-form is only form. It is not 'meaning,' although constantly mistaken to be so: it is only the framework, the net, the constellation of differences. Whoever misunderstands this, misunderstands the real intention of glossematics, namely to be a discipline "that is independent of all substances concerned only with pure form" (Trabant 1981, 95). If Hjelmslev adopts this radical reading of Saussure (that true goal of glossematics is to study language as a pure form), then has to admit that the "study of substance is assigned to other, non-glossematic, that is to say non-linguistic, disciplines. Semantics, as the study of meaning-the study of content-substance is thereby excluded completely from linguistics-glossematics" (Trabant 1981, 95), i.e. "[a]ccording to Hjelmslev, semantics, which without any doubt is an aspect of linguistics, must be regarded as a non-linguistic discipline, since it studies substance. But if we regard glossematics as general semiotics, then the exclusion of semantics from glossematics ( semiotics) becomes entirely logical and sensible, since a general theory of signs is not concerned with meaning within a particular 'language' or sign system, but rather with the formal structural laws that might govern the content of the sign in general" (Trabant 1981, 96).

Third main motive which Hjelmslev is sharing with Saussure, but develops it in his own framework, is the refusal of motivated signs or "iconicity." These forms of signs, which are in his view "single articulated," Hjelmslev calls "symbols". These signs have nothing to do with any form of so called conventionalism. These structures has in the expression plane and the content-plane same form, i.e. they are interpretable objects to which a content-substance can be assigned, but no content form that differs from the expression-form: "These interpretable entities serve in Hjelmslev's argument as a background against which the specific characteristics of the sign, namely the differing forms of the two separate planes, stand out particularly well. Signicity consists not only in the mere distinctiveness of the two planes of expression and content (in symbols too, ex-

pression can be differentiated from content), but in the different form of the two levels" (Trabant 1981, 99).

The question is which motives of this highly formal system inspired D&G. First answer is: none. The complicated system of Hjelmslev's glossematics cannot be completely translated to the conception of D&G's semiotics. From this perspective there is no space for any kind of "socio-semiotics" or "pragmatics" or "semantics", "since a general theory of signs is not concerned with meaning within a particular 'language' or sign system, but rather with the formal structural laws that might govern the content of the sign in general" (Trabant 1981, 95-96).

On the other side we can say that D&G perhaps follow or ab/use often neglected part of Hjelmslev's system, the line of escape from his extreme formalism which is his connotative semiotics, i.e. specific pragmatics. Despite Hjelmslev's exclusion of pragmatic dimension from immanent and general theory of signs, he was not blind to 'reality of language' as living process connected to the action of speakers and listeners. Hjelmslev himself often operates with differences which are 'pragmatically' determined: as the differences between nations, classes, regions, communicative situations and individuals – and we can add the communicative situations which are *affected* by these differences. This pragmatic dimension, which has no importance for formal system itself, has its meaning in the immanent quality of the sign. As J. Trabant emphasizes: "[T]his takes place on an additional *content-plane*, which vaults over the *denotative* sign to form the expression-plane of the *connotative* sign. As an expression of the connotative content can serve the substances or the forms, or the forms *and* substances of the denotative sign" (Trabant 1981, 100). The connotative sign is not some 'emotive meaning', or any kind of psychologism, but another general structure of forming and differentiating planes. The connotative sign itself saying something about the individual who is speaking, e.g. as various forms of sociolects and dialects, therefore the glossematic interest in the connotative sign is an interest in the *forms* of the connotative sign:

"In this extended concept of 'connotation' every sign participates as a matter of principle in several connotative semiotic structures. Now if the connotative structure is to be a sign, it must be built like a sign and must have the strata of a sign: expression-substance, expression-form, content-form, and content-substance. Above all, it must possess differently formed planes of expression and content, that is to say a connotative expression-form and a connotative content-form" (Trabant 1981, 101).

D&G are ignoring the project of glossematic and following some pragmatic consequences of Hjelmslev's thoughts – where Hjelmslev is excluding these studies from general theory of signs to the sphere of non-glossematic study of substance, D&G are reterritorializing them in the center of their semiotics!

#### Discussion: Affectivity and the Defense of Saussure

We can see then that at least many of critical points they articulated in the "Linguistic postulates" fit perfectly to Hjelmslev's perspective which is very close to Saussure. Hjelmslev in many ways developed general idea of algebraic conception of language which source can be found in the *Course of general linguistic*. The gap, D&G demarcated between Saussure and Hjelmslev, is unnecessarily too deep. Again, it would be foolish to mark Deleuze and Guattari as the authors who are developing some kind of algebraic and purely deductive structuralism in Hjelmslev fashion, but they again got some main points from this Danish linguist. Deleuze and Guattari developing Hjelmslev's 'critical nominalism' to the form of 'processual realism': there is nothing such as 'sign' as substance, unit or 'sensible being.' What we call sign is a function which subsuming under itself various elements from the plane of expression and from the plane of content. But this function is deterritorialized from the field of formal linguistic to much broader context of our everyday, empirical experience and experience itself at all. Sign as function is not a sensible being, nor even a purely qualitative being - and here we are getting to the

point, to the original synthesis of Hjelmslev and Peirce in D&G's philosophy. Sign/function is unifying elements or processes from two planes in various relations (like e. g. difference, interdependence, conjunction and disjunction), but to understand how signs works we have to step to the Peirce and say, that this subsumption is process of semiosis, i.e. sign is not formal relation but ontological relation affected through fermenting intensities.

General point is that these two concepts could lead D&G to their specific synthesis or assemblage of Peirce and Hjelmslev's positions. On one side there is Peirce semiotic and phaneroscopic influences (sign is relation, but also the perceptible 'place' of affective quality of intensities) and on the other Hjelmslev and his presupposed destruction or deconstruction of binary organized 'suburb of semiotics,' semiology and purely immanent perspective.

The specific theoretical synthesis is built on the presupposition that sign is:

- a) The relation inherent to given regime (we can say given 'structure' or 'organization,' but in the sense of Hjelmslev's conception of flowing structures which are not (only) binary organized; sign-function is subsuming different and deterritorialized planes in some specific order)<sup>42</sup>
- b) Therefore is determined by its specific organization
- c) Therefore sign is something which is affected (by given situation/object)
- d) And affecting the recipient of the sign
- e) This process is not the matter of traditional rationalism, empiricism or Cartesian metaphysics, where

<sup>42</sup> Cf. (Eco 2000, 38): „In that case the system would be, as Hjelmslev would have put it, monoplanar: operations carried out on the continuum of the universe, by digitally activating some of its states, would be at the same time "linguistic" operations that describe possible states of the continuum (activating states would be the same as "saying" that those states are possible).“

we can distinguish e. g. between subject and object, intention and act etc.

As we can see, the 'pragmatic' plane (of affectivity of *parole*), which was not interesting for structuralism is here inherited as the main part of semiotic theory, i.e. where structuralism was static, D&G conception of sign is purely genetic and also implicitly refusing the essential opposition between *langue* and *parole*. But the genesis is not based on one underlying system/structure but is producing and is produced by various, multiplying structures. We can illustrate this perspective of sign/affectivity, as N. Nesbit (Nesbit 2010, 174) did in his analysis of connections of Deleuze's conception of sounding bodies. Let's imagine the Jimi Hendrix at the Fillmore East with the Band of Gypsies and his 12-minute improvisation of "Machine Gun", which was the assemblage of Hendrix, his Stratocaster, and feedback from Marshall amplifier on full volume. The organization of this signifying event cannot be subsumed and analyzed through standard tools of semiology – signs are not produced through "human language centered communication" including some articulated intentional acts, but through the "indexical/iconical" intensity of the process, including sounding bodies as the body of the guitarist as well as the body of amplifier, and the body of screaming feedback.<sup>43</sup>

### Conclusion

The aim of this text was to explore selected figurations of D&G's (re)interpretation (or *rhetorical deterritorialization and reterritorialization*) of semiotic concepts with the specific notion on affectivity. We analyzed D&G's reactivation/refutation (Deleuze, Guattari 1994, 18) of

basic semiotic paradigms (Peirce, Saussure, Hjelmslev) with the notion on specific problem of affectivity and showed problems, which stems from D&G's reinventions of these paradigms. We described the D&G's concept of affectivity as the core of semiosis and tried to show why D&G prefer (quasi)Peircean and (quasi)Hjelmslevian concepts over (quasi)Saussure and show some misleading interpretation of structural linguistics. On the other side we showed how D&G has opened (through their rhetorical deterritorialization and reterritorialization of presented conceptions) lines of escape from various forms of structural semiologies and provided instruments for considering *stimulus* (cf. Groupe µ. 1992, 147) as the main point of departure for every semiotic theory on various levels (from the relation between reader and text to semiotic ontology and perhaps semiotic cosmology).

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. (Bogue 1996, 266): "Deleuze makes explicit the relation between music and forces, but of cinema and forces he says very little. At one point in *Cinema 2: l'image-remps* (1985) Deleuze offers a Nietzschean reading of the film of Orson Welles and there makes frequent use of the concepts of force and power, but for the most part his theory of cinema is framed in Bergsonian and Peircean language of 'images' and 'signs' that is relatively free of any reference to force."



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**ART**

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## MOVEMENTS OF DESIGN MEDIATION

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**ABSTRACT:** Mediators create movement. And as Deleuze showed, mediations are new forms of coexistence and creation. To examine what constitutes spatial mediations of design, this paper initiates a study of the future V&A East Collection and Research Centre in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London. The centre will display V&A storage and archives, thus making the design objects and the immaterial archival knowledge and work processes a subject for sensuous and embodied experience through spatial design, material presence and temporal events. The designers are Diller Scofidio + Renfro; an architecture studio known for cross-disciplinary projects that investigate the visual, spatial and bodily across media such as installation, video, sculpture, theatre, performance, exhibitions, text, building and urban design. Their work demonstrates a disciplinary openness, an experimental approach to architectural time and space, and an interest in the virtual. Such qualities are also present in Cedric Price's influential but never built Fun Palace project developed during the 1960s and designed for a site at Mill Meads - close to the future V&A East. The composition of the Collection and Research Centre's function, the V&A as institution, the site near Mill Meads, and the choice and legacy of architecture suggests an entanglement of potential design cultural mediations, values and flows of meaning to be experienced and perceived as part of the realization. The contribution of this paper is to tentatively explore these relations as virtual and processual aspects of the project.

**Keywords:** architecture, relations, William James, V&A East, Brian Massumi

### Relations as making

In the essay "The Thing and its Relations" from *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, William James makes an influential argumentation for acknowledging the reality of immediate experience and the immediately experienced conjunctive relations that make it full of both oneness and manyness (James 2008, 43). James describes immediate experience as a 'that', not yet a definite 'what'. A that, which is "ready to be all sorts of whats; full both of oneness and of manyness, but in respects that don't appear; changing throughout, yet so confusedly that its phases interpenetrate and no points, either of distinc-

tion or of identity can be caught. Pure experience in this state is but another name for feeling or sensation." (43). Things are conjunct in the states and flows of immediate experience whereas separation comes with emphases, fixed identities, and abstraction when we start to verbalize, describe, categorize and, thus, intellectualize.<sup>1</sup> Reflecting upon this as a pragmatist and a radical empiricist, James is of the opinion that "those [intellectual products] are most true which most successfully dip back into some particular wave or wavelet. [...] Only in so far as they lead us, successfully or unsuccessfully back into sensible experience again, are our abstracts and universals true or false at all." (James 2008, 46). The pragmatic significance of making a practical difference is regarded as being significant to the pragmatic method and is, according to James, "a simple test" (James 1981, 27). In the lectures on *Pragmatism*, he explains: "There can be no difference anywhere that doesn't make a difference elsewhere – no difference in abstract truth that doesn't express itself in a difference in concrete fact and in conduct consequent upon that fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere, and somewhen. The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one." (James 27).

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<sup>1</sup> In the beginning of the essay "The Thing and its Relations" William James writes:

Experience in its immediacy seems perfectly fluent. The active sense of living which we all enjoy, before reflection shatters our instinctive world for us, is self-luminous and suggests no paradoxes. Its difficulties are disappointments and uncertainties. They are not intellectual contradictions.

When the reflective intellect gets at work, however, it discovers incomprehensibilities in the flowing process. Distinguishing its elements and parts, it gives them separate names, and what it thus disjoins it can not easily put together.

[...]

But the flux of it no sooner comes than it tends to fill itself with emphases, and these salient parts become identified and fixed and abstracted; so that experience now flows as if shot through with adjectives and nouns and preposition and conjunctions. Its purity is only a relative term, meaning the proportional amount of un-verbalized sensation which it still embodies.

(James 2008, 43-44).

Throughout the book *Semblance and Event. Activist Philosophy and the Occurant Arts*, philosopher and affect-theorist Brian Massumi relates to James' thinking. Massumi emphasizes the importance of understanding James' approach to pragmatism through his radical empiricism in order to fully appreciate the force of James' work and to avoid a purely utilitarian understanding of what making a difference could mean. Massumi writes:

Classically, objects and their associated operations are in the world while percepts registering them are in the subject. What James is saying, by contrast, is that *both are in the transition*. Things and their experience are together in transition. There is no oscillation in the theory between extremes of objectivism and subjectivism because the object and subject fall on the same side of a shared movement. The question is what distinction *their movement makes*, according to which they fall on the same side." (Massumi 2011, 30).

The example Massumi refers to, inspired by James, is a simple act of describing a building to a friend. The description may be received with skepticism by the friend and there is nothing else to do than "[...] walk together to the building and you point out convergences between what you had said and what you both are now experiencing. According to Massumi, for James [...] the demonstrative pointing-out is less an external referencing of an object by a subject than an indexing of two subjects to the same phase in the 'ambulatory' movement." (30). Thus, the example illustrates a movement of sharing rather than the pointing towards an object. The performative of a sharing in the pointing-out is an event, which Massumi describes as a "unity" – or one-ness and "a rolling together of subjective and objective elements into a mutual participation co-defining the same dynamic." (30). As long as this event of sharing and of pointing-out lasts there is oneness; then the unity "resolves back into differentials, and the movement continues" (30). Such movements of sharing and relating are considered by Massumi as being continuously "de-defining". Whatever the object may be, it can be taken up again, actualized through a new situation and context and through

this event and oneness, unfold differentials. It will, thus, de-define "[...] but in a new capacity, as an object no longer of skepticism but of dispute. Whether the object is strictly the 'same' as taken up differentially by the movement the second time as it was the first is not a question of concern to pragmatism. What is of interest is that unfolding differentials phase in and out of integrating events in which they figure as dynamically interlinked poles – that there is a punctuated oneness in a many-ness ongoing." (Massumi 2011, 31).

To further develop how things and their experience can be understood as being together in transition, Massumi takes the example of giving a gift. The relation that develops (in) this process runs through the giver, the recipient and the gift together as an experienced *that*. It is triggered coming together of different sorts of things such as tendencies, desires, obligations, sensual qualities, fragrances, and sparkles. Massumi writes:

What holds the holdings together is a oneness-in-manyness of a moving on. It is what runs through the parts and their holdings, without itself being held; what is unmissably experienced without being seen. *That* - the relation - is not in the giver. Nor is it in the gift. Nor the recipient. It is what runs through them all, holding them together in the same dynamic. It is integrally many things: 'concatenated and continuous.' It is whatever tendency impels or compels the giving. It is the desire to please another, or to bind another or oneself. It is an obligation, which obliges in return. For a giving is never solitary. It calls for more. It is serial, ongoing. It is in the conventions that define the timing and sequence, what gift is desirable or appropriate, and when. It is also in the sensual qualities of the gift (unromantically, its 'sense data'). It is the fragrance or the sparkle. It is all of these things, folded into and around each other to form an experiential envelope, a field, 'full of oneness and manyness in respects that don't appear' - incorporeal medium holding the gift up for the giving and holding the successive holdings to the same event. Holding-up/holding-together, integral unseen medium of suspension: *that* does it. (Massumi 2011, 35)

The distinction that the shared movements and relational processes of objects and subjects make is virtual-actual. (Massumi, 33). In the event, they are only virtual-

ly object and subject, because, as we can understand from Massumi's example of giving, there is oneness and manyness, but the different parts are not separable. The understanding of *what* each part are is an effect of the event. "The truth is in the making." (35).

### A relational site

The aim of this paper is to tentatively explore relations that can be perceived and experienced as part of an architectural project, which is currently in the process of making. The project is the Victoria & Albert Museum's future Research and Collection Centre in East London, which will be one of the institution's public facilities in V&A East, together with a new museum at Stratford Waterfront. While at this point, I am writing about a place that is not yet finished and available for us to visit and in which case we are not able to experience the result as such, the processual state of the project does not prevent us from having perceptions and experiences of it. Visualizations and texts that describe the project in its initial phases have been published online, e.g. on websites belonging to the Victoria and Albert museum and the architects; and newspaper articles and architectural magazines are some of the other places through which we can form an impression of the project. My background for writing about the project in these initial stages is further supported by observations and field-notes I made during a visit to the site and to the V&A in August 2019. In the following, I will provide a more detailed description of the plans for the Research and Collection Centre as well as a presentation of the architects behind. However, first it is important to offer some background information regarding the relevance of exploring the relations of an ongoing project, and how it can be considered part of contemporary tendencies in connection with architecture today.

The realization of new buildings and of transformations in our built environment are processes with a considerable duration and a long-term impact. Whereas the aim and the expected result, i.e. the completed

building or space, has often been the center of attention for builders, architects, users, and critics, a new tendency indicates a significant change. Recent years' development has shown that attention is increasingly directed towards exploring the potentials of the realization processes themselves through initiatives such as temporary constructions of information centres, guided tours in the area, exhibitions of scale models and samples of materials. If we follow such processes (e.g. Yaneva; Lash & Lury), research can tell us about different ways of affecting and engaging, about ways of creating contextual and cultural relations, of adapting to transformations, and about how habits and perceptions are challenged and changed. The development of process activities, structures, and initiatives is connected to a broader tendency expressed in efforts to activate areas in transformation through temporary use and instant urbanism. Researchers, architects and urban practitioners have addressed the temporary as a rich possibility and a positive force for exploring city life through short term projects (Bishop & Williams 2012; Bishop 2015; Marling & Kiib 2011); as a strategic tool for urban transformations and as events that can bring about new developments (e.g. Oswalt, Overmeyer & Misselwitz 2013; Haydn & Temel 2006).

While important work, as previously shown, is done to connect pragmatism and radical empiricism to contemporary developments within arts, politics and philosophy by Massumi, an architectural approach to relations is developed by professor of architectural theory Albena Yaneva, while also taking inspiration from James' work (Yaneva 2012; Yaneva & Latour 2008). Yaneva explores and maps architectural agency as the connections that architecture is part of and she investigates the political through describing the practical differences that the architectural makes through its different actors and networks. (Yaneva, 2017; 2012). Focusing on the process rather than, for example, the building as an end result and as an object, her work contributes to an understanding of architecture as taking place through pragmatic processes and networks (Yaneva, 2017; 2012; 2009a;

2009b). According to Yaneva, architecture should be analyzed through connections that “[...] flow out of these streams of experience of designers, constructors, users and citizens related to the building.” (Yaneva 2012, 106). Her work, furthermore, encourages us to “[...] foreground the practicalities, materialities and events of buildings.” (Yaneva 2017, 7).

In 2019, the design and curatorial planning of the V&A East Collection and Research Centre is still being developed. The Collection and Research Centre is expected to open in 2023 in a location and interior space designed by the American architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro with Austin-Smith: Lord as the local, executive architects. The Centre will display V&A storage and archives, thus making the design objects and the immaterial archival knowledge and work processes a subject for sensuous and embodied experience. This will be possible through spatial and curatorial decisions that enhance flexibility and dynamics in the different ways visitors will be able to encounter and study particular design from the archives and in the physical and sensual ways the archival material will be stored and presented. According to recently published material in the internationally acclaimed Japanese journal *Architecture + Urbanism* (a+u 2019), the Centre is considered to become a “purpose-built home for 250.000 objects and an additional 917 archives from the V&A’s collection of fashion, textiles, furniture, theater and performance, metalwork, ceramics, glass, sculpture, architecture, paintings and product design.” (a+u, 2019). Objects on different scales will be on public display spanning from smaller objects to actual parts of architecture, which can be experienced as 1:1 interior and architectural elements. These elements are planned to be integrated parts of the spaces and of the interior movement patterns, designed by the architects to lead visitors through the space. The 1:1 archival objects include an office designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for American businessman Edgar J. Kaufmann Jr. in the 1930’s, a ceiling from the Altamira Palace in Spain (a+u, 2019) and a section of the Robin Hood Gardens in London. The Robin Hood Gardens social housing project was

designed by Alison and Peter Smithson in the 1960’s and recently demolished. On the occasion of the demolition, the Victoria & Albert Museum chose to acquire a three-story section of the complex as an historic example of British Brutalist architecture.<sup>2</sup> In the Collection and Research Centre, archival objects, which can be accessible to researchers and other interested are kept in different forms of storage, conceptualized by the architects as: “hacked open shelving”, “two way pull-out racks”, “ganged rolling high density storage”, and “hacked rolling storage” (a+u 2019).

The V&A East Collection and Research Centre will be based in the already existing building *Here East*, which was previously a press and broadcast centre during the London Summer Olympics in 2012. The Here East building is now a home to several privately-owned companies, workshops, and studios. With a post-olympic profile as a creative and innovative hub, Here East is branded as a ‘home for the makers’, according to the information on its website (<https://hereeast.com/> 2019). Current tenants in the Here East complex include among many others: Studio Wayne MacGregor working with dance and technology, a fabrication, robotics, and prototyping facility of UCL’s Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment and Faculty of Engineering Sciences, and MatchesFashion.com – a retailer of luxury fashion brands such as Stella McCartney, Gucci, Alexander McQueen to name a few. (<https://hereeast.com/whos-here/matchesfashioncom/>). As a business complex adjacent to the Lea River, Here East connects to the local area through public and commercial programmes such as bars and cafés, and through public maker activities that are mainly targeted towards children. On this level of relationality the V&A places it self in a carefully selected context with a creative and innovative profile. Reflecting upon this contextuality from the perspective of being an outside observer, it is obvious that it creates multiple potentials for connecting aspects of the practic-

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<sup>2</sup> Accessed October 6, 2019 at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/robin-hood-gardens>

es, spaces, and archives of Collection and Research Centre to a variety of aspects connected to the creative businesses and artforms. We can imagine relations forming, for example, between dance, choreography and V&A exhibitions; between fashion and V&A archives, or between prototyping for the future and design history. The virtual field of the 'whats' this relationality may actualize is manifold but at the same time toned by the decisions that have been made regarding placing a part of the V&A in this context. During the next years, the V&A Collection and Research Centre will, consequently, be an active part of forming multifaceted context-relations and a complexity of design relations at V&A East. Parts of these relations concern the collaborations with local people. Some thoughts regarding collaborative initiatives are expressed by the chief curator Catherine Ince:

To ensure V&A East is rooted in its neighborhood by the time it opens in 2023, we will continue to build relationships across the Olympic boroughs, and test ideas through conversation and collaborative creative projects. With local people helping shape its vision and programmes, V&A East will be a place for everyone representative of the cultures, communities and creativity of east London and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

#### Architectural movements of virtual-actual

Diller Scofidio + Renfro is an architecture studio known for several artistic, urban, architectural, and cross-disciplinary projects that investigate the visual, spatial and bodily across media such as installation, video, sculpture, theatre, performance, exhibitions, text, building and urban design. The original founders Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio have worked together since the 1970's on projects that include, among many others: *Traffic* (1981), a 24-hour installation at Columbus Circle using orange traffic cones; *The Rotary Notary and his Hot Plate* (1987), a multimedia theater work in collaboration

with Susan Mosakowski and Creation Production Co. for the occasion of the Duchamp Centennial and inspired by Duchamp's artwork "The Large Glass"; and *Jet Lag* (1999), a multimedia theater work based on true stories of people detached from usual time-space conventions. Recent projects include the *Blur Building* (2002) which is an architecture of atmosphere, fog and water, responding to shifting weather conditions; *The High Line* (2003-2019), with James Corner Field Operations and Piet Oudolf, a public park built on an abandoned elevated railroad in Manhattan; and *The Shed* (2019), a cultural institution in New York with galleries, theater and rehearsal spaces, creative lab and space for large-scale performances, installations, and events.<sup>4</sup>

In a recently published interview, Diller and Scofidio both reflect on their cross-disciplinary oeuvre and admit to having not initially wanted to become architects but instead artists working more liberated from the constraints that follow with the traditions and the heroes and masters of the discipline:

Previously, I was interested in photography and timebased media, but I started to think in three dimensions. So I decided to get an architecture degree, but not with the intent of joining the profession. My only intent was to make a career in plastic arts and work with sculpture and media in a spatial way. I became keenly interested in working in space and time.

(Elizabeth Diller, a+u, 2019, 7).

Architecture was very enclosing for me at that time. The profession was practiced in a very prescribed way. I came out of the school of the master architects – the heroic, solo figure – so it was rather oppressive to be in architecture when I first started. In fact, I never wanted to be an architect either. I wanted to be a musician. I was very musically inclined. I had played both classical and jazz, and when I decided that I wouldn't be able to earn a living in music, I went to Cooper Union to study art. So I had never really contemplated architecture."

(Ricardo Scofidio, a+u, 2019, 7).

Diller and Scofidio consider a dominant constraint in architecture today to be the temporality of processes,

<sup>3</sup> Accessed October 6, 2019 at <https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/va-east-project>

<sup>4</sup> Accessed October 6, 2019 at <https://dsrny.com/>

which is far from the outset of their artistic and architectural practice. Buildings take a long time to design, detail and construct – and they usually remain in place for centuries. In the project *The Shed*, inaugurated in 2019, Diller Scofidio + Renfro have managed to incorporate temporal, performative and movable elements in the design of the building's shell, which will be able to transform the spaces temporarily. Thus, this flexibility will directly affect the spectrum of potential usage and, furthermore, create a desired possibility to respond the needs and wishes of the users. The ability to respond to temporary needs in architecture can be considered to work against the materiality, solidity and durability often regarded as key to architecture. But according to Elisabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, questions of temporality and ephemerality are central to developing the agency of architecture:

When Ric and I started, we were working during a time of institutional critique that questioned what could be defined as a space for art. Is it in the museum? Is it in the street? We did a lot of our early independent work on found, borrowed sites. Sometimes we squatted as a form of guerilla architecture. It was often ephemeral – at times only in existence for 24 hours.

(Elisabeth Diller, a+u 2019, 8)

We live in a time where architecture just feels too slow. From the time you have an idea, to the time you design it, to the time that it's constructed and occupied, it's rarely less than five years and oftentimes much longer. Architecture is geo-fixed, it's heavy, it's cumbersome and in place for good. And it's expensive. Reflecting specifically on the challenge for the Shed, architecture is everything that's contrary to contemporary art, which by definition is constantly in flux. The challenge is, how do you build a permanent building for a discipline that is constantly evolving? The Shed is a response to that question.

(Elisabeth Diller, a+u 2019, 16)

In their design of *The Shed* the architects have taken inspiration from the *Fun Palace* designed by the influential British architect Cedric Price together with the theater director Joan Littlewood. Just as Price envisioned would be the case in his project, the *Shed* integrates

variability in use, scale, modes of movement, use of technology and is dependent on the needs of artists and other users of the building's facilities.

<https://dsrny.com/project/the-shed>

During the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014, elements of Cedric Price's visions for the *Fun Palace* were transformed into an exhibition form at the Swiss Pavilion, where drawings and models of Price's work were exhibited together with work by the Swiss sociologist Lucius Burckhardt. The exhibition *A stroll through a fun palace* was a performative archive. In the main room of the exhibition, trolleys with models and drawings from architecture projects would be drawn out and presented to the interested visitors – who also became participants – by the guides working in the pavilion. As part of the public programme in connection with the exhibition, Elisabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio participated in a conversation with curator Hans-Ulrich Obrist and presented their work on *The Shed* as indicative of Price's influence on contemporary architecture.<sup>5</sup> During the recording of the talk and the conversation, Diller and Scofidio continuously reflect upon the inspiration they have taken from Price's work on the *Fun Palace* and Scofidio mentions that the wonderful thing about the fact that the *Fun Palace* was never built is that it is possible to continually reinvent it and in that respect, it continually changes and stays fresh.<sup>6</sup> We can understand this as an appreciation and awareness of the virtuality of the project; its continued potential for actualizing and showing what it can be in the hands of these architects, working on this specific architectural programme, with these flexible functions, on this building site, etc. It's making is in this sense relational and event-full.

The ideas of creating movable archives at the V&A Research and Collection Centre can, from the perspective of this paper, be connected to the profound interest we see in the architectural practice of Diller Scofidio + Renfro to work with temporalities, to work with tech-

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<sup>5</sup> The *Shed* was inaugurated in 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Accessed October 6, 2019 at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVqKETR7FXU>



nologies, performativity and with different modes of expression and experience. In this regard, what can potentially become a living archive through bringing ideas of ephemerality, change and movement into the experience of V&A has an important predecessor and a source of inspiration in the Fun Palace. The project envisioned an architecture that includes time and events as central to experience and it has been inspirational in the developments of architectural projects since the 1960's. Although the Fun Palace was never realized, its ideas of creating a place for leisure, fun and education within an architecture that would adapt to events and needs from the users, without static functional programmes or fixed activities has proven meaningful. In the Fun Palace, the architect decided that it should have no specific form and no fixed floor plan. In an interview with the Price scholar Stanley Mathews, Price refers to the Fun Palace as an 'anti-building' and, according to Mathews, he even regarded himself as an 'anti-architect':

The varied and ever-changing activities will determine the form of the site. To enclose these activities the anti-building must have equal flexibility. Thus the prime motivation of the area is caused by the people and their activities and the resultant form is continually dependent on them. The fact that such enjoyment does take place within the pathetic areas in London's slums gives a clue to the immense potential for enjoyment in an area which encourages random movement and variable activities.

(Mathews 2007, 73)

The ideas of variation, flexibility and an architectural form, which is based on people's activities and their wishes, desires and tendencies will also be traceable in the V&A Collection and Research through the different types and modes of storage through which visitors will experience the design objects. Dependent on whether a visitor comes in a professional capacity as a researcher or designer to the Centre and wishes to study a particular design object from the archive or he or she simply wishes to experience the public exhibition of a particular objects from the archive the person will experience a space affected by the objects in question. Experiences

with and perceptions of design and architectural projects and transformations are affected in this living or performative archive where things are changing and moving. The processuality and the relationality of making will be expressed in the bringing together of dissimilar elements – regarding factors such as scale, form, use, origin, technology and materiality. Thus, a connection between the architectural visions and practices of Cedric Price and those of Diller Scofidio + Renfro can be traced in the different forms of storage indicated in the design for the V&A Collection and Research Centre. Another and more exterior connection between the Fun Palace and the Here East as a whole is the location in East London near the Lea River where the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Parc is located.<sup>7</sup> Efforts were made back in 1964 to develop the Fun Palace in the context of a larger scale Lea Valley Development Plan. (Mathews 2007, 100-141). This may explain the visions indicated by Cedric Price in the quote above when he refers to bringing enjoyment to the poorer areas of East London.

### Mediation as exchange and becoming

As suggested previously, building and transformation processes form a complex relationality, which is both creative, communicative, and experiential. In the following, mediation will be introduced as a conceptual approach for exploring and analyzing this complex relationality. In this case, mediation does not indicate a connection to particular technologies or the representation of contents in media but is more broadly understood as creative relations of mutual resonance and exchange (Deleuze, 1995). In *Mediators*, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze thinks about mediation as relations of mutual resonance and exchange (Deleuze 199, 121-134). Thus, mediation occurs when someone or something (the mediator) enters an existing movement and does it in the mediator's own way. This means that mediation

<sup>7</sup> Accessed October 6, 2019 at [https://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/-/media/park-map\\_2019\\_a4.ashx?la=en](https://www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/-/media/park-map_2019_a4.ashx?la=en)

should be looked upon as creation, as a movement of continuous becoming and not a simple transmission or representation of something. Deleuze considers everything as happening through exchange and becoming which makes mediators essential as creative parts of relations: "Mediators are fundamental. Creation's all about mediators. Without them, nothing happens. They can be people - artists or scientists for a philosopher; philosophers or artists for a scientist - but things as well, even plants or animals, as in Castaneda. Whether they're real or imaginary, animate or inanimate, you must form your mediators. It's a series. If you're not in some series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own." (Deleuze 1995, 125). Deleuze's understanding of mediation as creative, relational and exchange is in a way a very basic and may even be quite broad. It is, however, very profound and powerful in reminding us that creation and exchange are parts of what characterizes and forms relations.

In the book *Global Culture Industry – The mediation of things* (Lash & Lury 2007), Celia Lury and Scott Lash's method is to follow the mediation and development of things through writing biographies of cultural objects and brands. They take inspiration from understandings of virtuality as intensity (Lash & Lury 2007, 14-15); a thinking that concerns, for example, brands which is something we cannot experience in itself but rather needs to be actualized in different products for us to experience, sense and feel. Also, architectural and urban space have virtuality and intensities that are actualized in different events; i.e. that become perceptible through objects, materiality etc., so that we can experience them with our senses. The biographical in Lash' and Lury's work draws on the concept of duration developed by Henri Bergson and later Gilles Deleuze, in which differentiation is an expression of the temporality of continuous becoming. This differentiation is experienced from within. Thus, it is not a biography written only through a

sequential narration with an external temporality in which we can consider time as measurement, but most of all a biography of differentiation, of intensities that are actualized and made perceptible in different ways, forms, and events. Compare this to the way Scofidio looks at the Fun Palace when he mentions that it keeps coming back but always changed and always in a different way. In the case of the Shed, in other materials, informed by technology of today, in a completely different setting; or as suggested here, in the archives of the V&A where encounters between design objects, design history and people are rethought. Or think of Massumi's explorations of James' philosophy where the truth is in the making and in the movement of virtual-actual. It is the making itself that unfolds a potential of differentiation and becoming.

#### What forms relations?

What this paper has explored is how relations and movements of virtual-actual can be considered to characterize the experience of the project in making. We can speculate about, for example, how certain potentials of the context-relations will be actualized or how particular initiatives will bring the V&A as institution in creative contact with the local citizens in East London. In order to reflect upon how such process based on initiatives that involve different users and actors work, it will be relevant to consider the attunement that occurs between people. When referring to the concept *differential attunement*, Massumi looks at what happens when we are immersed in an event together (Manning et.al. 2012). We can be part of the same event together, but we are in the event differently depending on what our tendencies, habits and different potentials are, which Massumi expresses here:

That's what I mean by differential attunement: a collective in-bracing in the immediacy of an affective event, but differently in each case. 'Attunement' refers to the direct capture of attention and energies by the event. That something captures our attention. 'Differential' refers

to the fact that we are each taken into the event from a different angle and move out of it following our own singular trajectories, riding our waves in our own inimitable ways. It's the idea of an event snapping us to attention together, and correlating our diversity to the affective charge that brings and that energizes the whole situation. And it's the idea that this happens at a level where direct bodily reaction and our ability to think are so directly bound up with each other that they can't be separated out yet from each other, or from the energizing of the event.

(Manning et.al. 2012)

### Concluding remarks

The V&A East Collection and Research Centre will be a mediator of and through design. Consequently, it is relevant to investigate how spaces, bodies, practices, temporalities, materials, senses and affects are involved. This paper is a starting point where experiences and relations implied in making have been introduced. Architecture and design have agency on different scales: it affects at an intimate scale through the senses and the body, while it, simultaneously, has spatial and political agency in the processes of forming the contexts of lives. However, understandings of immediate experience and relations of oneness and manyness are useful in order to think across such analytical and categorical scales and rather dive into an exploration of the processes embedded in the movements of virtual-actual. Thus, the aim of the paper has been to explore some relations of a project in making perceived across visualizations, photographic material, text, background knowledge, past experiences and plans for the future. It has been to explore how relations are formed and built, and how they suggest potentials for future developments. As such, the relational and processual is a site where we can investigate architectural modalities of mediation. The V&A East Collection and Research Centre points towards an entanglement of potential design cultural mediations, values and flows of meaning to be experi-

enced and perceived as part of the realization. The contribution of this paper is to tentatively explore these relations as virtual and processual aspects of the project and to discuss them as they seem to be: real.

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## TACTILE TACTICS IN 21ST CENTURY CULTURAL DISPLAYS

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**ABSTRACT:** There is a long tradition to see museums and similar cultural displays as sites of knowing and self-education; and also as tools of political and ideological tuition, indoctrination indeed. The critical approach of new museology in the late 20th century launched a systematic revision of the social and epistemological role museums play in contemporary culture. New museology highly increased, or at least required, the self-reflexivity of cultural displays, however, an increase in reflexivity does not involve, in a self-evident way, an increase of intensified experience, which became crucial to our contemporary life, especially in the perspective of somaesthetics. Thus, more recent museological and curatorial approaches, oriented according to the corporeal turn in philosophy and social sciences, emphasize the effects and consequences of the sensorial range in use within cultural displays. The historically developed and therefore questionable social constructions, political status quos and epistemological pre-suppositions underlying museum displays are encoded already at the level of the sensorial modalities. Hence, a new critique of the cultural displays and representations will consider the sensorial spectrum available and targeted.

The museum was once considered a church, later a school, then a stage. Today, in accordance with somaesthetics, cultural displays can be conceived as physical sites of intersubjectivity and models of human environment relationship, in other words: social and ecological agoras. Mentalistic and educational tactics (like identity politics, national heritage issues, inter-cultural relations, etc.) are not *passé* at all, but the somatic dimensions of human existence need to be revealed through tactile tactics in the most important cultural institutions.

**Keywords:** somaesthetics, museum experience, new museology, multisensory exhibition, tactility

“a piece of cloth is only half-experienced unless it is  
handled,  
the visitors find it impossible to keep their hands off.”  
(Collingwood 1955, 451)

“‘An object in a museum case’, he wrote, ‘must suffer  
the de-natured existence of an animal in the zoo.  
In any museum the object dies – of suffocation and the  
public gaze ...’  
(Chatwin 1998, 17)

### 1. Starting point: an example

In September 2013, during the Budapest Design Week, together with two of my colleagues, I had the privilege to encourage a team of art students to perform an exhibition intervention, hosted by the Museum of Ethnography, an initiative that is still rare in the Hungarian museum practice.<sup>1</sup> The museum invited us to be completely free in our approach to the task, and at first we deemed it as a double task. On the one hand, there was a chronological exhibition of partly folk, partly artistic, professional and industrial exhibition materials, under the title of *The living tradition of ryjy – Finnish rugs from a private collection*. On the other hand, the bustle of the Design Week and the freshness of art students’ creativity offered a good opportunity to reach an audience usually not inclined to visit an ethnographic museum.

Having reviewed our options and resources, we decided on constructing a set of small interventions amidst the original display of the exhibition. This “sensory trail” was oriented by the ideas of scale change, interaction, cooperation and multisensoriality, in particular to the relatively rarely employed sense of hearing and the consistently prohibited touch. The original exhibition was construed along the needs of an educated audience keen to welcome sophisticated narratives. Our aim was to create an alternative, which is non-narrative, non-linear, and non-systematic in terms of cognition while it enhances the sensory and creative capacities of the visitor and triggers a vitalizing experience. The original exhibit displayed a highly complex ethnographic knowledge about societal practices, culture and identity construction by showing the materials spanning almost half a millennium. We did not intend to compete with this concept; rather we wanted to intensify the physical presence of the artifacts and the authentic touch that can be drawn from historical items – corresponding to the respective ideas of Frank Ankersmit (2005). Drawing on Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht’s ideas on “presence culture”

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<sup>1</sup> Experiments in exhibition practice are far less rare among leading international cultural heritage institution than in the Hungarian context. To get a comprehensive look into museum experiments, see Macdonald and Basu (2007).

and “meaning culture” (Gumbrecht 2004), I can say that the goal of our intervention was to balance the production of an erudite meaning by the effects of sensory immersion, in other words to counterpoint the mentalistic side of the aesthetic experience by the other side, which is multisensorial and full of somatic intensity, just as Dewey described a full experience (1980, 35-57).

The result of our intervention can be considered satisfactory: it multiplied the number of visitors during its existence, and by the end, a knotted carpet was also completed made collectively by the visitors. Our exhibition intervention provided inspiration not only to the art students but to the museum professionals involved as well. It might not come as a surprise if I admit that the biggest controversy surrounded the question of touch. The main opponent, however, was not the generous private collector, Tuomas Saponen (who agreed surprisingly easy to allow some carpets to be touched under controlled conditions), but more the museologists, of course. We were perfectly aware of the fact that our modest action and the arguments triggered on a local level, go beyond themselves and lead to wider cultural anomalies, which I shall expound on below.

## 2. Debates in and about the museum

In order to place the arisen debate about tactile experience into an appropriate context, it is worth bearing the critical remarks of the new museology of the 1980's in mind (Lumley 1988; Vergo 1989; Merriman 1991; Bennett 1995; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Macdonald 1998); in parallel with developments unfolded in philosophy and social sciences under the title of *corporeal turn* (Turner 1984, 2012; Gallagher and Laqueur 1987; Tamborino 2002; Sheets-Johnstone 2009) much of which was later crystallized in the emerging project of somaesthetics (Shusterman 2008, 2012). These impulses led to a millennial museology discourse in which the theoreticians not only re-examined the social, political and epistemological roles of the museum, as initiated by new museology, but they also made a further step by review-

ing the sensorial range employed in cultural displays, assuming that historically developed and therefore questionable social constructs, political status quos and epistemological presuppositions underlying museum displays are encoded already at the level of the sensorial modalities (Butler 2003; Marsh 2004; Classen and Howes 2006; Dann 2012). Soon after the turn of millennium, a number of studies appeared in rapid succession in which scholars placed such problems in the focal point of museology discourse as tactile sensation, interactivity, multisensorial experience, immersion or cultural access for the disabled (Pye 2007; Chatterjee 2008; Candlin 2010; Levent and Pascual-Leone 2014). Over time, the theoretical debates were echoed in museum practices as well – largely due to the fact that the debates were not mere speculations but mirrored the real issues of the museum as an institution. One critic rightly described the situation, when she drew attention to the fact that with the pressures of practical life, institutions can not expect theoretical disputes to come to a standstill, because in a system of public funding, dependent on visitor numbers, museums “simply cannot afford to alienate their visitors”. (Candlin 2004, 71)

In this process, museums have moved away from the traditional mission of a unidirectional, didactic, monologist, educative activity that is carried on by showcasing distinguished objects of high importance, positioned in a way that helps to underlie or transmit a cultural identity desirable for the museum, even more so, for the political power that maintains the museum's existence. Today more and more museums define themselves as an interactive, dialogic, transformative, an intermediary space (Simon 2010), a physical site of intersubjectivity and a platform for modeling human-environment relationships. It is not only the visitor who allows himself or herself to be refined, by even multi-sensorial tactics for that matter, but the physical configuration of the exhibition and the knowledge accumulated in it also call for continuation or re-articulation either on an individual or a collective level. Thus, the concatenation of the sensory-interpretative-affective-performative-social actions

that occur in the exhibition space might not be conceived as self-evident, but rather as something in the “becoming”. (Ntalla 2012, 254-255) Consequently, the audience is not expecting to obtain determinants of a lofty cultural identity as much, rather they find chips and fragments for an endless reworking of an open cultural identity. (Foucault 1997)

21<sup>st</sup> century museums can have a special affinity for honing the above-mentioned self-description in cases when their collections consist of natural science items or everyday objects. In contrast, art is still surrounded by the mythologies of the genius, which makes it difficult to realize exhibition tactics of immersion and interactivity. Of this one could draw the conclusion that art and non-art museums approach the challenges of the new millennia with different tactics, but before answering much of the questions by overemphasizing the opposition between art and non-art collections, let’s take a look at the museum in the most general perspective, and return to the specifications only later.

It is well-known that classical modern museum has been defined by its collection that ought to be preserved, cared for and exhibited in a meticulous and quality-assured manner. The roles, however, that came with that approach, and the limited opportunities that have been offered to the audience by classical modern museums turn out to be less and less satisfying in the postmodern media industry, in tourism and consumer culture. The museum can overcome this problem if it defines itself not primarily by its collection, but rather by the specific relationship between the venue, the presented objects and the stakeholders, including the audience – as it was brilliantly demonstrated in the 2010 Marina Abramović MOMA retrospective. The crucial aspect of this relationship is the fact that the visitors’ experience is founded not only on what is exhibited, but partly on the museum space as a whole, partly on their own and collective body, and also to be more precise, on the interactions of these factors. This can be intensified to the utmost through the interplay of multisensory

tactics that have been considered a taboo from the viewpoint of the museum establishment.

### 3. Historical horizons of tactile tactics

Lessons learned from new research on the historical development of museums, notably the one conducted by David Howes and Constance Classen at Concordia University,<sup>2</sup> provide important insights into the conflicts of museum display and tactility, an opposition held as a natural and necessary fact despite its apparent origin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century museology mindset. The preceding centuries before the modernization of the museum are usually treated as a pre-modern period thought to be luckily exceeded forever, a judgment that is less and less sustainable today, and formulated precisely because this earlier period does not support the premise in any way that the so-called “lower senses” (*touch, smell and taste*) would be disqualified within museum culture. Furthermore, pre-modern museum practice does not support the conviction that *sight* is the alpha and omega of museum experience and the reduction or restriction of any other sensual modalities would be inherent. (Classen 2007) Classen demonstrates on a variety of examples – which are primarily derived from contemporary travel reports and correspondence – that the senses of touch, handling, sounding (instruments for instance), smell and even taste were actually frequent in early museums. Later, these have been identified by modern consciousness as immature, uncivilized, childish, or even bestial. The fleeting immediacy triggered by the interplay of the lower senses has been opposed with permanent sight and the consequent distancing gestures of reflection. However, the critical redistribution of the senses could only be done by challenging the cognitive potentials of the lower senses, including those cases where qualities unattainable through vision can be assured by touch,

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<sup>2</sup> *The Sense Lives of Things: A Cross-Disciplinary Investigation into the Sensory Dimensions of Objects in Practices of Collecting and Display, 2002-2005; The Sensory Museum: Its History and Reinvention, 2007-2010; The Hands-on Museum: Transition Periods, 2011-2014.* <http://www.david-howes.com/senses/>

or when the sensations gained by one of the senses are verified by another sensory modality.<sup>3</sup>

The pre-modern museum practice of touching and handling inevitably raised questions on the other side: how can the physical integrity of the collection be ensured? How can the compositional stability of its spatial arrangements be warranted? And last but not least, how to prevent theft, how to prevent inappropriate touch? The guardians of early collections had to find satisfactory answers to these questions, however they found the cognitive value gained through touch to be so significant that they would rather take risks than to reduce collection display to sight alone. When today, considerations on touch seem to re-emerge, they always coincide, not surprisingly, with the rise of the old ethical dilemma: “How can museums reconcile their duty to preserve often fragile objects in optimum condition for posterity with the needs of a population for whom touch is of such importance?” (Cassim 2007, 165)

The far-reaching decision on the cessation of the early-modern protocol that included touch has been made by 19<sup>th</sup> century museums when they faced an extraordinary explosion in visitor numbers. “Look but don’t touch!” – the price for a broader democratic availability was a limitation in terms of sensual modalities within museum access. Hence more people were allowed to visit the shrines of sciences and arts following a more abstract conduct of a uniperspective inspection directed by discursive commentaries, instead of touch that offer not only a temporary experience of possession (although it is offered in a more abstract way by sight as well), but also a physical continuity, or as Maurice Merleau-Ponty called it, “the flesh of the world”. (1968, 130-155) The pre-modern museum, conceived as a “training” place for the social elite, gave its place to museum of “basic education” for the masses. The price paid did not appear

excessive, as the new museum politics proclaimed the glory of the nation state for the broadest social strata, and the new narrative of art history compensated for the losses as well. Today, however, these compensations seem no longer satisfactory, when ocularcentrism and logocentrism are questioned and challenged by perspectives of various studies from somaesthetics to neurobiology, from phenomenology to body culture studies. Increasingly, prestigious establishment museums, like Musée du quai Branly, Victoria & Albert, British Museum, Les Arts Decoratif Paris, to name but a few, reflect the abovementioned critical insights themselves by multisensorial experiments.

The epistemological implications of touch, and the habitual, bodily dimensions of understanding that go beneath interpretation (Shusterman 2000, 115-137) have been defended by various theoreticians: polymaths, such as Michael Polanyi (2005) and John Dewey (2008), or the psychologists, Heinz Werner (1948) or Daniel N. Stern (1985). However, today’s analysts arguing for the significance of tactility can rely not only on modern philosophical or psychological schools, or on contemporary natural science, but they can consider classical authors as well such as Locke, Goethe or Herder (see Pallasmaa 2005; Classen 2007; Candlin 2008). As Constance Classen notes, in contrast to the modern concept, before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sight was held as superficial, childish level of inquiry, indeed, as a kind of entertainment in terms of the empirical learning conducted in collections. On the other hand, higher authority was attributed to touch and the complex modalities of multisensory cognition. (Classen 2007, 906) When today’s scholars speak out for the re-emancipation of touch, their most common argument in all cases is the recognition of its epistemological relevance. This is none other than the finding that haptic cognition, with its imaginative, speculative and affective aspects, is not superfluous, but part of a meaningful being-in-the-world. (Candlin 2008, 278)

<sup>3</sup> “Until the eighteenth century at least – notes historian, Robert Mandrou – touch remained one of the master senses. It checked and confirmed what sight could only bring to one’s notice. It verified perception, giving solidity to the impressions provided by the other senses, which were not as reliable.” (Mandrou 1976, 53)

#### 4. Tactility and status

As it is known, touch cannot be considered a modality as unified as sight or hearing. It contains a high number of physical aspects (pressure, surface, heat, motion, etc.), and it demonstrates the ambivalence and reciprocity that come into play between the sensing body and the sensed. This interplay is surrounded by broad socio-cultural meanings. Thus, in the tactile practices of pre-modern museums, a multitude of aspects, values and motifs formed a hybrid unity. (Classen 2007, 907) Magical or religious aspirations could be expressed through touch: stroking the statue of the ruler, the goddess or the lion, one could symbolically come into direct contact with beings very unlikely to encounter in everyday life. By touch, the sensing person received or believed to receive the powers of the sensed; or vice versa: by touch, special power could be given by the touching person to the object. Similarly, in the practice of relics in the pre-modern collections, the exhibited item might be conceived as a mediator of forces and dynamisms. However, it also uses its mediator status in a more profane context: wearing the hand marks of its creator or its former user, it makes contact with named or anonymous historical persons. It is a very special contact, since it is imbued with the potential to imagine, which goes hand in hand with such an undefined relation. (Candlin 2008, 287) Touch, of course, could be an expression of simple curiosity, but in times of the early collections it was held to be the reliable means of deep scientific cognition.<sup>4</sup>

Last but not least, touch is the gesture of possession; it establishes a direct relation between the touching and the touched. It refers back to the original relation of the collection and its collector, which is inherited later by the museologist. In modernity the right to touch is denied from the audience, but allowed for the museum professional, who acts as the representative of the pub-

lic or private owner and is reluctant to recognize the remains of his or her sensual curiosity, a desire for possession or even faith-based attachment, because at the level of professional museology, tactile action can be acknowledged legitimate only as a means of institutional work.

In her studies, Fiona Candlin points out the anomalies of the situation, while combining her insights in the field of museology with contemporary social policy issues, namely the problem of equal opportunity and cultural access for the disabled. (2004) Candlin's questions are disarming: how can the museum fulfill its social mission to provide extensive accessibility to its collection if its existing practice reflects a social image that does not meet the ideas of advanced democracies, because it excludes the disabled community, especially the visually impaired? What does the presence of a blind person do to the museum? What challenge does this morally irrefutable presence mean for the museum? And there's a reverse question: can a place still be called a museum, where you can freely handle the exhibited materials?

The tension between the questions is all too clear: the individual (regardless of ones physical abilities) wants to learn, experience and have fun in the museum, and has all the rights to do that. The museum, on the other hand, has the duty and obligation to care for its collection for future generations. These two aspects cannot be fully balanced if we remain within the paradigm of the museum experience founded on a subject-object relation.<sup>5</sup> The reconsideration of the museum experience as multirelational and multidirectional that involves intersubjective, performative and atmospheric elements, in other words the conceptual involvement of intention-driven bodies and meaningful spatial situations in the creation of museum experience would add new aspects to the dilemma. Here, I cannot do more than to

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<sup>4</sup> Modernity could not justify the hybrid character of the early collections: by dissociating religion, art and science, important aspects of touching experience were compromised, and ultimately tactility was banned.

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<sup>5</sup> Ken Uprichard, a senior conservator from British Museum formulates the problem of asymmetry saying "If we just had to preserve the collections, we'd put them in a room, we'd lock them in a controlled environment and throw away the key, but we don't do that, we put them on display." (quoted in Candlin 2004, 75)



draw attention to this and to notice that our present museum tactics try to smuggle fragments of presence into the exhibited past held for the future, and vice versa: in the midst of an orgiastic present time it takes precautionary measures for the future.

Candlin also points out a blind spot in the preservation-access aporia: the conservation principle can be interpreted as a return of the repressed anxiety of status. According to her view, the asymmetry of the authorized sensory modalities in museums, in which professionals are allowed to touch the items while the visitors, even the visually impaired are banned to do so, is actually a symptom of the unsteady social status of the museological expertise, and of the anxiety about the possibly serious nature of lay experiences. From this, it can be deduced that in the context of museums, the theoretical debate around touch has never really been an innocent speculation, but it was a façade of power conflict. As a matter of fact, the questions concerning the identity and the status of the one who is allowed to touch, and the process of the authorization to do so, seem to be much more important.<sup>6</sup> As Candlin warns, conservation of items masks the conservation of territory. It is mirrored also in the views of the 19<sup>th</sup> century art connoisseur, Gustav Waagen, who thinks it would be better, for the sake of the optimal preservation, if visitors with inadequate physical status, especially when they arrive en masse were excluded from the National Gallery, arguing that “the exhalation produced by the congregation of large numbers of persons, falling like vapour upon the pictures, tend to injure them.” (Ibid., 76)

This alarming desideratum by Waagen in fact is still not totally alien to everyday practice: while the presence of persons acting according to the protocols is confirmative for the institution, the uninitiated, uneducated, dirty-handed or disabled visitors are considered to be undesirable. Moreover, the latter also carry an addition-

al threat: their unclean hands, incapable to limit the desire of touch, contaminate not only the immaculate cultural heritage, but symbolically the collectors and the guardians as well. Therefore their actions, which insult the job of the museum professional, recall the old horrors of sacrilege and treason. (Classen 2007, 908)

Candlin neutralizes this widespread concern when she recognizes: the notion of “museum conservation” refers not only to the professional preservation of the items, but also to safeguard this professional preservation practice, including all the related power relations and social statuses. The same duality returns at the visitor site as well: the promotion of cultural heritage is never just a technical matter, whom the museum has to take care of. It is also the responsibility of the individual cultural player as well, which prevails in the forms of personal, mental and embodied knowledge and individual transfer, and cannot be subjected to the hierarchy of predetermined statuses.

The modern churches of art and sciences, and the priesthood of professionals working within form the paradigm of a vicarious culture. Even Heidegger raised his word against this, when he emphasized that “the manner of the proper preservation of the work is created and prefigured for us only and exclusively by the work itself,” and “as knowing, preservation of the work is the sober standing-within the awesomeness of the truth that happens in the work.” (2002, 41-42) The visitor is therefore the preserver who becomes an heir to culture. And in the latter’s capacity, his or her physical and mental presence is not only up to his or her personal arbitrariness and leisure, but also to a felt cultural commitment. The only question left is how can a human being, whose ordinary and least conscious experience is provided by the modalities of embodied cognition, become an heir to a culture when sight and mental understanding are the sole legitimate instruments for undertaking this responsibility.

Candlin’s analysis convincingly clarifies: the controversial principles of preservation and access do not in fact create an insoluble conflict: in the day-to-day prac-

<sup>6</sup> “The status of who does the touching and knowing is crucial rather than the use of touch per se and that resistance to touch is as closely connected to the conservation of territory as it is to the preservation of objects.” (Ibid., 72)

tice, even the modern museum praxis provides space for the otherwise prohibited tact.<sup>7</sup> The actual tension is more social in nature: who, when, on what and why can touch or not touch? And how would the museum expertise and the expert status be redefined if the possibility of tactile cognition – even in a limited way – would be extended to laymen as well?

### 5. Tactility in theory and practice

To the questions above, Candlin does not respond satisfactorily, but offers plenty of guidance, which can be complemented by further considerations in cases of ethnographic, scientific or design collections. If we seek to gain results that can be studied for practical purposes in terms of showcasing, it is important to clarify the needs and positions that we can recognize as legitimate:

(1) Above all, we accept the diagnosis of Gumbrecht, according to which in our present cultural situation, which is abundant in meaning effects, “presence effects have so completely vanished that they now come back in the form of an intense desire for presence.” (2004, 20) In the museum space, this means that visitors also want to get in touch besides gaining intellectual knowledge. They want to get in touch with the object and with materiality through the object, and also with former creators and users. (Candlin 2008, 285) In historical collections, visitors want to touch the past in some ways – and even their eyes are offended if they find out, they only see replicas. (Classen and Howes 2006, 217)

(2) In museums where there are collections from objects of everyday life (of folk, craft or industrial items), the access by sight can only provide a low degree of cognition, because “the exhibits cannot by action demonstrate their fitness for use” —as the typographer Edward Johnson writes about the 1933 exhibit of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (cited in Mitchell 2012, 9). Usability is, of course, not seen as a value in itself, it is

valued in relation to the life context in which and for which it has been produced.

(3) Objects created for use, and immersed in the habitual – from remains of tribal life to relics of space exploration – refer to forms of life that partially overlap with the visitor’s life, and are partially different as well. The problem is that regarding “his own family goods and chattels all five senses confer in daily judgement, [while in the museum] he must be content with Sight alone.” (Ibid.) This reduction in sensorial modalities makes it impossible to experience the otherness according to its scale, which would be the core pedagogical aim of the museum. Classen and Howes give voice to the requirement that the objects with meaningful cultural distance should be experienced in their original sensory dimensions, instead of subjecting them to our scopic regime. (Classen and Howes 2006, 212) In order that these objects could offer a productive critique on our cultural presence and to perceive their meanings and contexts as vividly as possible, we need to reconstruct the sensorial modalities that are encoded in them as much as we can.

(4) The exploration of perceptual models that characterize each cultural paradigm must be carried out by the historical and comparative anthropology of the senses.<sup>8</sup> This task is unavoidable also in terms of material culture studies. Not only social meanings are encoded in objects but a perception model as well. The object is not simply something to be read or decoded as a sign, but it must be physically perceived beforehand. In addition to the social or cultural biography of the object, we also need to discover its perception history, and we should look for ways to convey it in the exhibition practice.

(5) The museum has sprung from the culture of travelling and collecting. That’s why it is not surprising that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the emerging tourism industry provided not only increased number of visitors, but also posed a challenge for the museum. The presence effects, whose lack is felt by the audience in necropolis-like

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<sup>7</sup> Although “the curator’s touch is perceived to be qualitatively different from that of the casual visitor” – writes Candlin. (2004, 77)

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<sup>8</sup> A pioneering work is Mark M. Smith’s *Sensing the Past* (2008).

museums (especially in collections of foreign folk culture, material culture or industrial design), are obtainable for the public in the field of tourism, even if not in the same form. Shelley Ruth Butler rightly points out that the museum should not be blocked from this competition, but must rejuvenate certain effects, learn from tourism, if its intention is to remain relevant in 21<sup>th</sup> century culture. (2003)

(6) The museum has been a place of learning from the beginning, and will remain for the time being. Classical interpretation theories have always tried to strike a balance between the text under investigation and the scope of its related contexts. In this way, the museum practice that operates with the cultural models of perception should decide from case to case how much it aims to direct the attention towards the immediate materials of the collection or to its contexts. When a greater emphasis is placed upon the former, the attitude of pure aesthetic reception is favored; in this case artworks are most likely to be exhibited, and the prohibition of touch is plain, understandable and well founded. In other cases, when the display focuses on the contextual scope or the practical use of the collection items (which is not surprising in ethnographic, technical or design exhibitions), it is much more difficult to maintain the principle of distancing that takes vision in a privileged position.

(7) The theoretical rehabilitation of touch does not, of course, solve all the practical problems that arise. The recognition of intersensory interaction between the tactile and the ocular, however, still provides practicable methods. Even a handful of authentic objects give the visitor some experience, which can be re-activated again when encountering objects available only for sight. Cooperation between sensory modalities does not stop when a partial limitation of the full sensorium occurs.

(8) Whether it is mere attraction, or the consequence of a disability policy, or the result of well-founded epistemological considerations, tactile tactics utilized in exhibitions should not replace a recognized imbalance with another one. As Gumbrecht has pointed

out, cultures, above all, need the co-operation of meaning effects and presence effects, and not the domination of one aspect. It is more about fluctuation and fragile balance rather than status quo carved in stone. Tactile tactics can bring back to museums the effects of the homely, the habitual and the life-like. At the same time, conceptual knowledge, through vision and discourse, can give a deeper perspective to these effects. By linking these approaches, tactility can find its way towards thinking, while vision can become sensually more refined.

For the museum, to ignore the scope of the full human sensorium and to entrust sight and a scientific jargon to animate dead exhibition objects is a tactical error. Nothing is able to animate the object and the human-environment relation better than human touch, the lived intercorporeality. On the other hand, Candlin notes how ironic it is when museums founded on the principle of the rationalistic and panoptic presentation, start experimenting with multi-sensorial techniques attracting irrational emotions, wanton phantasies, subjective empathy, or even mystical behavior to reach a larger number of paying audiences. Irrational moments are then attempted to transfigure into signposts of rationality. But when this happens, does it not question its original reason for existence? (Candlin 2008, 290-292) I do not intend to give the obvious answer too quickly, firstly because the consequences cannot be seen. However, I am ready to admit with Candlin, that instead of our belief in the boundlessness and the infallibility of our knowledge, the materialization and display of which would be the modern museum, it would be worthwhile to give room for the uncertain, the unclear, the imaginative, the tentative, and even the non-rational. In doing so, no dramatic novelty would happen, only an uncovering and recognition of something that has always been present in the visitor's practice. Since the audience has always been busy with a commute between the offered rationality and the desires, aspirations, imaginative impulses it brought. And even if license was officially

denied, the audience seized every opportunity to steal a little presence effect by touch.

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Looking back on the exhibition of the Finnish knotted carpets displayed in the 2013 Budapest Design Week and the “sensory trail” installed in it by the art students, it seems to me that the analysis of the visitors’ attitudes and the perspectives gained from the anthropology of perception proved to be undoubtedly decisive. Most of the exhibited objects at the time of their completion were created to address not only the eye. Their social meanings and the use of these carpets were determined not only by their appearance, but other sensorial aspects as well. Consequently, the question of sensory modalities is not a neutral one, but it as an inherent part of the meaning, which the museum wants to convey in the most authentic form. Although in the debate, at the time, it seemed that the museum professionals and the designer collaborators were going in opposite directions, the situation was exactly reversed: coming from different backgrounds, they tried to face the same challenge.

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## EMPATHY, CHRISTIAN ART AND THE BODY<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** Christianity has a fraught relationship with the body: bodily pleasure is a sinful distraction from the spiritual life of the immortal soul, yet it is hard to escape images of the, often tortured, bodies of Christ, martyrs and Saints in Christian art. There are images of Christ's suffering that elicit low-level empathy in the viewer, and there are depictions of God's high-level empathetic understanding of humanity. I argue that the latter—via depiction of the body of Christ—can reconfigure our conception of God and specifically his omniscience. This should be seen in terms of divine understanding, with empathy and love required for God's understanding of human beings.

**Keywords:** empathy, omniscience, Christianity, art, understanding, somaesthetics

As one approaches Caravaggio's *The Flagellation of Christ* down a long gallery in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, one starts to tense in sympathy with the tussling bodies, the knots in their muscles emphasized by the twisted loincloth, clothes, rope binding a switch, and crown of thorns.<sup>2</sup> Christ teeters, his body twisted in opposite directions, his knees buckle as the torturers pull his hair and kick his calf. Here, one's own bodily reactions are involved in coming to know what it is like to be beaten—what it like *for Christ* to be beaten. Our response to this painting involves empathy, that is, we come to share in the emotions and thoughts of those depicted. There are two kinds of empathy. There is low-level empathy, where the emotions and feelings of another are contagious. One can, for example, be deflated by the sadness of those around you. There is also high-level empathy. This is where the perspective of another is adopted, where, for example, I come to understand the thoughts that led to one person betraying another. Empathy involves 'the

sense of being emotionally and cognitively "in tune with" another person, particularly by feeling what their situation is like from the inside or what it is like for them'.<sup>3</sup>

Analytic somaesthetics highlights the role of the body in the knowledge we have of ourselves, the world, and others. In contrast, religion—and Christianity in particular—downplays the role of the body in favour of the immaterial soul.<sup>4</sup> Here, though, I explore how somaesthetic considerations can be brought to bear on the relation between religious art and how we conceive of God. Much religious art focuses on the body of Christ, and, the claim stressed here, is that our own bodies play a crucial role in our appreciation of such art and how this contributes to our understanding of religion. This dual role of the body is stressed by Richard Shusterman: somaesthetics 'treats the body not only as an *object* of aesthetic value and creation but also as a crucial sensory *medium* for enhancing our dealings with all other aesthetic objects'.<sup>5</sup> Further, my project embraces the multi-disciplinary and unifying approach of somaesthetics, drawing together, amongst other disciplines, the philosophy of religion, aesthetics, neuroscience and art history. I shall first consider the empathy we feel for the depicted Christ in various religious images, before moving on to artistic representations of God's empathy for us, and their relevance to how we should understand God's omniscience.<sup>6</sup>

### Sympathy for Christ

There are countless images of the dead or dying Christ: 'pietas' in which he is held by Mary, God, and by angels. It's hard not to be moved by some of these images. Look

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<sup>3</sup> Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2016, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> See Richard Shusterman, 'Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57(3), 1999, p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> Shusterman, 'Somaesthetics', p. 308.

<sup>6</sup> I should say, perhaps, that this paper is part of a genuine attempt to understand religion. I am not myself a Christian nor, I think, religious in any recognized sense. I am tempted to describe myself as, what Mark Johnson in his recent book calls, religiously 'tone-deaf', although, given the arguments of this paper, this does not seem the best description of my lack of faith since I can discern the kind of tones others can hear—or, rather, see—in Christian art; it's just that for me they are not accompanied by belief (Mark Johnson, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 17).

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<sup>1</sup> This is a shortened and revised version of an extended discussion of this topic in my paper, 'Art, Empathy and the Divine', forthcoming in *The Heythrop Journal*. (Early view: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/heyj.13054>.)

<sup>2</sup> Caravaggio (1607), *The Flagellation of Christ*, [oil on canvas], Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. Caravaggio plays with balance and twisted cloth to similar effect in *The Martyrdom of St. Matthew* (1600), [oil on canvas], San Luigi dei Francesi, Rome.

at the entwined hands and the dirty feet of Veronese's pieta, and at the way Michelangelo sculpts Mary's slumped body and Christ's fingers resting on her dress.<sup>7</sup> Via low-level empathy one comes to appreciate the suffering portrayed, which in turn leads to sympathy and compassion for Christ, Mary and others we see portrayed in anguish. In their masterly portrayals of the broken body of Christ counter-reformation artists had a wide repertoire of techniques to promote empathy. The Late Gothic revels in gore: spurting blood, bulging veins and wracked muscles crowd the walls of churches. Carlo Crivelli's *Dead Christ Supported by Two Angels* (1470) has thorns in his forehead and battered hands, with cherubs showing intense grief.<sup>8</sup> Physical aspects of the setting also aid empathy. The sharp corners of masonry in Antonello da Messina's *Pieta with Three Angels* and Caravaggio's *The Deposition* (1600–4) seem to dig into our own flesh.<sup>9</sup> Caravaggio's chiaroscuro and spotlighting were highly influential, with Italian, Spanish and Dutch artists adopting this way of focusing on the facial expressions and contorted bodies that elicit sympathy in the viewer. In Jose de Ribera's *The Trinity* (c. 1635), one's skin stretches with that of Christ. Ribera's forte is stretched, wrinkled and wounded skin—exploring, it has recently been argued by Edward Payne, relations and parallels between fabrics torn in struggle, the bodily skin of Christian martyrs, Saints and Christ, and the pictorial surface of the paintings themselves. Javier Portus notes that 'it would be difficult to find a seventeenth century painter in whose work there is such an abundance of martyred flesh'.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Paolo Veronese (1581), *Pieta*, [oil on canvas], Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Michelangelo (1499), *Pieta*, [marble], St. Peters Basilica, Rome.

<sup>8</sup> Carlo Crivelli (1470), *Dead Christ Supported by Two Angels*, [tempera on poplar], National Gallery, London.

<sup>9</sup> Antonello da Messina (1475), *Pieta with Three Angels*, [tempera on wood], Museo Correr, Venice, and Caravaggio (1603–4), *The Entombment of Christ*, [oil on canvas], Pinacoteca Vaticana, Vatican City.

<sup>10</sup> Jose Ribera (c. 1635), *The Trinity*, [oil on canvas], Museo del Prado, Madrid. Portus' claim is taken from *Ribera*, Barcelona: Poligrafa, 2011 (p. 84). For discussion of cloth, skin and canvas, see Edward Payne and Xavier Bray, *Ribera: Art of Violence*, London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 2018.

As we saw in Caravaggio's *Flagellation*, artists also play with rhythm and constrained movement. In a 14<sup>th</sup> Century painting of the crucifixion by Ugolino da Siena, *Crucifixion with the Madonna, Saint John and Angels*, one feels one's own torso twisting in rhythm to the opposed stances of Christ, Mary and John.<sup>11</sup> The art critic Bernard Berenson notes of Renaissance nudes that 'taughtnesses of muscle and those stretchings and relaxings and rippings of skin which, translated into similar strains on our own persons, make us fully realise movement'. The states of our own bodies mirror those of the bodies depicted in paintings. Neuroaesthetics is a recent development in which cognitive neuroscience investigates aesthetic experience. Relevant here are findings that indicate the mirror neuron system is involved in such empathetic engagement with art and our sensitivity to the posture and facial expressions of those in paintings, just as we are sensitive and receptive to the emotions and feelings of those around us.<sup>12</sup>

In viewing such paintings we experience both low-level empathy towards the depicted torments of Christ and, to some degree, high-level empathetic appreciation of his thoughts and experiences.<sup>13</sup> Through depiction of the redemptive role of Christ's bodily suffering we are also invited to share God's empathy *for us*. However, to

<sup>11</sup> Ugolino da Siena (n.d.), *Crucifixion with the Madonna, Saint John and Angels*, [tempera and gold on wood], Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Berenson, *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1896, pp. 86–7. Greg Curry investigates the kinds of mirroring and empathetic mechanisms that may be involved ('Empathy for Objects' in Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie, eds., *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 86–7). For the role of mirror neurons, see David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese 'Motion, Emotion and Empathy in Esthetic Experience', *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 11(5), 2007, pp. 197–205.

<sup>13</sup> Franciscans emphasize the role of suffering in worship and religious life, with flagellation and mortification of flesh aids to penance and meditation. Their focus on suffering and empathy resulted in a move from *Christus Triumphus* images, with Christ alive on the cross, triumphing over death, to images of the *Man of Sorrows*, and from child rulers to those who needed care and protection. This emphasis on the role of the body is also stressed in 'practical somaesthetics; which 'involves actually engaging in programs of disciplined, reflective, corporeal practice aimed at somatic self-improvement' (Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 45). Further work on the somaesthetics of religious practice would be illuminating.

explore such divine empathy I shall turn in the next section to more explicit representations of Christ's empathy with man.

### Divine Mindreading

There are various reasons to think that God must be able to empathize with us. First, understanding a person involves knowing what they are thinking, and philosophers of mind talk of this in terms of 'mindreading'. Elsewhere I have argued that divine mindreading must involve empathy.<sup>14</sup> In interpreting thinkers, we must empathize with them: understanding someone's words, thoughts and actions involves being able to think the thoughts that they entertained when they said, thought or performed them. An omniscient God understands all our thoughts and therefore in order to do so he must be capable of empathizing with us. I focus on the conceptual content of thought, whereas Linda Zagzebski is concerned with conscious experience. She argues that since 'God is cognitively perfect, he must grasp what it is like to be his creatures and to have each and every one of their experiences'. Such knowledge requires 'total empathy': the ability to 'empathiz[e] with every one of a person's conscious states throughout that person's entire life—every thought, belief, sensation, mood, desire, and choice, as well as every emotion'.<sup>15</sup>

Eleonore Stump relates empathy to the notion of personal presence—when, that is, one is present *with* another person or present *to* them.<sup>16</sup> Empathy with another can cause us to feel, in some sense, another's pain, and when this occurs another's presence is vivid. Presence is also a feature of our cognitive interaction with one another: as we communicate with each other, either verbally or perhaps by catching someone's eye,

we are present to each other. I am now present to you: *here, now, with you*.<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of a lecture, I look out at a sea of faces, but in catching your eye, or listening to your questions, I come to see you as a person. I am not merely aware of my own first-person experiences, nor am I merely aware of your objective, physical properties, those that can be apprehended from the third-person perspective; I am aware, rather, of your consciousness in the world—you become present to me as another person. In coming to see you in this way I adopt the second-person perspective. Such presence is magnified where there is love: 'there is a much greater degree of personal presence when two people, who are mutually close to one another in a loving relationship, are mutually mind-reading each other in intense shared attention'.<sup>18</sup> God too, Stump argues, can be present to us and we to him, both in divine mindreading and through divine love. There is, then, unilateral apprehension of another, when, for example, one empathizes with another's pain and in so doing their presence is manifest, and mutual awareness manifest in communication and love.

Artists have attempted to represent the kinds of empathy God and Christ show towards man. In Francisco Ribalta's *The Vision of St. Bernard*, Christ appears to Bernard while praying in Church, detaching himself from the cross in order to embrace him.<sup>19</sup> In Bernard's facial and bodily expression we see his sympathy for the suffering of Christ, and his love, but we also see Christ's reciprocal empathy and love for Bernard. Christ is not just aware of Bernard's love towards him, but also his pious beliefs, hopes and intentions concerning his life. Their joint-presence together, in Stump's sense, is beautifully expressed. In Tintoretto's *Christ Mocked*, we see

<sup>14</sup> See Dan O'Brien, 'God's Knowledge of Other Minds', *European Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*, 2013, 5(1), pp. 17–34.

<sup>15</sup> Linda Zagzebski, 'Omnisubjectivity: Why It Is a Divine Attribute', *Nova et Vetera* 14(2), 2016, pp. 438, 442.

<sup>16</sup> See Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 108–28.

<sup>17</sup> This paper was presented at the *Somaesthetics: Between the Human Body and Beyond* conference in Szeged, Hungary, May 14, 2018. The co-presence of speaker and audience is vivid to both, but the presence of an author is also manifest in their writing.

<sup>18</sup> Eleonore Stump, 'Omnipresence, Indwelling, and the Second-Personal', *European Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 5(4), 2013, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Francisco Ribalta (1625), *Christ Embracing St. Bernard*, [oil on canvas], Museo del Prado, Madrid.



Christ looking out at the viewer, looking at us, attempting to understand our humanity—attempting to empathize with us.<sup>20</sup> Similarly in Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*, his humanity emphasized in contrast to the metallic, inhuman arms of the soldiers who come to take him.<sup>21</sup> See also the searching eyes of Christ in Domenichino's *The Way to Calvary* and the eyes of St Bartholomew in Ribera's *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*,<sup>22</sup> where, as put by Edward Payne, 'he peers out into space and we stare back at him, our roles are instantly reversed: the victim transforms into a spectator and we become the subject of his gaze'.<sup>23</sup> Such eyes become almost the sole focus of devotional paintings such as icons and Veronica images. The latter are paintings of the veil of Veronica that was imprinted with Christ's face as he stopped to have his face wiped on the road to his crucifixion; these "'record" the anguished appearance of Christ as he looked at the holy women on his way to Calvary, so—as we look at these images—he gazes at us in the very same way'.<sup>24</sup>

### Seeing Things Anew

I suggest that religious art can loosen the grip of certain problematic ways of conceiving of God and his divine properties, with the emphasis here on representations of the body in Christian art. Analytic philosophers of religion conceive of omniscience in the following kinds of terms. Kenny defines it as the 'doctrine that, for all  $p$ , if  $p$ , then God knows that  $p$ '.<sup>25</sup> In Ribalta's *St. Bernard*,

however, we see an all-knowing Christ, but his is not an omniscience happily characterized by the claim that 'if  $p$ , Christ knows that  $p$ '. The kind of knowledge depicted is not seen in such quantitative terms; it is, rather, to be understood in terms of empathy and love. My claim, then, is that a painting such as this may reconfigure our conception of omniscience (or, perhaps, undo the distorting effect of analytic philosophy).

The art historian Otto Pacht argues that '[v]isual art, like music, can say things, in its own medium that cannot be said in any other'—'There is more to it [the history of art] than a mere illustration of the humanities'.<sup>26</sup> In one sense it is a familiar and persuasive claim that pictures can say more than words. Look at Rembrandt's drawing of a child being taught to walk.<sup>27</sup> It's breathtaking—actually, that's not quite the physiological reaction I have; rather, I feel weak-kneed (perhaps in sympathy with the child's faltering steps). The picture draws you in—you step, in turn, into the shoes of the proud child, the mother, and perhaps end with the milkmaid, surveying the scene, her stance reflecting her satisfaction at the child's progress. It is a drawing of a secular subject, but religious art can be similarly rich. A further way to think of the *sui generis* character of art is to note that artists not only depict familiar appearances; they can also make us see things anew. They can *reconfigure* our experience. Nelson Goodman claims that '[a] visit to an exhibition may transform our vision'; 'successful works transform perception and transfigure its objects by bringing us to recognize aspects, objects, and orders which we had previously underrated or overlooked'.<sup>28</sup> Rodin's sculpture of Balzac can be seen as reconfiguring our conception of the writer. Rodin's hulking figure is

<sup>20</sup> Jacopo Tintoretto (c. 1548–9), *Christ Mocked*, [oil on canvas], Private collection.

<sup>21</sup> Caravaggio (1602), *The Taking of Christ*, [oil on canvas], National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

<sup>22</sup> Domenichino (1610), *The Way to Calvary*, [oil on copper], Getty Museum, Los Angeles. Jose Ribera (1644), *Martyrdom of Saint Bartholomew*, [oil on canvas], MNAC, Barcelona.

<sup>23</sup> Payne and Bray, *Ribera*, p. 62.

<sup>24</sup> Gabriele Finaldi, *The Image of Christ*, London: National Gallery Press, 2000, p. 107. For a striking example of one such painting, see Catherine Puglisi and William Barcham, eds., *Passion in Venice. Crivelli to Tintoretto and Veronese: The Man of Sorrows in Venetian Art*, New York: Museum of Biblical Art Press, 2011, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Kenny, *The God of the Philosophers*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Otto Pacht, *Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method*, London: Harvey Miller, 1999, pp. 84, 137.

<sup>27</sup> This is one of David Hockney's favourite drawings and he describes it eloquently (see Craig Raine, 'Phantasmal Nudges of Pigment', *Times Literary Supplement*, No. 5924, October 14, 2016, p. 21). This drawing is in the British Museum (see Martin Royalton-Kisch, *Drawings by Rembrandt and His Circle in the British Museum*, London: British Museum Press, 1992, cat. no. 53). For buckling knees also see Caravaggio's *Flagellation* above.

<sup>28</sup> Nelson Goodman, and Catherine Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy & other Arts & Sciences*, Routledge: London, 1988, pp. 48, 22.

not the sedate man of letters usually portrayed. The folded arms and protruding stomach are resolute in the face of his torments; psychological turmoil suggested by (almost demonic) deformations of his skull. Catherine Lampert suggests that '[t]he troubled personal life of an artist who has no choice but to sacrifice domestic happiness, who works unrelentingly, needs solitude but craves approval, is somehow manifest in the raking angle and the huge, enveloping (and concealing) Dominican monk's robe'.<sup>29</sup> In Rodin, then, we have an artist who has reconfigured our conception and perception of a particular person. Perhaps art can play an analogous role in reconfiguring our conception of God.

### Knowledge and Understanding

'Knowledge' and 'understanding' are sometimes used to refer to the same thing, but there is an important sense of understanding where it is seen as a greater epistemic achievement than knowledge.<sup>30</sup> In understanding why one of my hostas is struggling in its current position in the garden I do not merely know that the hosta is not doing well. I also know that it's struggling because it's too dry and that it's native to marshy conditions. I also grasp certain modal relations: I know that it will continue to struggle if it remains where it is, and that it would improve if moved over by the pond. Understanding involves grasping the relations between individual items of knowledge—seeing how they fit together.<sup>31</sup> One is

therefore often said to have understanding of systems or bodies of knowledge. I can understand microeconomics and meteorology.

The distinction between knowledge and understanding also applies to our grasp of other minds. I can know that you are frightened of air travel without *understanding* this aspect of your character. To understand another, one needs more than merely to know the propositional content of their thoughts. I need, for example, to know the reasons for this fear, if there are any, and perhaps quite a bit about your personal history and how this fear has impacted on relationships and family life. Understanding a person involves appreciating what motivates them, not just which beliefs they hold, but which are important to them, which they might drop if push came to shove.

Understanding of another also involves empathy. Given how much time Mary spends in her garden it's easy to say that you believe that gardening is the most important thing for her, but you do not really understand her unless you can step into her shoes and appreciate what life would be like if that's the case, how other activities would not satisfy her in the same way, and how, for example, she might react if she discovered she were unable to garden any more.

Further, emotions can play an epistemic role in our coming to understand ourselves and others. They can reveal salient features of a situation, those that were not seen or could not be discerned in the absence of emotion. Fear, for example, can reveal danger, or, before an exam, it can provide one with self-knowledge that one has not worked hard enough. For Proust, 'suffering itself is a piece of self-knowing. In responding to a loss with anguish, we are grasping our love'.<sup>32</sup> Or, on a less tor-

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<sup>29</sup> Catherine Lampert, 'The Burghers of Calais, and the Monument to Balzac: "My Novel"' in C. Lampert, et al., eds., *Rodin*, London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2006, p. 102. The sculptures referred to are Auguste Rodin (1898), *Monument to Balzac*, [bronze], Boulevard du Montparnasse, Paris, and Vasselot's marble bust (1875), now in the Comédie Française.

<sup>30</sup> '[K]nowledge, as contemporary theories conceive it, is not and ought not be our overriding cognitive objective. For to treat it as such is to devalue cognitive excellences such as conceptual and perceptual sensitivity, logical acumen, breadth and depth and understanding, and the capacity to distinguish important from trivial truths. Even when Watson knows more than Holmes, he does not appear to be cognitively better off' (Catherine Elgin in Goodman and Elgin, *Reconceptions*, p. 152).

<sup>31</sup> See Mikael Janvid, 'Understanding Understanding: An Epistemological Investigation', *Philosophia*, 42(4), 2014, pp. 971–85, and Catherine Elgin, 'From Knowledge to Understanding' in Stephen Hetherington, ed., *Epistemology Futures*, Ox-

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ford: Clarendon, 2006, pp. 199–215.

<sup>32</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p. 267. For Nussbaum, however, such episodic feelings cannot provide this kind of knowledge. Such knowledge must be attained slowly, over time, only then can the evolving and dynamic nature of love be revealed, and this can only be communicated through narrative (*ibid.*, pp. 269–72). That is not to say, though, that emotions do not have the epistemic role I suggest (as pointed out by Mark Wynn,

tured view of love, laughter and fun are themselves pieces of self-knowledge—in finding oneself responding to the world *with another* in such a way, one grasps one's love for that person. Emotions can also provide insight into the minds of others. Love for a partner enables one to come to know the fine grain of their mental life—love in part constituted by such sensitivity. McPherson calls love that reveals in this way, 'transfiguring love'—love that, in my terminology, reconfigures what one sees and how one understands what one sees: '[t]here is a kind of intelligibility in the world that only comes into view when we are properly disposed and attuned to the world through an engaged standpoint of love'.<sup>33</sup> As Elgin puts it: emotion is 'an avenue of epistemic access, hence a contributor to the advancement of understanding.'<sup>34</sup>

My claim, then, is that divine omniscience should also be seen in this way. Since understanding is intellectually more demanding than mere knowledge, God's perfect mind should be seen in such terms. Such understanding is holistic: it does not merely involve knowledge of all true propositions, those concerning the beliefs, desires, hopes and intentions of thinkers; it also involves

knowing how these fit together. It must also involve empathetic engagement. And, lastly, love is required for such empathy to be total. We saw above that Bernard and Christ were jointly present with each other, and we saw their love—such empathy and love, I now suggest, an essential component of omniscience with respect to another person. Consideration of religious art has not enabled us to engage in analysis of perennial debates concerning what are termed the omni-properties of God, debates that focus on certain problems associated with them. How, for example, can God have knowledge of all true propositions when, given his existence is not spatio-temporal, he cannot come to know (indexical) truths about what is happening *here* and *now*.<sup>35</sup> Christian art, rather, focuses on the body of Christ and thus we come to empathize with his suffering and also with the way he understands us as flesh and blood human beings. Here I have explored how artists facilitate such low and high-level empathy with Christ and how this may enable us to see the thinness of the analytic philosopher's notion of omniscience and perhaps therefore not to feel the pull of such traditional problems in the philosophy of religion.

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*Emotional Experience and Religious Understanding: Integrating Perception, Conception and Feeling*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); to do so, according to Nussbaum, they must feature in such narrative understanding.

<sup>33</sup> David McPherson, 'Transfiguring Love' in Fiona Ellis, ed., *New Models of Religious Understanding*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> Catherine Elgin, 'Emotion and Understanding' in George Brun, Ulvi Doguoglu and Dominique Kuenzle, eds., *Epistemology and Emotion*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, p. 33.

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<sup>35</sup> For details of such incompatibility arguments, see Yujin Nagasawa, *God and Phenomenal Consciousness*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 17–73.

## VIRTUALITY VERSUS SIMULACRUM

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**ABSTRACT:** In the paper I focus on the concept of virtual art gone so viral recently. My statement is that in the literature discussing the concept of 'virtual' in art the word is either undefined or used in a way which makes it interchangeable with simulacrum. The main aim to be achieved by most of the art works in question is *immersion* which is, as I have tried to show, is exactly the opposite of what is to be achieved by virtuality. It is a *fake* presence in the absence, unlike virtuality that can be defined by the *real* absence in the presence. To prove my statement I return to the history of art prior to new media arts in order to show that the new technological devices used by new media art works are not only unnecessary for making an art work virtual but sometimes they literally hinder it from being able to become something more than the modernist presentism and the society of the spectacles imposed upon both the art works and the beholder.

**Keywords:** virtuality, virtual art, simulacrum, immersion

In the last two decades we have been accustomed to using the concepts of 'virtual reality' and 'virtual art' without truly knowing what exactly 'virtual' in these expressions should mean. Looking up, for example, the book entitled *Virtual Art* written by Oliver Grau, one of the most famous proponents of these concepts, we are surprised to find no definition of the 'virtual' in the whole text. Instead, what we get is another concept introduced, that of 'immersion', referring to the experience of the beholder encountering a piece of 'virtual art'. Why can the word 'virtual' be found in the title of Grau's book and how can it be connected, if at all, to the concept of immersion? To learn that, we first have to make it clear what 'virtual' really means.

Instead of getting lost in the long history of the concept it may suffice here to recall the definition given by Gilles Deleuze in his *Difference and Repetition*. 'The virtual', he claims, 'is not opposed to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: "Real without being actual, ideal

without being abstract"; and symbolic without being fictional.' (p. 208) Three pages later he adds a very important note to the definition. In it he says that 'the only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is "realization". By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality in itself. The process it undergoes is that of "actualization".' (p. 211)

The problem with this definition is that it is only a formal one. The real definition would be the following: something is virtual if it exists in the way that its spatio-temporal coordinates are indefinable. It means that we are fully aware of its existence without exactly knowing where and when it takes place. This indefinability is due, however, not to a lack in our knowledge but the elusiveness of the virtual as such. Here elusive is something that emerges from the thing itself and is in accordance with its own nature.

Let's take an example, say, that of a digital image. Digital images are often called virtual images. But why exactly so? Needless to say, it is not because they are only possible images. Digital images are a special and particular kind opposed to analogue images and they exist to the same extent as the latter. Then they are perhaps *virtual*, we could say, because their reference is inscrutable and we can never know if what they show is something real or not. The problem with this answer is that if this were the case then, by the same logic, we might as well take not only the digital images, but all paintings or sculptures depicting something as virtual. But we do not. The more appropriate answer is that we call a digital image virtual in as much as it exists in a medium which enables it to circulate at an almost infinite speed and to show up absolutely anywhere and everywhere, while nobody knows where, when and by whom it was made, how many times it was altered, in how many versions it exists etc. We can find it in many places, whereas we can never be positive about it having been definitively deleted. The only way to stop its permanently changing life is to actualize it: to download or to print it out, i.e. to transpose it into a medium, which

puts an end to the endless circulation and in which an actual token of the virtual image is stranded.

What did we exclude following Deleuze's definition from the meaning of virtual? Again, the virtual is real without being actual, ideal without being abstract and symbolic without being fictional. What do these distinctions mean and what feature may join them together? The first part of the definition, i.e. the 'real without being actual' means that the virtual has no place in the world at all. It has no permanent connections to anything and has no meaningfully structured history. It cannot be seen or felt or found or intentionally made. It is beyond experience. It can only be met by its traces and symptoms. The virtual comes always too early (fancy, utopia, fantasy) or too late (myth, trauma, fossil, archive), or if it eventually comes up in the present will never be embedded in the stream of time (event, tragedy, comedy, love, invention, creation). That is to say, the virtual is outside of the actual reality, it is not a component of the actual world (including its past, its anticipatable future and its unrealized possibilities), for it is not a component of the world *as a meaningful whole*. What does the second part of the definition, i.e. the 'ideal without being abstract' mean? Ideal is something that has too many connections. Ideal is a multiplicity, an aggregate of many inconsistent perspectives. Abstraction, by contrast, means to spot and pull out some features from the world ignoring all the others in order to put them in a relation from which they can develop their own system. The ideals never constitute a system, a second world. That's why they can remain both closer to the world and freer from it. They are faced like *problems* in the world, like incomprehensibilities inside a comprehensible whole which must be solved, eased, cured for the sake of the whole's consistence. It doesn't fit in it and if it does only at the expense of having been narrowly and tightly connected to the world and becoming actual or conversely, of having lost all its connections in disappearing as a problem (we can 'let the problem go' – as it is said).

The abstract being refilled with concreteness without, however, rejoining to the real world, makes a new world be born, that of the fictional. Symbolic without being fictional – that was the third part of the definition cited. Fictional is something that has an own world equipped with laws, histories, facts, characters of its own. Fictional world, however, is not connected to the real one at all. Its only endeavor is to hold the outside world back and to keep its particular whole together. Fictional is a world disconnected from the real world which still can be a self-sufficient, full-blown world in itself. Symbolic here means something rather imaginary than institutional. In spite of his intellectual relationship to Lacan the concept of 'symbolic' in Deleuze's definition seems rather to mean what Lacan denoted with 'imaginary'. Although Deleuze didn't write much about the concept of symbol, neither before nor after his *Difference and Repetition*, when he did, however, he did it in the following way: 'The locomotive [in Zola's *The Beast Within*] is not an object, but an epic symbol, a great Phantasm, like the ones which often appear in Zola's work, reflecting all of the themes and situations of the book.' (Deleuze 1990: 330) According to the sentence, symbolic certainly refers to something that is free to the point of not being constrained by the rules of any particular world for, unlike fiction, a symbol has deep, unclear, arborescent meaning which can unexpectedly make connections with many places, times or other meanings in this world while remaining much more unbound than any component in a fictional world. Symbolism, as against Fictionalism, prefers fancy, daydream, nightmare, fantasy, hallucination to a life in the world of imagination.

To make the distinction between virtual and actual more clear, I am referring to some examples from the History of Art in the last one-and-a-half Centurie. The first example is a randomly chosen Impressionist painting, a not too famous one, the *Landscape near Monte-Carlo* of Claude Monet painted in 1883. While we take a look at the picture I mention that in the history of immersive pictures and arts this era happens to be repre-

sented by the panorama and cyclorama pictures. Cyclorama and panorama pictures truly give an illusion of being inside, and even of being there and then in the depicted scene. Why should it be, however, called virtual picture apart from the fact that it brings closer and is forcing to pass the border from the represented to the physical world and to conquer at least that little parcel of the latter inside the Cyclorama?

What painting did Monet and his friends invent in the meantime as compared to cyclorama picture? Based on modern Sensualism they created a kind of picture in which image (the mental entity) and picture (the object supporting paint) had been strictly dissociated in order to make the former as lucid and intense as possible. The mental image was supposed to be the clearest possible considering that it was born only on the retina of the painter or the beholder. And although it may be justified to retort that there has not ever been any picture in the long history of art that would only have been a material surface covered by paint without being an image in the constitution of which the beholder had a crucial part, yet the endeavor of the Impressionist painters was undoubtedly to intensify the beholder's partaking to the extreme point where the image loses all its direct connections to the picture including the most material element of the latter, the paint itself. The paradox of this endeavor is that it can only be fulfilled by making the picture as material as possible, i.e. by abjuring any underpainting and glazes. Accordingly, the problem of the Impressionists was not with the reference. They want as much to scan the waves of visual energy of the outer (perceived) or the inner (represented, fancied) world as to make it by releasing the image from any particular reference either in the outer or in the inner world. Impressionist picture is subjective only in the sense that it emerges in the eye of the painter or any viewer. But it has nothing to do with anyone's sensibility if not with the human's as such. The place where it comes into the world is not an actual place neither being connected to anyone's inner world nor to that particular place, the room of the exhibition the picture happens to hang in. It

is there and isn't there projecting an image into the room to the moment when somebody goes there and takes a look at the picture. From this very moment the virtual image has been actualized in a particular couple of eyes. It is not a *trompe l'oeil*, on the contrary, it is a pure image. While perceiving the actualized image, however, the viewer doesn't see the picture as object any more. The price to be paid for gaining a pure mental image is losing the object to be looked at. If we want to regain the picture we need to actualize it. It is not so difficult to do with an Impressionist picture – we only need to step some closer and instead of the previously actualized image we get back the physically actual picture. This basic structure of the Impressionist painting concentrating on the sharp division made between the image and the picture created a kind of virtual image which made the virtual attainable by sharpening its contrast with the actual up to an abstract dialectic (either... or...). So what the Impressionists really achieved was not the perfect representation of any inner or outer actuality but the pure image and the pure sensation. This is the image that Bergson talked about in the first sentences of his *Matter and Memory* and did so almost at the same time when Monet painted the *Landscape near Monte-Carlo*. 'We will assume for the moment that we know nothing of theories of matter and theories of spirit, nothing of the discussions as to the reality or ideality of the external world. Here I am in the presence of images, in the vaguest sense of the word...' (Bergson 1988: 17). According to Bergson making a world is to make these floating virtual images anchor as perception, memory, imagination, cognition etc.

My second example is a drip painting of Jackson Pollock titled *One: Number 31* from 1950 which doesn't mean, of course, that there were no other virtual images of various kinds between the time of Impressionism and Abstract Expressionism. One of the most famous sentences of Clement Greenberg, based mainly on Pollock's works, is the following: 'The Old Masters created an illusion of space in depth that one could imagine oneself walking into, but the analogous illusion created by the

Modernist painter can only be seen into; can be traveled through, literally or figuratively, only with the eye' (Greenberg 1993: 90). What exactly does this sentence mean? First of all, Greenberg claims that the characteristic of modern painting is not its literariness or concreteness, i.e. not a kind of anti-illusionism. Modern painting does make an illusion that differs from that of the old painting only in its nature and not in its possible degree. At first glance, however, the end of the sentence seems to contradict this claim considering that the expression 'only with the eye' in itself could be interpreted as a kind of restriction. Is it, however, really a restriction and not more of an expansion or even a piece of disengagement?

Taking a look at the picture the only thing we can see is a tangle of lines in various colors, lengths and thicknesses and flecks and patches. Moreover, we cannot really be sure if the picture is not upside down. And our doubt is not totally inappropriate since the picture was painted laid down on the floor from all possible directions so it is really no more than a piece of arbitrary convention to view it in the way we view a picture hanging on the wall. However, it is undeniably a picture and not only in the sense that it has a frame that cuts it out of its surroundings but also in that more restricted sense that it creates an illusion of some other space different from that of the exhibition room. So it is not only a picture but also an image creating an illusion of a 'somewhere else'. What is this 'somewhere else' indeed? It cannot be somewhere else in the world we live in because it doesn't depict anything we might recognize and what is more, it cannot be some fictional place either, i.e. some place in another world because a fictional world, in spite of not really existing out there remains a world 'that one could imagine oneself walking into' as Greenberg wrote above.

A modernist painter from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, someone like Malevich or Kandinsky, might answer this question by claiming that it must then surely be some cosmic space. Cosmic space doesn't possess the qualitative distinction of above and below that terrestrial space does. It is, however, a space that envelopes hu-

man being in his/her whole physical existence even if (s)he cannot dwell in it. Cosmic space is too big to be habitable yet it has scales and coordinates unifying it. And it is so because cosmic space doesn't only *contain* our whole flesh and blood existence but also the whole world as its widest conceivable context for all human intentionality in the Husserlian sense of the word. How large is, however, the space that we enter by our eyes looking at the picture of Jackson Pollock? If, suspending the habit of picture viewing we inherited from the time of the Renaissance, we step very close up to Pollock's painting we will be surprised at experiencing that the picture can also be viewed as an image and not only as a painted surface even from that close. And what can be seen on that little part of it is a space as huge as that of the whole picture. Or, to be exact, the two spaces are incommensurable. Detached from the whole every little part of the picture is able and even willing to grow to a cosmic scale, and having done so, it can no more be localized within the space of any larger, encompassing parts or that of the whole. So unlike terrestrial and even cosmic space this particular pictorial space in question doesn't have a scale system. And this is exactly what Greenberg's distinction between 'walking into' and 'traveling through only with the eye' points out. The pure optical illusion Greenberg talks about virtualizes the beholder in the way that in order to enter this space (s)he has to leave all his body behind, including all his senses, except for vision. And without body (s)he lacks the point of reference to which the different scales could be correlated.

The painting *One: Number 31* of Pollock is an immersive picture. It may be, however, asked whether immersion is what makes it virtual or, on the contrary, virtuality is what makes it immersive. Neither is the case. For there exist immersive pictures without being virtual as well as virtual pictures without being immersive. My third example is one of the latter.

The third example is the picture entitled *Overdrive* (1963) of Robert Rauschenberg. As opposed to Pollock's *One: Number 31* it is a picture without any deep space of

its own. It seems to be no more than a solid, flat surface covered by things as diverse as possible: photographs, drawings, imprints, patches of paint; images, diagrams, signs, abstract painterly gestures. Some represent something, while others don't, and the ones that do, do it in a way different from all the others. The whole picture, as far as its title suggests, intends to represent the state of mind of a human being living in a modern urban environment. Apart from the title, however, there is nothing that could integrate the divergent elements and anchor them as a unified image in the world by localizing the elements in a mind being the picture of a unified world. Moreover, it might be asked whether *Overdrive* is not a picture raising the same question Heidegger had raised twenty-five years earlier concerning world picture but giving a completely different answer to it. As it is well known Heidegger took issue with modern science that, according to him, transforms the whole world including the human being into an object 'placed in the realm of man's knowing and of his having disposal' (Heidegger 1977: 130). He treated modern science as an ideology that makes of the world a mental representation by rendering it separated and objective. And his only hope was to get rid of all such objectifying pictures and return to the world itself to the point of being-in-the-world, i.e. being totally immersed in it. And he spoke so in an era of totalitarian ideologies, himself being completely immersed in the most dangerous one as it was recently so blatantly confirmed by his Black Notebooks.

Rauschenberg's picture is as distant and objectified as the world picture Heidegger talks about. As I mentioned above it is not an image at all but only a surface covered by different elements among which a few pictures can also be found representing something or other but the way they are applied to the surface and put together totally thwarts all our intentions to enter the visual space either by 'walking into it' or by 'traveling through it only with the eye'. Some elements are but ready-mades cut out from a book or a magazine, others are iterated and put side by side. Both stop the eye on the surface. Furthermore, the assembling of the ele-

ments also keeps the viewer at a distance making any immersion impossible, considering that although these elements may sometimes hint at some deep space by their representative content, the direction the single elements should be viewed from is permanently changing. So as opposed to Pollock's painting, which *could* be seen from many different directions, this is a picture that *should* be seen from the same amount of directions. Namely, Pollock's picture simply ignores its own frame for its lines sometimes transverse it and return at another place so that the whole picture looks but a detail of an infinite whole, i.e. an almost arbitrary cut-out. And this fact converts each particular point of view into an entrance to the visual space rendering the former much less important than the inner space itself. They all still remain viewpoints offering a provisional perspective of the whole, unifying the picture from without. By contrast, Rauschenberg's picture holds the viewer away, in the outer space, while none of the possible viewpoints is able to unify it. Or, to be exact, the picture can be entered, but in doing so, the viewer can only get inside the space of one of the picture's borrowed details, if it happens to be a picture by itself. So being disappointed (s)he returns to the outer space and keeps searching for the appropriate point of view. And stepping back from the picture (s)he has the same experience: there is neither a distance from which all its parts could be discerned at the same time, nor is there any segue between the distant and the close view. Briefly, the beholder gets no place to view the picture from either inside or outside. Yet, the thing faced is not a concrete object but a flat, framed surface covered by representative elements, and what is more, the procedure it was produced by embeds all its elements in the very homogeneous surface. It is not a concrete, billboard-like surface, the so called 'flatbed picture plain' named by Leo Steinberg, which Rauschenberg produced in his combine paintings a few years earlier, but a silkscreen print that contains the elements instead of only supporting them. So it should be, in principle, an image as well as a picture. And it definitely is: the virtual *image* of something irrepre-



sentable, the invisible image of being overdriven experienced by the beholder through his/her own becoming-virtual in the process of perceiving the *picture*.

The three examples discussed so far represent three different ways of making a picture virtual. Virtuality as a way of being, however, is not confined to the realm of pictures. On the contrary, it can be engendered in ever so many ways in various domains. In the psyche for example it may emerge as a trauma, i.e. as an experience that can neither be remembered nor forgotten. A trauma is always present in the psyche in its particular way of absence – it is there and not there and it is everywhere and nowhere at the same time and is sending the signals of its existence through symptoms. Or it can be engendered in the body as a phenomenon that is called by Deleuze ‘a body without organs’ – an aject body that has lost its capacity to unify itself in the form of an organism. Or it can be engendered in history as myth. Myth is not fiction, for it took place in this world and it is taken as a story that did really happen sometime, but in an antediluvian time so to speak, which preceded human or even natural history – in other words it happened in a past which had never been present being the source of history itself. And virtuality can also be engendered in the future as some post-apocalyptic time, a time after history, and what is more, right now in our very present: some ecologists say that the ecological catastrophe has already befallen us, it already exists in its virtual form and what we are facing is only its process of actualization.

I chose the foregoing examples from the realm of pictures in order to make the contrast between virtualization and simulation all the more obvious. Jean Baudrillard, the most famous proponent of the concept of simulation in the eighties, writes: ‘To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t... But the matter is more complicated, since to simulate is not simply to feign: “Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Some who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms.” (Littré) Thus, feigning or dissimulating leaves the reality princi-

ple intact: the difference is always clear, it is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between “true” and “false”, between “real” and “imaginary”.’ (Baudrillard 1983: 8) Facing this phenomenon Baudrillard draws the conclusion that ‘simulation thus begins with a liquidation of all referentials’ and announces the age of ‘the divine irrelevance of pictures’. Is this, however, the only conclusion that can be drawn from the very situation? And is this a true conclusion at all? If a picture doesn’t have any reference or if it has a false one, does it mean that it becomes a simulacrum? I don’t think so. There are a lot of pictures without any reference, the abstract or concrete pictures for instance, and there are a lot of pictures with false reference, the fictional ones, and none of these are simulacra. Baudrillard is right that simulacrum can have something to do with reference but it is not its relation to reference that makes it a simulacrum. Namely, there exist referential as well as irreferential simulacra and the former can work more easily and maybe more efficiently than the former because it can take advantage of the belief we have in the one and only world, i.e. *the* world we live in. In case of a simulacrum, however, this belief doesn’t primarily concern the reference, i.e. something outside the picture but the perception itself. Being inside a simulacrum one takes the percepts as real and not their references and this is exactly what the irreferential simulacrum makes obvious. Consequently, the core of the problem of simulation is rather the age-old and well-known problem of make-believe and not that of reference.

Simulacrum is an image, it cannot be otherwise, even if a very peculiar one. It is an image feigning not to be a picture, feigning not to have any medium or support. It tries to conceal its own frame, which is always there in one form or another, and tries to bring the percept (and not the reality) as close to the beholder as possible. That is why it needs immersion. Not every kind of immersion is a simulacrum considering that there are situations, even in everyday life (a love affair is one of them for example), in which one can be immersed to the

extent of neglecting almost everything else, but it seems to be quite sure that a simulacrum cannot be other than immersive in order to be able to engender the belief in question. And this very belief should encompass all our cognitive capacities: it has to cover the perceptual faith on what Merleau-Ponty based his phenomenology but it also has to abolish the famous 'psychical distance' favored in aesthetics by Edward Bullough among others and what is more, it even has to inhibit the beholder's taking any reflexive attitude concerning the ontological status of what is experienced. That is the reason why I claimed that simulation can work the best if it is based on our everyday experience. And here we get to the paradox of simulation. The main purpose of constructing a simulation is to create an absolute presence in something absent and the most perfect way to do so is to base it on our everyday experience familiar to everyone; however, if we manage to do so it simply loses its sense. Why else would we want to make a double of this world if not for the purpose of changing something in it? But the more we change, the more unfamiliar the simulated 'world' immediately becomes and then we are not able to believe in it any longer. The only way to get rid of this paradox would be the elimination of the dual structure of simulation, the elimination of the distinction between real and unreal. But this distinction is a constitutive feature of simulation – without the distinction of the real and the unreal there is no simulation. So what remains is only a schizophrenic endeavor of trying to totalize the simulation while hoping that this very totalization won't cease to be a simulation. I think that this is what is called Virtual Reality or Virtual World in recent theories. The latter is an expression which, in my opinion, simply doesn't make any sense: a world cannot be virtual and the virtual cannot make a world because the virtual simply lacks the coherence and reliability required for anything to be recognized by us as a world. But the former, the virtual reality, does definitely make sense: in philosophy it refers to a part or to a kind of reality considering that reality consists of two different parts, the one is actual and the other is virtual. In recent theories

of virtual reality, however, the expression has a completely different meaning: as far as I can see it functions as a final idea (*Zweckidee*) referring to a future or maybe to a present condition of a system of mediation which has already been made as complete as to become reality itself. I don't know whether we have already reached this condition or not but one thing seems to be sure: if we have then it is not a simulation any longer in which we can be *immersed* but a new reality in the proper sense of the word in which we must be (re)born in a new body with new kinds of senses. And what is more, to "enter" this very reality we may have to forget everything we brought with us from our good old world for being able to feel at home in it. It is truly not an immersion any longer but a kind of *incorporation* about which the new computer game theories have already begun to ponder (Calleja 2011: 167-179). Today nobody knows yet what will happen when it is managed to be fully developed, one thing, however, seems to be quite certain: it will be no mere game anymore.

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# BOOK REVIEW

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## GORGING ART

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Sculptures, paintings, and installations have constituted art for centuries. Now – slowly – food is becoming an art. Consumption, mastication and digestion of art, are no longer confined to kitchen tables or restaurants, but also come to galleries. From an everyday chore, making food becomes something elevated, creative, unique; it moves from the private area to the public sphere.

Dorota Koczanowicz describes and analyses in her notices such transformations. She devours, not only with her eyes, artists' menus. She recalls past times and tells stories that were not mentioned in the past. She believes that the mission of food studies "is to unravel what food means to interpret human existence"<sup>1</sup> and so she does in *Pozycja smaku*.

Koczanowicz follows Dewey's path, noticing the significance of an ordinary experience, which becomes extraordinary within the frames of human aesthetics. Food becomes art instead of energy supply: suddenly, a bowl of soup is not just a soup, but an artistic experience. A cook becomes a chef and contestant of edible art challenges, while a consumer becomes a food critic.

The philosophical discourse opens slowly to taste, which becomes an aesthetic experience. Philosophy starts noticing the things necessary for the body to live. With this thought, the idea of body awareness comes up: Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics.

An activity becomes the yardstick of the truth. However, the evaluation of food, as Koczanowicz argues, is not a straightforward endeavor. A feed of calories is one thing, admiration of the design of the dish is another, and the performative demonstration of food is yet another one.

Matters concerning food belong to two, theoretically

separate zones: the private and the public. Koczanowicz refers to feminists' authorities, contrasting a grandmothers' home kitchen with sophisticated restaurant cooking. In the grandmothers' kitchen, it was felt and dedicated to sharing that played the primary role, whereas in the restaurants, it is tasting and visual experience that plays the central part. Nutrition was important in-home cooking; in a restaurant, hunger is secondary: socializing and unusual and an unexpected culinary experience bears more significance.

Entertainingly and interestingly, Koczanowicz shows what restaurants were in the past and what they are now. The understanding of changes over the decades, the evolution from a substitution of the home kitchen where only women cooked to what restaurants have become now: exclusive, aesthetically sophisticated shrines of food.

Shusterman proposes to accept eating as an art of self-tasting<sup>2</sup>, but he does not recognize cooking as an act of art, yet. Separation of cooking from eating creates a dissonance. If the unfinished painting is a piece of art, are semi-boiled potatoes not? Does food suddenly turn into art when it becomes a dish? Or should it be understood as an art of tasting, regardless of what we taste? A kitchen is a special place, not as a physical space, but as a place to teach our body new skills. With this concept, Koczanowicz touches upon feminism, recalling the separation of the public from the private. It is within the latter, as Shusterman argues, where the body learns and memorizes. Placing the body in the center of considerations allows for an alternative perception of the world. Somaesthetics admires the body and reflects on human feelings. That is why eating is such an important experience.

Koczanowicz compares Shusterman's somaesthetics with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Considering somaesthetics as positive, broadly understood corporal philosophical transformation, she confronts it with the habitus, which positions humans in a rigid construct of the social structure. Briefly, the habitus is an assembling

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<sup>1</sup> D. Koczanowicz, *Pozycja smaku. Jedzenie w granicach sztuki (Positioning Taste: Eating within the Realm of Art)* Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, Warsaw 2018

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<sup>2</sup> R. Shusterman, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Cambridge University Press, 2008

of skills and competencies acquired by an individual: it does not institute sustaining rules.

According to Bourdieu, analyzing and expressing schemes which an individual acquired could be an invention of controlled improvisation.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, positioning an individual in the social structure results from a lack of possibility of the invention of different behavior scenarios. The human being paints a picture of the world and prepares to react to encountered situations. Bourdieu believes that comprehensive unraveling of the habitus is impossible, because it is positioned at the unconscious level of perception and, as a result, impossible to verbalize.

Shusterman's concept enables improvements and the discovery of new resources of self-consciousness. As per *Pozycja smaku*, Shusterman's concept is much closer to the cultural meaning of eating as a process of creating art, also understood as a historical snapshot of the society at a given time.

An advantage of *Pozycja smaku* is its openness to literature and broadly understood art. The chapter dedicated to the films: *Babette's Feast* and *Blue is the Warmest Colour* shows admiration for the cinema, which influenced many viewers. The accessibility of films in a "video on demand" era from streaming services allows for referring to celebrated works. Koczanowicz equalizes popular movies with sculptures, paintings and installation art.

Koczanowicz does not overlook the culture that changes human behaviors or creates new norms and values in society. Food is both a merging and dividing point for individuals and communities. Considering culinary culture as a building factor for internal relations within societies is interesting.

The author peeks into plates of prominent philosophers and shows how important food was for them. Some of them celebrated meals, considering them as the

most important task of the day and arranged gatherings (Kant), or, on the contrary, ignored them, limiting food to the bare minimum. A successful and tasteful culinary trip is an interesting experience. The discovery of food preferences of favorite philosophers and their eating habits are not only interesting as such but also demonstrate the impact of food on their creations. The understanding of the context enables a better understanding of their ideas.

Besides, we are invited to a fascinating journey through examples from literature about the attraction of food, taste, and, what is often related, travels. Examples of culinary trips are particularly remarkable. For ages, food was relatively monotonous, based on locally sourced ingredients where seasons dictated taste. Owing to the ease of traveling now, its accessibility and increasing mobility of individuals' tastes from different corners of the world blend together. It is more possible now to taste the food of other cultures and societies. The increase in accessibility shapes interesting food styles. It was historically accepted that eating local food means fraternization with the local place and its inhabitants. Food, considered as an intimate and individual act, becomes a source of rich experience. Eating local food allows for a better understanding of places, people and culture. At the same time, however, the author does not elaborate too much on the fact that foodies taking culinary trips are often fed with the vision they are chasing. Visiting exotic countries, they experience what was crafted for them, prepared for what meets the expectations of the exotic.

Food also provides relief. The scent of the home is often connected with a favorite dish. New aromas of travel may irritate; the scent of the home is comforting.

The author of *Pozycja smaku* takes us on a journey to search for an "authentic taste" that is the Grail of contemporary culture. She notices two contradictions in this term: firstly, authenticity is closely related to history, which evolves every day; secondly, culture has become a product for sale. Koczanowicz also mentions the pressure on authenticity – something that a foodie is looking

<sup>3</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Sentiment of Honor in Kabyle Society. In Honour and Shame The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Peristiany, trans. P. Sherrard, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

for. The demand for authenticity is contradictory to uniqueness. The author proposes a solution as “an aware [conscious?], active shaping of experience”.<sup>4</sup>

Koczanowicz recalls a contemporary artist, Rirkit Tiravanija, for whom preparation of food and common eating are acts of art. The author names this ‘contextual cooking,’ which relates to local culture, a contemporary time, with the use of local ingredients, for which food miles count in single figures.

*Pozycja smaku* is a perfect place to present Eat Art. Daniel Spoerri, an artist, demonstrated already in the 1960s how the physiological taste might be combined with an aesthetic taste. The author participated in a dinner in Stuttgart, dedicated to Spoerri. The touch of the logic of meals presented to the special table, the combination of the basic function of eating with aesthetic consideration, creates Eat Art.

Koczanowicz declared to have desired to demonstrate the complexity of cooking and common

eating in a cultural context. Notable is that *Pozycja smaku* attempts to demonstrate eating as an art that is accessible here and now, for everybody. Individual experiences resulting from aesthetics or somaesthetics are also important. There is no gradation of evaluation; instead there is an individual and subjective assessment. It does not happen in a vacuum. The cultural and social context mentioned above is one of the more impactful factors on the quality and mode of a cultural experience.

*Pozycja smaku* is an important work in Poland. As a scientific approach to food and eating, food studies are at their infancy stage in the Polish humanities. Mass feeding is something very different from the spiritual fest. Both kinds of food are necessary. The former lets us notice the latter. The trust that art can be tasty encourages experimentation in our own kitchen. Journeys through history, literature, paintings, sculptures and performative arts allow for a broader look at food as art.

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<sup>4</sup> D. Koczanowicz, *Pozycja smaku. Jedzenie w granicach sztuki (Positioning Taste: Eating within the Realm of Art)*, Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, Warsaw 2018, p. 24.



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