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John Dewey's Struggle with American Realism, 1904-1910

John Dewey's move from the University of Chicago to Columbia University in 1904 marks a significant turning-point in his career, as he made a sharp transition from one type of professional activity to a quite different type.[1] The collegial interactions that he enjoyed before 1904 were largely of a collaborative and insular nature, and his work of that time reflects this; for example, only four of his articles from that period offered replies to published criticisms.[2] It is no reproach to Dewey to take notice of such matters. Rather, it serves to indicate how his attention was then securely focused on the internal development of functional psychology and instrumentalism, and that while this involved numerous protests against dominant philosophies, energies did not need to be shifted to answer severe counter-criticisms. However, after 1904 such focus would drastically alter. Dewey's active participation in the ongoing heated philosophical debates impacted both his own position and those of his interlocutors as they together tackled many issues in psychology, epistemology and metaphysics. Above all these questions, one was more stridently pursued by this group than the rest: was pragmatism compatible with realism? We will explore Dewey's efforts to argue in the affirmative against the general tide of negative criticisms from the American Realists during the period from 1904 to 1910. Many of these efforts are among the most murky and impenetrable in Dewey's corpus and are hence rarely discussed.[3] Nevertheless, ventures into this territory shed light not only on an important period in Dewey's philosophical development, but also on issues that concern present-

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day endeavors to support pragmatic principles. There is a great deal of instruction to be received from Dewey's own argumentative tactics since many of the principal obstacles to an understanding of pragmatism are largely the same today as they were at the beginning of the century.

I. Encountering the Realists

Dewey became a colleague of three realists at Columbia: Frederick J.E. Woodbridge, Wendell T. Bush, and William P. Montague. Perhaps almost as importantly, he was introduced to a journal. In 1904 Woodbridge had undertaken the editing for the new *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, with Bush joining him in 1906. This journal was conceived partly as a realist alternative to the older *Philosophical Review* at Cornell, a stronghold for idealism. While respectfully appreciative of Dewey's philosophical and pedagogical eminence, the Columbia faculty, being far more academically heterogeneous, were naturally less sympathetic and supportive than previous colleagues. They did, however, take great interest in his version of pragmatism, recognizing an important contribution to the heated debates then engaging most philosophical minds. Dewey's 1903 *Studies in Logical Theory* and the 1905 "The Realism of Pragmatism" and "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism,"[4] abruptly thrust him into the middle of a discussion of idealism and the merits of some newly-minted rejections. As their principal source and inspiration these new voices had William James, who had long struggled with the attractive and repulsive aspects of the dominant idealism flourishing in America and England, especially as it was expounded by his friend and colleague at Harvard, Josiah Royce.[5] James was among the first to make argumentative challenges, and two Harvard graduates then defended realism in their influential responses to Royce's 1899 *The World and the Individual*.[6] James's own "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" offered a key spark in 1904,[7] helping to touch off the flames of controversy that quickly consumed much of subsequent volumes of philosophy journals in both America and England.

The many defenses of realism against idealism were then gener-

ally of two sorts, depending on whether they relied on the pragmatist viewpoint. A triangle of idealism, realism, and pragmatism gradually emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century, as each developed serious objections to central views of the other two. They rarely completely separated; many idealists and realists shared epistemologies but not a metaphysic, and many idealists and realists found a great deal of worth in the pragmatist theory of the acquisition of knowledge. Pragmatists generally claimed to be realists, while many did not leave idealism's orbit. The controversies surrounding Dewey's doubtful departure from idealism[8] were just typical of the innumerable attempts during this period to delineate philosophical territory.

The three works by Dewey mentioned above immediately drew critical review, both from established idealists and the upstart corps of self-proclaimed realists. Dewey did not fail to respond; indeed, most of Dewey's published articles would henceforth recognize and respond to others' interpretive and critical efforts directed at his own philosophy.[9] Such efforts before 1910 were of four principal, though necessarily interrelated, types. One concerned Dewey's functional analysis of concepts and judgments. Another questioned the implications of this analysis for a pragmatic theory of knowledge and truth. A third examined the portrait of experience and its components that Dewey offered; for instance, the reflective or "knowledge" experience drew considerable attention. The last took issue with the relationships (or potential identity) between experience, knowledge, and reality. While these topics did not dissipate after 1910, they took on a different character and emphasis due to the appearance in that year of Dewey's *How We Think* and *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, the New Realists's "The Program and First Platform of Six Realists," and Dewey's response, "The Shortcut to Realism Examined."[10] Dewey did not directly respond before 1910 to anything written by the six philosophers who would become the New Realists, nor to those who in 1920 announced themselves as Critical Realists; his conversations in print with realists were then with Woodbridge and Evander B. McGilvary,[11] and in this paper these conversations receive greater attention.

The other realists were far from inactive during this time. Three New Realists engaged pragmatism as espoused by Charles S. Peirce, James, F.C.S. Schiller, and Dewey: Edward G. Spaulding discussed pragmatism and science in 1906, Ralph Barton Perry tried to achieve an overview of pragmatism's claims in 1907, and W.P. Montague questioned its commitment to realism in 1909. Four Critical Realists also analyzed pragmatism: Arthur K. Rogers in 1904 and 1906, Roy Wood Sellars in 1907, James B. Pratt in 1907, 1908, and 1909, Charles A. Strong in 1908, and Arthur O. Lovejoy in 1909.[12] Furthermore, every realist was heavily involved in questions of the sort raised by James in America and G.E. Moore in England pertaining to realism, consciousness, and knowledge, each publishing several articles on these topics.[13] When one also considers that most idealists were debating each other, while actively probing both pragmatism and realism at the same time, one gains some appreciation for the scale and value of the intellectual activity of this period. This maelstrom of philosophical debate swept up Dewey and his pragmatic instrumentalism, subjected it to comparison with every other doctrine, and tested the applicability of his thought both for practical problems and domains of theoretical inquiry beyond count. It required much of Dewey's energy to just keep pace.

II. The Real is What is Experienced

Despite Dewey's attempt in 1905 in "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism"[14] to "do my little part in clearing up the confusion," his definition of that postulate and his uses for it brought down upon him a hailstorm of protest that lasted for years afterward. By tendering his support for James's radical empiricism while recasting these issues in his own post-Hegelian perspective and terminology, the attention that Dewey engendered escalated to a far higher level than ever before. Dealing with such criticism did have a benefit because Dewey was able to perceive the difficulties others were having with both his own and James's proposed alterations to widely cherished notions of reality, truth, and knowledge. He did try to predict the source of many such problems: "Now, this statement that things are

what they are experienced to be is usually translated into the statement that things (or, ultimately, Reality, Being) ***are*** only and just what they are ***known*** to be or that things are, or Reality ***is***, what it is for a conscious knower...." (*MW* 3: 159). Dewey's prediction was accurate: his critics would not quietly accept the notion that some experiences come unaccompanied by self-consciousness: that knowledge that "I" or my "self" is having these experiences. Furthermore, they would easily detect and deplore his explicit denial in this essay of a uniquely determinate or permanent reality in favor of a process metaphysics, and therefore they would not agree to Dewey's employment of the terms 'knowledge' or 'truth,' since such lack of unique determinateness and permanence must for Dewey attach to these two concepts as well. His abandonment of what were commonly taken to be philosophical axioms about consciousness, experience, reality, and truth understandably attracted the most attention.

Woodbridge was the first realist to question Dewey on these matters, and his queries met Dewey's expectations.[15] He first rejects Dewey's denial that a cognitive experience is essentially linked to all other experiences. Proceeding from the common agreement that there are many different modes of experiencing, Woodbridge then asks how one may detect the specific elements in experience. His answer is that this must be accomplished with a cognitive experience — we must know, in a transcendent way, how to identify and classify experiences.

> But now I must add that the cognitive experience is of such a 'sort' that it enables us to tell what the others ***actually*** are when we ask the question about ***their*** sort. This question may not be asked and may not be answered. In that case no one sort of experience is identified or distinguished. And what sort of an experience would that be if not precisely what we should mean by an unconscious experience? (*MW* 3: 396)

For Woodbridge the absence of knowledge implies the absence

of conscious experience, since an inability to know an experience denies us the ability to characterize it in any way. What then permits Dewey to claim that such experiences have characters in and of themselves? Woodbridge's difficulty with Dewey here is rooted in his acceptance of the principle that consciousness and experience are identical. In another article, "The Nature of Consciousness,"[16] he complained that he could not understand the Jamesian notion that consciousness could be only "a function within experience whereby experience itself becomes differentiated into the objective and subjective, the physical and the psychical," since "the differentiation simply divides the field of consciousness into two parts, but does not isolate a separate field in which alone consciousness is found."[17] The easily made substitution of "experience" and "consciousness" in this inference reveals the instinctive (unconscious?) experience-consciousness identification.

Both James and Dewey were attempting to replace this identification with a functional analysis in which the physical and the psychical were viewed as distinct, but not independent, features of an encompassing non-intellectualized reality. In Dewey's "The Realism of Pragmatism"[18] he explicitly describes this theory that states of consciousness, sensations, cognitive ideas, etc., only come into existence during the process of inquiry, and therefore it is impossible for existing things to be dependent upon them. Actually, dependence runs the other way, and therefore pragmatism can hardly be charged with subjectivism or solipsism: "Psychical things are thus themselves realistically conceived; they can be described and identified in biological and physiological terms....Their origin as existences can be stated and must be stated in terms of adjustments and maladjustments among habits, biological functions" (*MW* 3: 154-55). Despite such warnings, many commentators continued to charge that Dewey's identification of experience with reality must mean that reality is being limited to subjective, individual experience. Dewey's regular protests that there is no real necessity to define experience as subjective and tied to the 'self,' and his request that mental things should be found to be part of experience and not the reverse, were mostly ignored;

very few of his contemporaries understood, much less accepted, these ideas.

Woodbridge goes on to say that if the transcendence of knowledge is instead denied, as Dewey requires, then the cognitive experience of things is going to be different from other experiences of these things, since "in the cognitive experience all other experiences become altered" (*MW* 3: 397). Put another way, the knowledge of something will change it; such knowledge must ***really*** change it and make it different from what it also ***really*** was in a different sort of experience. Woodbridge's next comment, that this position is indistinguishable from absolute idealism, indicates that he understands Dewey to be committed to holding that the mental cognition of a thing is responsible for that thing's reality. This commitment would proceed from the principle that if some X changes when Y is in operation, in the supposed absence of other goings-on, then X is somehow dependent on Y. Needless to say, this is a highly questionable method of argumentation, but it is typical of the sort used by many idealists, and Woodbridge hears an echo in Dewey's statements. However, Dewey would have nothing to do with such reasoning, since his and idealism's conceptions of 'mind' are distinct. However, Woodbridge was right to point out that for Dewey, when a thing is known it is really altered. The obvious ramifications of this postulate for truth and the nature of reality would be investigated by many later commentators, including some to be discussed below.

Dewey's response to Woodbridge points out that precisely because the account of things provided by knowledge differs from other types of accounts in experience, philosophers should take up the task of arbitrating the conflicting claims.[19] His preferred resolution is the establishment of harmony rather than doubt or the elevation of one over the rest, though this requires, as Woodbridge's comments show, an explanation of the relationship that the cognitive experience has with other kinds of experience. This resolution states that the mere existence of an experience's distinctive features has nothing to do with knowledge, but the connections between two experiences might, if "one thing may be found subsequently to affect, influence or con-

trol, favorably or unfavorably, the quality of some other present thing" (*MW* 3: 174). This connection is itself an experience, and qualifies as a cognitive experience since it takes place during a "doubt-inquiry-answer experience." It will result in the transformation of things for the purpose of giving them a stable reference, which in turn permits the erasure of doubt. In this way cognition can be contingently involved with other experiences as they contribute towards a solution to a practical problem. In one sense, cognition alters things permanently, but the non-cognitive things have not disappeared forever — they are always available in further non-cognitive experience. While a new cognitive experience does go beyond, or transcend, the elements which went into it, it nevertheless always remains within experience.[20] Dewey is providing here, in highly abbreviated form, the theory of knowledge presented in the *Studies in Logical Theory*. He also covers much the same ground in his replies to Bakewell and Bode, who similarly had difficulty with the notion of experiences which are not in themselves cognitive yet help to determine knowledge experiences.[21]

These problems can be phrased in terms of the question of the relationship between the immediately given and mediately altered. Dewey must tackle these questions: Why do we have any need for the alteration of experiences for the development of cognitive experiences, when every experience carries with it sufficient reality? And why then should the cognitive experiences be spoken of as 'correcting' or 'truer than' other experiences, to use Dewey's terms, if they do not provide any greater degree of reality? The most succinct response to these issues from Dewey's standpoint is that the notion of 'reality' and the notion of 'truth' should be radically disconnected. Reality and experience are to be connected (better, identified with each other), and truth and practical success are to be connected. Needless to say, such an arrangement made it extremely difficult for his commentators to grapple with Dewey's pronouncements on all of these matters, since their fundamental assumptions were quite the opposite of his. This topic is treated more fully in section IV.

III. How Real Must Reality Be?

The second realist to turn from the ongoing controversies with idealism toward Dewey was E.B. McGilvary, occasioned by Dewey's "Reality as Experience."[22] There Dewey argues that the identification of experience and reality is not refuted by scientific knowledge of time periods in the far past which lacked life and hence experience. His method of argument begins by denying any relationship between experience and a soul, mind, or consciousness (these having been discarded as metaphysically tainted). Without a duality, a monism (though not a Parmenidean monism) remains: there is no recourse but to find experience and reality together in the same realm, making them just two words for the same sort of thing. However, Dewey has no intention of making everything both experience and reality: "Unless some heterogeneous kind of reality is shoved in, then the early reality is at any and every point on its way to experience. It is only the earlier portion, historically speaking, of what later is experience" (*MW* 3: 102). Dewey confusingly speaks of their "assimilation" or "identification," but his purpose is actually not so bold. Experience is just an appropriate name for some portions of reality, and this reality is not marred by any discontinuities (only change) when it is also experience — it is always "continual-transformation-in-the-direction-of" (*MW* 3: 103). The principle of continuity is operating here, and is intimately connected with his process metaphysics, though Dewey does yet refer to these notions in such a manner.[23]

Dewey next tackles the real question lurking behind the philosopher's interest in scientific knowledge. "What is the better index, for philosophy, of reality: its earlier or later form?" (*MW* 3: 103). Should philosophy, in order to be 'empirical,' avoid a stance that denies scientific results? To do this, should it adopt as ultimate reality the portrait of reality drawn by science, in this instance, the scientific understanding of the past? Such questions attempt to place Dewey on the horns of a dilemma, but Dewey uses the postulate of immediate experience to try to go between them. Since reality is only what it is experienced as, Dewey will not deny the existence of times past since we can experience things as having existed in the

past. The geologist experiences rock formations or sediment deposits as known to be very old. But the geologist can also experience them in a wide variety of other ways, as the ditch-digger does, which are not part of knowledge. Should philosophy declare that the ditch-digger fails to experience, to have, true reality? Dewey believes that an affirmative answer is incorrect.

Dewey's demonstration of the inadequacy of the affirmative answer is quite obscure. Paraphrasing liberally, he asks us to consider whether, say, the occasion of the formation of the earth should be considered as entirely distinct and separate from our present experience of the earth. By the principle of continuity, the past earth could hardly be separated from its *present* state through its history, save in temporal distance. By the absence of a mind or consciousness, the past earth could not be separated from the *experience* of its present state. But could our *knowledge* of the past earth be distinct and separate from our present experience of the earth? This must be impossible, in the sense that only through a careful, reflective examination of our present experience could we ever gain such knowledge of the past. This examination, this selective and attentive analysis, always takes place within experience and relies upon the *full* reality of experience. Furthermore, whether this analysis will survive testing and result in successful practice and hence knowledge, also must depend on the full reality of experience. Finally, scientific theories would never be found lacking and no scientific progress would be called for, if it were not for the fact that scientists expect their knowledge to always be compatible with the extra-scientific aspects of experience.

In brief, science as it is actually practiced never questions in any way the full reality of experience in all its characteristics. Why then should philosophers doubt portions and demote them to an inferior status? When philosophers do so, the non-knowledge aspects just don't disappear: the philosopher must put them somewhere out of the way of true reality. Unfortunately, this alternate place becomes a second reality, and then the inevitable questions about the relationships and interactions between these dual realities follow. As Dewey would in later works express more fully, Plato's and Descartes's meta-

physics are paradigmatic examples of the results of this sort of reasoning. Plato's respect for the intelligible aspects of things, and Descartes's respect for science's description of nature, led to a reality separation (the realm of the Forms vs. ordinary opinionated experience, and objective physical reality vs. subjective consciousness). To repair such dualisms, one must leave ontology and understand epistemology — not what passes itself off as epistemology *after* a dualism has been assumed — but the actual methodology of gaining knowledge of the world. Dewey believes that he has a good understanding of this knowledge process, by way of functional psychology. As he tries to show in this article and elsewhere, this process is completely grounded at every stage in the conviction that the present experience of things is as they really are.

The realists were not entirely unsympathetic to Dewey's position. There was some appreciation for functionalism, as well as for Dewey's denial of dualism.[24] However, they had serious reservations over Dewey's theory of knowledge and its implications for realism. As McGilvary points out in his "Pure Experience and Reality,"[25] Dewey stated in his *Studies in Logical Theory* that the object of thought should not be read back into the time prior to its creation. There are very few other assertions that Dewey made during his career that created as much confusion and consternation. McGilvary's own reading of Dewey provides a corollary: "no truth made out by intellectual labor is to be held valid of anything real that may have existed before that labor was ended" (*MW* 4: 297). He infers from this that Dewey does not believe in any experience-independent reality, and therefore must be an idealist of some sort. Montague's inference is incorrect; accurately stated, Dewey does not believe in the existence of any experience-independent ***known*** reality, which is a very different belief. To say that the knowledge of a real thing is dependent on experience, and to say that this real thing's existence is dependent on experience, is to make a commitment to quite different propositions. When Dewey refers to the "known object" or the "knowledge-object," as he is usually careful to do, he is speaking of this object *qua* known, and not as it is experienced in other ways, or even as it is 'in itself'.[26] He

has very little to say about things prior to their being known or being experienced; such reticence is perfectly consistent with his adherence to the postulate of immediate experience. Ironically, it is not really what Dewey is willing to say about reality that brings down the 'idealist' accusation on him, but rather what he is not willing to say. Here is the exact crux of this central problem that pragmatism presented for the American Realists.

McGilvary does approve of Dewey's so-called epistemological idealism, which holds that "no thinker, no thought-object; no experience somewhere and somewhen, no meaningful reality anywhere and anytime" (*MW*4: 303). But Dewey's theory seems to be unable or unwilling to definitely commit to metaphysical realism: the assertion of the mere existence of the real object, irrespective of whether it is ever thought of, or ever experienced. McGilvary is all too aware that Dewey could reply, as he does in his response, that since we do experience things as having existed prior to our experience of them, we should also, by the postulate of immediate empiricism, believe that they really did exist in that past.[27] But that is insufficient proof for McGilvary that Dewey deserves to be a realist. What more could McGilvary have possibly desired from Dewey?

To answer this question we have to understand the nature and grounds of the ongoing debate between idealism and realism. The realists, in order to expose the exact point of their disagreement with idealism, came to agree upon a singular tenet. Acceptance of this tenet qualified one as a realist in America during the first decade of the twentieth century, and has remained central to realism long after. Royce in his rejection of realism defined it as the principle that "to be real means to be independent of an idea or experience through which the real being is, from without, felt, or thought, or known."[28] The realists objected that this definition made reality too independent, so that Royce was only knocking down a straw man. Reality can enter into or have relations with consciousness, they countered, but its existence is in no way dependent on such occurrences. The proper tenet defining realism became instead, as Montague declared, "the view that things do not depend for their existence upon the fact that

we know them, and that consequently they can continue in what is called *existence* during those intervals of time in which no subject is aware of them."[29] Dewey's membership application into the realist party would hinge on an unqualified allegiance to this doctrine, but he placed too many qualifications on it as he attempted to clarify the nature of things such as subjects, awareness, knowledge, and so forth. Such clarifications only served to raise clear warning signs for the realists: these seemed to justify various idealist readings of Dewey's pragmatism, as we have seen. McGilvary, like the rest of the realists, thus had tremendous obstacles impeding a clear review of Dewey's application, not withstanding Dewey's obscurities. They consistently disqualified him from membership not for any simple denial of the requisite article of faith, but for his elaborate and irregular (in the realists' view) affirmation.

McGilvary was doggedly persistent in his pursuit of Dewey for years afterwards; such resolve was probably related to his ready admission that the commentator on Dewey must take great pains to correctly understand him. McGilvary's next endeavor shifts ground by first defining idealism as "any theory which regards all reality as embraced within experiences or Experience....A clear unambiguous answer from Professor Dewey to the question whether he is an idealist in the current sense of idealism as defined above would, I am sure, make his view much more intelligible."[30] Montague suspects that Dewey must answer in the affirmative since he is so very quiet, unlike the realists, about anything that is not within experience. In addition, McGilvary complains that pragmatism's definitions of 'facts' and 'ideas,' pressing them into the service of the process of inquiry, obliterates the all-important distinction between the bare 'facts' or 'givens' of experience, which *contra* idealism, have a sufficient existence on their own in experience without any need for relating ideas or thoughts. The realists were concerned with such 'givens' because they commonly held that the viability of their alternative to idealism depended on the tenets that (1) the experienced object must be immediately present, and (2) the experienced object must be unmodified by the fact that it is experienced. Since the realists, like

Woodbridge, also identify experiencing with a sort of knowing, Dewey's alternative position would be unavoidably understood to be incompatible with these two tenets.

Dewey's response[31] attempts to explain that the 'given' which McGilvary so firmly grips onto, is just what Dewey means by pre-reflective, alogical, non-cognitive experience. McGilvary is clearly in the camp which believes that this given must be a known given, lest it disappear into nonexistence, like the despised Kantian thing-in-itself. He thus thinks that when Dewey refuses to read back into prior existence (prior experience, for Dewey) a known object like the visible hemisphere of the moon, then Dewey must be denying the existence of any 'givens' before or after thought, and concludes that Dewey is an idealist because all must be dependent on thought. Dewey counters by explaining that McGilvary is failing to recognize that this "bright something occasionally in experience, growing from slender crescent to full orb" which happens "whenever any one constituted like us opens his eyes and turns them in the right direction at an opportune time," (*MW* 4: 326) completely constitutes the pre-reflective act/experience. This type of experience can exist as it does without any thought intervening. Thought will intervene eventually, but not permanently, since the original experience is not thereby rendered forevermore inaccessible. Science tells about what we are seeing, for example a spherical moon, but this ***known*** object was not what we experienced originally. To posit that it is what we did see would only make the relationship between the "bright something" and the spherical moon thoroughly enigmatic. Now, most adults only see the sphere, but that does not mean that this sphere, as known, has anything to do with the process by which during childhood they came to understand that it is actually a sphere. The assumption that it did makes for hopeless psychological and epistemological puzzles. Furthermore, the meaning and verification of science's theories about the shape of the moon, the nature of the far side, etc., all rest at bottom on our ability to return to non-reflective but potentially cognitive experience.

With these considerations, Dewey is now in a position to answer

McGilvary's primary question. He confesses that philosophy, like science, should inquire only into the empirical, the things and characters of experience, and never the transcendental. If this is an idealistic viewpoint, then isn't McGilvary willing to agree with the value of this conviction? "I know shamefully little about 'all reality,' since my empiricism is precisely that the only realities I do know anything about or ever shall know anything about are just experienced realities" (*MW*4: 155). Dewey's agnosticism hardly denies the existence of a reality forever locked off from the possibility of being experienced in some way, yet does not affirm it. McGilvary would have been sensitive to Dewey's plea, since he himself expressed difficulties with the notion of the un-experienceable.[32] The Kantian thing-in-itself lurks behind these discussions of realism and idealism, and it still haunts them today. Dewey felt that it would hardly be just to require any realist to accept the thing-in-itself, though many more of Dewey's critics sought his conviction and banishment to idealism on such grounds.

IV. What Works Is Not Always True

The first to criticize pragmatism's connection between truth and practical effectiveness, and its disconnection of truth and a fixed reality, were not realists, but idealists.[33] When realists picked up these topics, their difficulties were best expressed first by A.K. Rogers who found pragmatism to be

> a theory which holds that the stars, *e.g.*, and every reality for which the stars stand, come into existence with the human need which leads to their discovery, or that the earth really was flat, in any valid sense of the word real, so long as men found it satisfactory to believe it so, which denies, in a word, any meaning to the reality of an encircling universe in which our human experience and our human thought are set.[34]

Another way of putting the same matter is to argue that the object of belief is always firmly and common-sensically considered to be

quite transcendent from one's mental states of experience, belief, knowledge, etc.[35] Rogers is complaining that pragmatism runs afoul of this belief since on that theory any object of belief is just an experience. The reader by now should be recognizing that here we have an objection generated by a misunderstanding of Dewey's "knowledge-object" and his genuine attempt at a non-solipsistic notion of experience.

When the realists set down their own theory of truth, they used some variant of a basic expression like the following:

> The intellectualist's meaning of truth is so simple, so commonplace, so close at hand, that the pragmatist has quite overlooked it. By the truth of an idea the intellectualist means merely this simple thing, *that the object of which one is thinking is as one thinks it.*[36]

Well, we should admit that this somewhat Aristotelian expression is really not just that simple; the correspondence theory of truth is considerably more complicated. For example, the realists were always quick to add to this theory that the object's existence is independent of thought, so that truth becomes quasi-independent of thought as well. From here the complete independence of propositions can be formulated, as Russell and others were attempting about this time. Furthermore, the realists, like the idealists, generally had a common conception of the nature of trans-subjective reality (setting aside their disagreement over whether this realm is mental). This realm was always absolutely fixed and rigid in its characteristics, qualities, etc. Whatever reality was like, as a totality reality was like it *in only one way.* One method the realists (and many idealists) often used to state this principle would be to bring the correspondence theory of truth into play and to declare the primacy of the resulting principle of contradiction which states that P and not-P cannot both be true at the same time. Put simply, if the truth of a proposition depends solely on its correspondence with reality, and if that reality is *fixed*, the correspondence is fixed, and thus the truth-value of the proposi-

tion is fixed: either P is true or P is false, and never both at the same time.

It is all too easy to show, as nearly every realist (and many idealist) commentators did, that if pragmatism holds that an idea's truth consists in the process of verification, pragmatism will violate the principle of contradiction. Such showing only requires a hypothetically constructed situation in which one inquirer can successfully verify proposition A, while another can do the same for not-A.[37] Another common way of making this sort of objection is to argue that the pragmatist cannot properly account for the discovery of error or falsity, since apparently a proposition about something at a specific point in time could be true in 1400 but not true in 1900. In general all such complaints against pragmatism revolve around a rejection of a perceived too-personal or too-human version of truth: individuals, communities, or even all human beings are just too frail and untrustworthy to be relied on for a solid foundation and source of so precious and pure a thing as truth.

A great number of realists as well as idealists found functional psychology and the resulting instrumentalist pragmatism to be a very persuasive account of the process of belief and knowledge acquisition, but balked when any pragmatist would add that a conception or theory really *becomes* true at the moment such knowledge is gained.[38]

> Here we come to a most important disjunction: between pragmatism as a theory of *what truth means* and pragmatism as an account of *why we think things true*. Professor Dewey seems to me to give on the whole a correct account of the psychology of thinking things true. One might say that he discusses pertinently the denotation of truth, but leaves the question of its connotation untouched.[39]

Many commentators found Dewey's account of knowledge to be merely psychological in the subjective sense, and refused to countenance the reduction of "purely" logical categories like truth and correspondence down to that individualistic level. They saw in prag-

matism the notion of truth becoming subservient to the notions of the good or the useful, and since these latter conceptions were widely regarded as hopelessly subjective as well, truth would be delivered into the clutches of relativism at best, or at worst, outright skepticism.[40] Dewey himself vociferously rejected that kind of reduction, but while he received a respectful hearing, few comprehended the message. Dewey himself cannot be accused of misunderstanding his critics (purposely evading questions put to him that he rejected as poorly worded, perhaps) as a perusal of his articles from that time easily reveals. He went to great lengths to accurately describe the positions of others, both realist and idealist alike, discerning a common "intellectualist" thread. This thread was seen by Dewey as the backbone of a philosophical tradition going back to Plato, preserved for the present-day as the enterprise of epistemology. This tradition embraced the metaphysical absolutism and the correspondence theory of truth discussed above, along with the companion notion of experience as irredeemably subjective and irrelevant to truth. The most detailed and exhaustive examination and rejection of this tradition that Dewey produced during this period, juxtaposed with his own functionalist analysis of knowledge and pragmatic theory of truth, was contained in "The Experimental Theory of Knowledge."[41] This article recommends itself not only as the clearest statement of his naturalistic instrumentalism that he had yet formulated, but also as an eloquent confession of his difficulties with the epistemological "transcendental" tradition.

Owing chiefly to the effort expended in previous debates with his many critics, Dewey is able to get to the heart of these matters: "Like knowledge itself, truth is an experienced relation of things, and it has no meaning outside of such relation" (*MW* 3: 118). Since Dewey will not license any talk of anything transcending (permanently beyond the range of) experience, present or potential, then "truth as correspondence" only can make sense if at minimum three conditions are satisfied: the things to be corresponded together must be related within experience, that relation must itself be experienced, and the subjectivist notion of experience must be relinquished. A

sympathetic hearing of these conditions allows the reader to penetrate into the broader explanation of the functionalist doubt-inquiry-satisfaction theory expounded by Dewey. However, each contradicts the epistemological tradition, and are together with Dewey's process metaphysics largely responsible for his commentators' difficulties. When Dewey's pragmatism was evaluated using this tradition's standards, it invariably appeared to be completely subjective, relativistic, and mischievously overambitious.

In his "The Control of Ideas By Facts," "The Intellectualist Criterion For Truth," and "The Dilemma of the Intellectualist Theory of Truth"[42] he further clarifies his inability to understand the "intellectualist" criterion of truth (that truth is solely dependent on an independent fixed reality) and refines and extends his reconstruction of the notion of correspondence. Along the way he tries to reveal his critics' own lack of understanding about their own epistemological commitments. In "Does Reality Possess a Practical Character?"[43] Dewey tries to assuage the predilection for associating qualities of experience like doubt, need, and conflict with the strictly personal and subjective. "The Logical Character of Ideas"[44] exposes and rectifies the critic's assumption that Dewey's functional theory of logic employs the same idea of consciousness that the critic uses. In each of these papers there are further attempts to elucidate the pragmatist account of experience and its characters, to deny that philosophers can meaningfully speak of an unchanging reality, and to distinguish pragmatism from idealism. There is also a slowly growing recognition that it may be hopeless to offer an alliance with the realist movement. When the group of Six Realists came together in 1910 their program and platform elicited an immediate attack from Dewey, with several more in succeeding years. As Dewey went on the offensive a new level of philosophical debate would emerge, due principally to the increased understanding on everyone's part generated by the philosophical conversations of the previous decade.

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NOTES

1. See George Dykhuizen, *The Life and Mind of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), pp. 116-23. See also Darnell Rucker, "Introduction," to volume three of *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, pp. ix. Further references to the *Works of John Dewey*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-91) have the volume number and page number following the abbreviation of the series, with *EW* for *The Early Works, 1882-1898*, *MW* for *The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, and *LW* for *The Later Works, 1925-1953*. References to publications in the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* use the abbreviation *JP*.

2. Those who responded to Dewey and received no reply in return (aside from his reviewers) are the following. W.M. Salter's "Theory and Practice," (*International Journal of Ethics* 2 (1891): 112-13) questioned Dewey's statement that the "ought" must be "the is of action" from his "Moral Theory and Action," (*EW* 3: 93-109). Edmund Montgomery's "Psychical Monism," (*Monist* 2 (1892): 338-56) critiqued Dewey's theory of absolute consciousness as presented in articles written from 1886 to 1892. James H. Hyslop's "The Ego, Causality, and Freedom," (*Philosophical Review* 3 (1894): 717-22), responded to Dewey's "The Ego as Cause," (*EW* 4: 91-95). David Irons' "Recent Developments in the Theory of Emotion," (*Psychological Review* 2 (1895): 279-84) commented on Dewey's "The Theory of Emotion," (*EW* 4: 152-88). Dewey did make replies in the following articles. The 1886 "What is the Demonstration of Man's Spiritual Nature?" (*LW* 17: 15-18) answered H.S. Swift's questions. The 1887 "'Illusory Psychology'" (*EW* 1: 168-75) replied to Shadworth Hodgson. The 1898 "Some Remarks on the Psychology of Number," (*EW* 5: 177-91), answered D.E. Phillips. The 1898 "Rejoinder to Baldwin's Reply" (*EW* 5: 399-401) responded to James Mark Baldwin.

3. Notable exceptions include Dykhuizen, pp. 124-35, and Thomas Alexander's *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), pp. 73-85.

4. *Studies in Logical Theory*, University of Chicago Decennial Publications, 2nd series, vol. 11 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903). The version in the *Works of John Dewey*, *MW* 2: 293-375, has significant termi-

nological alterations; see the volume's "Emendations List." "The Realism of Pragmatism," *MW* 3: 153-57. "The Postulate of Immediate Experience," *MW* 3: 158-67.

5. See Ralph Barton Perry's *The Thought and Character of William James* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1935), vol. 1, chapters 49-51.

6. Josiah Royce, *The World and the Individual, First Series: The Four Historical Conceptions of Being*, (New York: Macmillan, 1899, reprinted, New York: Dover, 1959). On the origins of American neo-realism see William H. Werkmeister, "Neo-Realism," in *A History of Philosophical Ideas in America* (New York: Ronald Press, 1949), p. 371; Herbert W. Schneider, "The Pragmatic Meeting of Minds," in *Sources of Contemporary Philosophical Realism in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), pp. 14-16; and Victor Harlow, *A Bibliography and Genetic Study of American Realism*, 1931 (reprinted, New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), pp. 16-21. Realistic views prior to 1903 are outlined in Werkmeister, p. 371, and Harlow, pp. 24-28. William P. Montague's "Professor Royce's Refutation of Realism" appeared in *Philosophical Review* 11 (January 1902): 43-55; Ralph Barton Perry's "Prof. Royce's Refutation of Realism and Pluralism" appeared in *The Monist* 12 (April 1902): 446-58. These references correct Montague's recollection of their publication dates in his "The Story of American Realism," reprinted in *The Development of American Philosophy*, edited by Walter Muelder and Laurence Sears (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), p. 421.

7. *JP* 1 (1904): 477-501.

8. The reader should be warned that this paper will not attempt to answer the question whether Dewey's pragmatism is compatible with realism, since it is no business of this paper to attempt to correctly enumerate the criteria for a realistic metaphysics. On Dewey's gradual development from neo-Hegelianism towards pragmatic naturalism, these works are recommended in addition to Dykhuizen's and Alexander's books mentioned above: Raymond Boisvert, *Dewey's Metaphysics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1988); James Collins, "The Genesis of Dewey's Naturalism," in *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence*, edited by John Blewitt (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), pp. 1-32; Darnell Rucker, *The Chicago Pragmatists* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969); Philip Smith, "The Development and Formulation of John Dewey's Theory of Mind," *International Philosophy Quar-*

terly 14 (1976): 275-303; Michael Buxton, "The Influence of William James on John Dewey's Early Work," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 451-63; Andrew J. Reck, "The Influence of William James on John Dewey in Psychology," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 20 (1984): 87-118. Recent attempts to re-evaluate Dewey's relationship with neo-Hegelianism are Jennifer Welchman's "From Absolute Idealism to Experimentalism: The Problem of Dewey's Early Philosophy," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 25 (1989): 407-20, Welchman's *Dewey's Ethical Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), and this writer's *John Dewey's Early Philosophy: The Foundations of Instrumentalism*, Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1994, and "Wilhelm Wundt's Contribution to John Dewey's Functional Psychology," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, forthcoming.

9. Dykhuizen (p. 124) counts more than 30 such articles written between 1905 and 1914.

10. *How We Think*, *MW* 6: 177-356. The essays in *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought* are published individually in the *Early* and *Middle Works*. "The Program and First Platform of Six Realists," *JP* 7 (1910): 393-401 (*MW* 6: 472-82), was written by Edwin B. Holt, Walter T. Marvin, William P. Montague, Ralph B. Perry, Walter B. Pitkin, and Edward G. Spaulding. See Dewey's "The Short Cut to Realism Examined," *MW* 6: 138-42.

11. The Critical Realists were Durant Drake, Arthur O. Lovejoy, James B. Pratt, Arthur K. Rogers, George Santayana, Roy Wood Sellars, and Charles A. Strong. In "The Story of American Realism" Montague recounts that Woodbridge and McGilvary had considerable status and influence as "unofficial" realists. See also William Jones, *Nature and Natural Science: The Philosophy of F.J.E. Woodbridge* (Buffalo: Prometheus Press, 1983). The other published conversations Dewey participated in between 1904 and 1910 were with Steven S. Colvin, Charles M. Bakewell and Boyd H. Bode. Colvin was in the idealist camp (see for example his "The Ultimate Value of Experience," *Psychological Review* 14 (1907): 254-63); his classification of pragmatism with psychological subjectivism sparked Dewey's "The Realism of Pragmatism," *MW* 3: 153-157. Bakewell's idealist criticisms brought out Dewey's "Immediate Empiricism," *MW* 3:168-70. Bode at times seemed sympathetic to functionalism,

but he found great difficulties involved with Dewey's notion of experience, remaining an idealist during those years. Dewey responded to Bode's comments with "The Knowledge Experience Again," *MW* 3: 178-83.

12. E.G. Spaulding, "Pure Science and Pragmatism," [Abstract] *JP* 3 (1906): 75-76. R.B. Perry, "A Review of Pragmatism as a Theory of Knowledge," *JP* 4 (1907): 365-74; "A Review of Pragmatism as a Philosophical Generalization," *JP* 4 (1907): 421-28. W.P. Montague, "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful from a Pragmatic Standpoint," *JP* 6 (1909): 233-38; "May a Realist Be a Pragmatist," *JP* 6 (1909): 460-63, 485-90, 543-48, 561-71. A.K. Rogers, "The Standpoint of Instrumental Logic," *JP* 1 (1904): 207-12; "Professor James's Theory of Knowledge," *Philosophical Review* 15 (1906): 577-96. R.W. Sellars, "Professor Dewey's View of Agreement," *JP* 4 (1907): 432-35. J.B. Pratt, "Truth and Its Verification," *JP* 4 (1907): 320-24; "Truth and Ideas," *JP* 5 (1908): 122-31; *What is Pragmatism?* (New York: Macmillan, 1909, reprinted, New York: AMS Press, 1977). C.A. Strong, "Pragmatism and Its Definition of Truth," *JP* 5 (1908): 256-64. A.O. Lovejoy, "The Thirteen Pragmatisms," *JP* 5 (1908): 5-12, 29-39; "Pragmatism and Realism," *JP* 6 (1909): 575-80.

13. On the American Realists see also Lars Bowman, *Criticism and Construction in the Philosophy of the American New Realism* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1955); Saiyid Zafar al-Hasan, *Realism: An Attempt to Trace Its Origin and Development in Its Chief Representatives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928, reprinted, New York: B. Blom, 1971).

14. *JP* 2 (1905): 393-99 (*MW* 3: 158-67).

15. F.J.E. Woodbridge, "Of What Sort is Cognitive Experience?" *JP* 2 (1905): 573-76 (*MW* 3: 393-97).

16. *JP* 2 (1905): 119-25. Reprinted in his *Nature and Mind* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965), pp. 307-15.

17. *Nature and Mind*, p. 313.

18. *JP* 2 (1905): 324-27 (*MW* 3: 153-57).

19. "The Knowledge Experience and Its Relationships," *JP* 2 (1905): 652-57 (*MW* 3: 171-77).

20. *MW* 3: 177.

21. See his "Immediate Experience," and "The Knowledge Experience Again."

22. *JP* 3 (1906): 253-57 (*MW* 3:101-6).

23. These matters are explained in greater detail by Alexander, pp. 94-96.

24. For example, R.W. Sellars expressed a debt to Dewey and spoke of experience as including "both the physical and psychical in functional relation to each other," in "The Nature of Experience," *JP* 4 (1907): 16, 17. W.P. Montague was at that time trying to work out a monistic realism; see Werkmeister, pp. 377-82. The New Realists agreed that representative realism's dualistic epistemology, such as that of the realist Charles A. Strong, had to be abandoned in preference for the notion of naive or direct realism.

25. *Philosophical Review* 16 (1907): 266-84 (*MW* 4: 295-313).

26. Georges Dicker has given an excellent treatment of this distinction in Dewey's philosophy. See his "Knowing and Coming-to-Know in John Dewey's Theory of Knowledge," *Monist* 57 (1973): 191-219, and "John Dewey on the Object of Knowledge," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 8 (1972): 152-66.

27. See *MW* 4: 120.

28. Royce, p. 62.

29. Montague, "Current Misconceptions of Realism," *JP* 4 (1907): 101. McGilvary refers to reality's independence as meaning "temporal independence, not 'absolute independence'. By 'temporal independence,' again, I mean existence at a time when there is no awareness of what thus exists." "Prolegomena to a Tentative Realism," *JP* 4 (1907): 451n.

30. McGilvary, "The Chicago 'Idea' and Idealism," *JP* 5 (1908): 589-97. This quotation is found in its reprinting at *MW* 4: 323.

31. "Objects, Data, and Existences: A Reply to Professor McGilvary," *JP* 6 (1909): 13-21 (*MW* 4: 146-55).

32. McGilvary says, "By the 'independence' of an object, I do not mean that the object would exist if this world were mindless from start to finish, assuming there to be start to finish. If this world were from everlasting to everlasting without mind as a constituent part of it, it would be so different from what it is that I do not know whether with the absence of mind there might not also be the absence of everything else." "Prolegomena to a Tentative Realism," *JP* 4 (1907): 450n-451n.

33. The critics included most of the prominent idealists of the

day. See James Seth, "The Utilitarian Estimate of Knowledge," *Philosophical Review* 10 (1901): 341-58; Josiah Royce, "The Eternal and the Practical," *Philosophical Review* 13 (1904): 113-42; Joseph A. Leighton, "Pragmatism," *JP* 1 (1904): 148-56; James E. Creighton, "Purpose as a Logical Category," *Philosophical Review* 13 (1904): 284-97; Francis Herbert Bradley, "On Truth and Practice," *Mind* n.s. 13 (1904): 309-35; Alfred E. Taylor, "Truth and Practice," *Philosophical Review* 14 (1905): 265- 89. The best account of these early controversies between pragmatism and idealism is by R.F. Alfred Hoernle, "Pragmatism v. Absolutism," *Mind* n.s. 14 (1905): 297-334, 441-78.

34. A.K. Rogers, "The Standpoint of Instrumental Logic," *JP* 1 (1904): 208.

35. See for example W.B. Pitkin, "The Relation Between the Act and the Object of Belief," *JP* 3 (1906): 505-11.

36. J.B. Pratt, "Truth and Its Verification," *JP* 4 (1907): 322.

37. Pratt does an exemplary job; see *ibid.*, p.322-24.

38. R.B. Perry is explicit, as are others, on this point. See his "A Review of Pragmatism as a Theory of Knowledge," *JP* 4 (1907): 365-74.

39. C.A. Strong, "Pragmatism and Its Definition of Truth," *JP* 5 (1908): 258.

40. W.P. Montague offers an excellent analysis in his "The True, the Good, and the Beautiful from a Pragmatic Standpoint," *JP* 6 (1909): 233-38.

41. *Mind* n.s. 15 (1906): 293-307 (*MW* 3: 107-27, and 432-36).

42. "The Control of Ideas By Facts," *JP* 4 (1907): 197-203, 253-59, 309-19 (*MW* 4: 78-90). "Reality and the Criterion for the Truth of Ideas," *Mind* n.s. 16 (1907): 317-42, was reprinted as "The Intellectualist Criterion For Truth," *MW* 4: 50-75. "The Dilemma of the Intellectualist Theory of Truth," *JP* 6 (1909): 433-34 (*MW* 4: 76-77).

43. *Essays, Philosophical and Psychological*, in Honor of William James, Professor in Harvard University, by His Colleagues at Columbia University (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), pp. 53-80 (*MW* 4: 125-42).

44. *JP* 5 (1908): 375-81 (*MW* 4: 91-97).