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Article:

INTRODUCTION

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Many philosophical schools can be readily seen to have a natural affinity and interconnection: existentialism and phenomenology for example, or materialism and naturalism, where several thinkers and themes on each side stand intertwined. But a look at the history of idealism and pragmatism may seem to tell a different story.

Idealism is the older tradition, with roots in Plato and Platonism, and has developed into a myriad of forms: for example, platonic idealism, Berkeleyian idealism, rationalist idealism, Kantian idealism, and absolute idealism. Underlying this variety is the claim that reality contains more than matter, but is also constituted by ideas or mental structures, where it is an issue for dispute within this tradition whether these ideas are outside and prior to individual minds and if so whether they also exist independent of the material world; whether they only exist in such minds, as does reality itself; or whether reality consists in some combination of mind-imposed ideas and mind-independent elements. Very roughly, the first option is explored by Plato in the one direction, whose ideas exist independently of the material world, and in the other direction by Aristotle, whose forms are instantiated in matter, while the so-called 'objective idealism' of Schelling and Hegel may be seen as descendant of this line of thought. The second option may be associated with Berkeley, where the mind in question is divine. The third option is broadly Kant's, whose 'formal' or 'transcendental' idealism treats the conceptual structure as a mind-imposed structure on a mind independent reality of things-in-themselves. Many other figures can be associated with this tradition in various ways, including Arthur Schopenhauer, the neo-Kantians of the late nineteenth century, and the British Idealists such as T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley; and while it suffered something of an eclipse with the rise of analytic philosophy and contemporary naturalism, it remains a living option within many field and in many forms, including Platonism in the philosophy of mathematics and transcendental idealist accounts of modality.   The

intellectual power of the idealist tradition is indicated by its longevity, where amongst other things it claims to offer a unique solution to questions concerning knowledge, the law-like features of the natural world, freedom, and the place of norms and values within reality.

Pragmatism as such is more of a new-comer, with its acknowledged origins being traceable to the work of philosophers such as C. S. Peirce and William James in the mid nineteenth century - though arguably the antecedents of this tradition go back to earlier figures such as Thomas Reid. The outlook can be summarized in the so-called pragmatic maxim of Peirce, that we should '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'.[1] As such, pragmatism offers a distinctive account of meaning, knowledge and metaphysics, which is opposed to the abstractions of a philosophy that has no relation to our activities within the world.

Laid out in this way, it may seem that idealism and pragmatism can have little to do with one another and should indeed be seen as intellectual opponents; and some of their defenders have in fact viewed their relation in this way. So, it may appear on the one hand to the pragmatist, that the idealist represents just the kind of empty and abstract metaphysical theorizing that she wants to overturn, while to the idealist on the other hand, the pragmatist may be viewed as offering a position that cannot resolve the problems that concern him, in refusing to engage with them properly by offering instead a crude appeal to 'practical consequences'. It could be assumed, then, that these two traditions will simply confront each other as philosophical opposites. Moreover, this suspicion can be reinforced by two further considerations: first, that while idealism flourished mainly on continental Europe, pragmatism took root in American soil, understood by some of its proponents as a distinctive philosophy designed for a new world; and second, that as a consciously

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[1] 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear' [1878], in Peirce 1958-66, 5.402 [references by volume and paragraph number]. This is only one of several formulations that Peirce provides of the maxim: for further discussion, see Hookway 2012.

radical and reforming intellectual movement, pragmatism surely sought to overthrow its worn-out predecessors, idealism included.

However, on closer inspection, it is clear that historically the position is much more complex than this stark contrast would suggest, while looking forward, there is much to be learned from exploring common ground, as well as thinking more deeply about where the divergences between the two traditions may lie. So, for example, while historically F. H. Bradley and William James presented themselves as at odds in their published writings, in their private correspondences they recognized a greater degree of convergence;[2] and while Peirce on occasion denounced both Kant and Hegel, he also on other occasions expressed his warm appreciation for their views.[3] Likewise, figures like Royce, Dewey and Sellars were explicit in claiming a shared ancestry for their views.[4] There was also a good deal of intellectual cross-fertilization, with better communication across languages and cultures than in fact is common now; and while pragmatism did sometimes present itself as the iconoclastic new-comer, it also often rooted itself in a concern for the history of previous forms of thought, whilst in their turn many idealists sought to learn from this new development in the field.

And more thematically, there is much that suggests how far idealism and pragmatism can be aligned, for example in relation to the question of naturalism and how that should be best conceived, or in relation to scepticism and how that is to be dealt with, or in considering the issue of how social norms arise and how they come to be upheld. Indeed, it is this kind of common ground that explains how many of the most prominent contemporary philosophers, such as Jürgen Habermas, Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Robert Brandom, Richard Bernstein and others, may be said to draw

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[2] Cf. Kenna 1966, and Perry 1936, vol 2, 485-93, 637-44.

[3] Cf. Peirce's comment that "My philosophy resuscitates Hegel, though in a strange costume" (1958-66, 1.42), and that his critical commonsensism was "but a modification of Kantism" (1958-66, 5.452). Peirce also remarks on Kant's influence on his formulation of the pragmatic maxim itself, commenting that he "was led to the maxim by reflection on Kant's *Critic of the Pure Reason*" (1958-66, 5.3; cf. also 6.490).

[4] See for example Good 2006.

inspiration from both these traditions, in finding ways in which they can reinforce one another.

However, while this rapprochement is an underlying feature of both the history and current profile of philosophical thought, it has so far received little explicit reflection and analysis, where it now seems important and timely to try to fill this gap.[5] The hope is that by shedding light on where these traditions stand, both historically and conceptually, this will lead to a greater appreciation of their individual strengths and weaknesses, and their real similarities and differences. The aim here is not mere eclecticism or to reduce each side to bland uniformity, but rather to explore where each can learn from the other, both in terms of finding common ground, and in offering mutual critiques. As such, this will also enable us to better gauge where these traditions should also be placed in the wider philosophical landscape, for example in relation to realism, naturalism, supernaturalism and so on, and thus with reference to fundamental disputes in metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, political philosophy and philosophy of religion. At the same time, closer investigation will bring out the important differences between thinkers within each tradition, so on some issues it may turn out that so-called idealists are closer to so-called pragmatists than they are to other idealists, and likewise for pragmatists: for example, Bradley's anti-intellectualism has more in common with James than it does with many of the more orthodox Hegelian idealists with whom he is usually classified.

The focus of this particular publication is historical, and seeks to explore some of the concrete connections between thinkers in both traditions. This is an extremely rich field, the full potential of which has yet to be developed, and clearly a collection of articles such as this can make no claim to comprehensiveness. Nonetheless, the hope is that the particular focus of

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[5] This publication is part of the 'Idealism and Pragmatism' project which aims to consider the issue more widely: see http://idealismandpragmatism.org. It grew out of a conference on the historical connections between idealism and pragmatism, held in Sheffield in October 2013. Two other papers from the Sheffield conference are to be published elsewhere: Gava forthcoming and Westphal forthcoming.

these articles will shed important light on the details and significance of these debates between major figures in the field.

Of the four classical German Idealists – Kant, Hegel, Fichte and Schelling – one central focus here is Hegel, who figures in the first three articles by Dina Emundts, Steven Levine and Paul Redding. Both Kant and Hegel are discussed in Preston Stovall's article, which compares them to Peirce on the issue of non-deductive inference and the reflecting power of judgement, while John Kaag takes up the relation between Kantian aesthetics and pragmatism. The connection between Kant and pragmatism is also covered in a related publication that has also grown out of this project.[6] Schelling is discussed in the article by Franks, which identifies him as a central influence on Peirce. Of the four classical German Idealists, Fichte is not covered in any detail; but some of his ideas, such as the way in which an ungrounded choice of attitudes lies behind key philosophical disputes, might well be related to James's emphasis on the clash of temperaments on which many of our philosophical debates rely.[7] After this 'classical' period the connections between idealism and pragmatism become very broad, as the British, American and European Idealists all had links with pragmatism, some aspects of which have been explored elsewhere.[8] This collection provides important discussions of this rich material, where Shannon Dea focuses on the link between Royce, Peirce and James and their background in Spinoza, and Jeremy Dunham explores the relation between James and the French idealist Charles Renouvier. More recent connections are considered by Giuseppina D'Oro, who analyses the differences and similarities between Carnap's pragmatism and Collingwood's idealism on the question of metaphysics. D'Oro's findings resemble those of the other articles, that in general suggest

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[6] Gava and Stern (eds) 2015.
[7] Cf. Fichte 1982, 14-15; Fichte 1845-46, vol 1, 433-4: 'Hence the choice [between idealism and dogmatism] is governed by caprice, and since even a capricious decision must have some source, it is governed by *inclination* and *interest*. The ultimate basis of the difference between idealists and dogmatists is thus the difference of their interests'. And cf. James, *Pragmatism*, in 1975-88, vol 1, 11: 'The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments'.
[8] For a bibliography, see http://idealismandpragmatism.org/bibliography.

the history of these two approaches are much more closely and profitably intertwined than many would suppose.

In what follows, I will provide a summary of the articles in rather more detail.

In her paper 'Hegel as a Pragmatist', Dina Emundts takes up the question of how far pragmatist themes can be found in Hegel's thought, and defends a positive response. She begins by identifying two central features of pragmatism as she understands it: first, that it is suspicious of claims to a priori knowledge, and second the related idea that knowledge involves doing and testing. She then turns to consider Hegel, beginning by focusing on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Having sketched Hegel's critique of Kant's method in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Emundts uses his account of sense certainty to illustrate how Hegel's approach involves consciousness testing its account of knowledge and experiencing how it fails, where it is that experience that drives it forward. While recognizing that the procedure of the *Logic* is apparently more abstract, Emundts nonetheless argues that the way that concepts are analysed in this text is still in terms of testing our views of these concepts, and seeing how they break down. She also considers in some detail the challenge that this overlooks the respects in which the *Logic* is a priori, which if substantiated would contradict her reading of Hegel as a pragmatist. Whilst she thinks this challenge can be defeated, she does nonetheless outline some limits to her thesis that Hegel is a pragmatist. The first point she considers is that Hegel's conception of knowledge is more ambitious than that of the pragmatists, while secondly he adopts a form of conceptual realism. Emundts discusses these differences in some detail, together with the underlying question of how the two sides consider the question of metaphysics, but argues that overall these differences should not deflect us from seeing the more significant similarities that remain.

Steven Levine's paper 'Hegel, Habits, and Pragmatism' begins with another way of relating Hegel to pragmatism, this time offered by Terry Pinkard, where both sides are said to be looking for a way to account for normative authority while avoiding a kind of Platonism about norms on the one hand, and a

relativism or conventionalism on the other, where Hegel and the pragmatists are said by Pinkard to try to 'anchor normative practices in the activities of *life* itself'. While agreeing with this broad approach, Levine argues that Pinkard still mischaracterizes the way the two sides deal with this issue in a way that then leads Pinkard to set them apart again, as his reading of pragmatism makes their conception of life too grounded in purely biological considerations, while his reading of Hegel is too constructivist in a way that leaves nature and hence life behind. Levine argues that the key to getting this balance right is to focus on what both have to say about habits and their place in our lives as social and historical creatures; on the one hand, from a pragmatist perspective this will allow us to appreciate the way in which the relation to our needs and interests can be dynamic and can take us beyond any biological givens; and on the other hand, it will allow for a properly sophisticated naturalism in Hegel's account of our capacities as free agents. Habits thus occupy a very important and distinctive middle ground, as in forming them we are doing more than just responding the determinations of nature, but nor are we free to construct them how we like independently of our bodily existence; rather they enable us to incorporate that existence into our freedom as situated agents. Levine's article thus contributes substantially to the on-going debate concerning how far Hegelianism and pragmatism should be considered to be naturalist positions, focused through the lens of a discussion of habit, where Levine brings Hegel into dialogue with Dewey on precisely this issue.

In the third paper in the collection dealing with Hegel's relation to pragmatism, Paul Redding offers 'An Hegelian Solution to a Tangle of Problems Facing Brandom's Analytic Hegelianism'. Robert Brandom is well-known for attempting to combine pragmatist and idealist approaches within his inferentialist semantics, according to which the meaning of a judgement is dependent on the inferential relations it stands in to other possible judgements. Redding characterizes this as a *strong* inferentialism because it claims not only is this necessary for meaning, but also sufficient; and he points out that in defending this position and the strong anti-representationalism that it entails, Brandom takes himself to be following

Hegel's radicalization of Kant, as well as pragmatists such as Peirce, Sellars and Quine. However, Redding challenges Brandom's attempt to enlist Hegel to his cause, and on the contrary suggests that by offering a different reading of Hegel as no more than a *weak* inferentialist then we can use Hegel to rescue Brandom himself from four crucial difficulties: the problem of object perception; of *de re* attitudes; of perceptual experience; and of drawing a modal distinction between possibility and actuality. Redding articulates the sense in which Hegel was no more than a weak inferentialist by offering an nuanced and historically informed discussion of Hegel's understanding of the history of logic, particularly in its Aristotelian forms, where he contends that it is this Aristotelianism that Brandom overlooks, but which he needs in order to solve the four problems outlined above, so to this extent Brandom's attempt to unify the pragmatist and Hegelian traditions in his own person is misconceived.

The paper by Preston Stovall on 'Inference by Analogy and the Progress of Knowledge' considers Kant, Hegel and Peirce against the background of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, and how this relates to fundamental issues concerning the tension between mechanistic and purposive explanation. Stovall suggests that Kant's notion of reflective judgement, Hegel's account of inference by analogy, and Peirce's view of abductive inference can be seen to be related to one another as forms of non-deductive reasoning essential to conceptual development. Stovall argues that the account of reflection that Kant uses to understand teleological judgements involves important analogical elements, which then in turn influenced Hegel's account of analogical reasoning and Peirce's account of abductive inference. However, it is suggested, Kant's account when applied to organic things left the tension between teleological and mechanistic explanation unresolved, as the underlying analogy presumed that organic purposes could only be understood by analogy with minded agency. Turning to Darwin, Stovall argues that his reasoning in developing his account of evolution was analogical rather than inductive in a way that fits the models of such reasoning offered by Hegel and Peirce, and moreover that Darwin's account enables us to give a retrospective rather than prospective account of purposiveness based on the principle of

selection, thus overcoming the problems that Kant faced with his intentional account, and enabling purposiveness to find a more stable place in our understanding of the world. Stovall also brings out how the American Pragmatists took up Darwinian reasoning, as a new form of analogical thinking about organic nature that can then treat our judgements of purpose in nature as determinative rather than merely reflective, and applied this reasoning to the development of new forms of explanation about mind and society.

In her paper on 'A House at War with Itself', Shannon Dea uses Peirce's rather neglected discussions of Spinoza to help locate Peirce in the contest between the sort of pluralism espoused by William James on the one hand, and the sort of absolutism espoused by Josiah Royce on the other – where tidy historical taxonimizing might lead one to expect Peirce the pragmatist to go with the former camp and to reject the latter as too idealist. Dea begins by looking in some detail at Peirce's engagement with Spinoza, where she emphasizes how uncharacteristically positive about the latter Peirce could be, and how frequently he listed him as a crucial source for 'the river of pragmatism'. At the same time, Dea points out, Peirce was clearly equivocal about his relation to James, where this is in part marked by Peirce's well-known attempt to label his position 'pragmaticism', as against the label of pragmatism that James had begun to popularize. She then focuses specifically on James's attempt to defend a pluralistic spiritualism (and hence idealism) in *A Pluralistic Universe* and elsewhere, which is explicitly aimed at refuting the more monistic absolute idealism of the Hegelian school (as James saw it), particularly Royce, where Spinoza is also associated with this position. However, as she makes clear, Peirce was by no means enamoured with James's attempts to recruit Peirce to his cause, and she brings out why through a careful exposition of Peirce's view of the absolute, and how he thought of it in Spinozistic terms which he believed were lost on James, but better grasped by Royce. The key here is their respective conceptions of the infinite, which Peirce took to allow a proper understanding of the absolute which would escape James's criticisms, while avoiding aspects of James's pluralism which Peirce felt to be superficial and highly problematic, such as

James's defense of a finite God. Dea thus brings out how complex the relations between pragmatist and idealist positions could be in this period.

In the paper on 'Peirce's "Schelling-Fashioned Idealism" and "The Monstrous Mysticism of the East"', Paul Franks focuses on the important relation between Peirce and Schelling, and Peirce's claim in 1892 to have offered an idealism inspired by Schelling, which holds 'matter to be mere specialized and partially deadened mind'. As Franks explains and explores, this allows Peirce to place Schelling in the exalted camp of non-nominalist realists, of which virtually the only other member is Peirce himself, which treats ideas not only as real, but also as living. It is the latter issue, Franks argues, that fundamentally explains Peirce's preference for Schelling over Hegel, seeing in the former an evolutionary metaphysics that is missing from the latter. At the same time, Franks sheds light on Peirce's other claim, that amongst others Schelling represented 'the monstrous mysticism of the east', arguing that this should be understood as a reference to certain key kabbalistic ideas, and how such ideas can be related to the cosmologies of both thinkers, particularly that what fundamentally needs explanation is not heterogeneity from homogeneity (or diversity from unity), but homogeneity from heterogeneity (or unity from diversity). Franks thus not only uncovers in some detail what drew Peirce to Schelling, and why he preferred the latter to other idealists such as Hegel, but also the role that this neglected tradition of Jewish thinking played in inspiring the cosmologies that make them so distinctive.

Jeremy Dunham's paper on 'Idealism, Pragmatism, and the Will to Believe' sets William James's famous article against the background of Charles Renouvier's idealism, and explores the influence of the latter on crucial aspects of James's thinking, and also the development of pragmatism more broadly. Dunham begins by clarifying in what sense Renouvier should be considered an idealist, where he focuses on two key themes: (1) that our mental ideas are exemplars of the 'really real'; and (2) that reality is exclusively experiential in nature, where it follows from these theses that reality is knowable, while what we know is experientiable. Renouiver also defends a 'principle of relativity' which treats knowledge as relative to subjects

and experience as relational, while offering a theory of 'certitude', according to which we hold no beliefs that are absolutely free from doubt. It is this latter key idea, Dunham argues, that influenced James, while showing how it could be built about the other aspects of Renouiver's position, which also had affinities with pragmatism. For, Renouvier showed how the distinction between theoretical and practical reason comes under threat once his theory of certitude is accepted, and that belief at both levels can be subjectively necessary while remaining rational, thereby introducing a connection to Kant's earlier treatment of the postulates, which had also given practical reason a kind of primacy. Dunham then uses this background to assess Renouvier's impact on the argument of 'The Will to Believe', and to adjudicate between current scholarly controversies concerning this influential but problematic piece, particularly in the way that religious belief can be viewed as a kind of hypothesis, in many ways not distinguishable from hypotheses of a more scientific kind. Dunham thus shows how French idealism had a vital role to play in shaping one of the founding documents of American pragmatism.

John Kaag turns from religion and science to the place of aesthetics in considering 'The Lot of the Beautiful: Pragmatism and Aesthetic Ideals'. He advances the unusual thesis that classical pragmatism should be seen as an outgrowth of German aesthetic theory, particularly Kant and Schiller and their treatment of the imagination, genius and aesthetic common sense. He also uses this as a background to offer a warning to contemporary pragmatists, who he thinks have ignored this crucial connection, and ended up with a 'thinned out' form of pragmatism as a result. He begins by focusing on the imagination, and the influence of Kant's treatment of the schemata on Peirce, as well as the former's conception of the creative imagination in the third *Critique*. Kaag then considers Kant's account of genius and of Schiller's play drive, both of which he links with Peirce's view of the kind of creative process involved in abduction. Thirdly, he turns to Kant's conception of the *sensus communis*, and the need for such universal common sense for communicability and knowledge, which in Peirce takes the form of an appeal to community. Kaag then argues that despite the importance of these themes, the account is not yet complete, as it has left out the significance of aesthetic

experience itself, where here (he argues) Schiller is a more important influence than Kant. He also argues that contemporary pragmatists have ignored this crucial element of the idealist heritage, and as a result have neglected the place of aesthetics and indeed experience itself in pragmatism, focusing on more technical and abstract issues instead.

Finally, Giuseppina D'Oro considers a later phase in the connections between idealism and pragmatism, in her paper 'Unlikely Bedfellows? Collingwood, Carnap, and the Internal/External Distinction'. Carnap's logical positivism is often seen to incorporate crucial pragmatism elements, particularly concerning the choice of linguistic framework, which might therefore be expected to contrast with Collingwood's more idealistic sympathies, and particularly his defense of metaphysics. However, D'Oro argues that there is in fact a deep affinity here, though some differences remain. D'Oro first considers Carnap's crucial distinction between internal and external questions, where the latter relate to linguistic frameworks themselves, and thus cannot be assessed for truth or falsity, though they can be decided upon on grounds of utility. D'Oro then explores how this outlook can be compared to Collingwood's treatment of absolute presuppositions, which again form a kind of framework to our inquiries and thus lack a truth value. However, while Carnap used his account to argue against metaphysics altogether, D'Oro agues that Collingwood gives metaphysics a revised role in identifying what these absolute presuppositions are, rather than in trying to step beyond them in a more traditional and ambitious manner.

This difference between Carnap and Collingwood might be taken to reflect an underlying affinity of idealism for metaphysics and an underlying hostility of pragmatism against it. However, as this and the other papers in the collection show, we should be wary in making any such generalizations about these two traditions, where the complexity of the dialogue between them makes it unlikely that any such simplistic dichotomy can be sustained for long, whether it is a matter of metaphysics, or of 'reason vs experience', or 'knowledge vs practice', or 'religion vs science', or 'realism vs idealism'. It is in adding depth to our appreciation of that complexity that the value of this collection is

intended to lie, and where it is hoped that its contribution can be made.[9]

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