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Abstract
Peter Hare devoted much scholarly effort to understanding and explaining the philosophical views of Brown University philosopher C. J. Ducasse. Ducasse was influenced by William James and Josiah Royce at Harvard University. Hare was especially interested in Ducasse's views on aesthetics, the ethics of belief, and philosophy of religion. Hare judged that Ducasse was an important figure in American philosophy.

Keywords: Peter Hare, C. J. Ducasse, Aesthetics, Belief, Causality, Ethics, Religion.

Peter Hare on the Philosophy of Curt John Ducasse

John R. Shook

Peter Hare published two books about philosophy, both co-authored with his colleague Edward Madden. The first was *Evil and the Problem of God*, while the second was titled *Causing, Perceiving and Believing: An Examination of the Philosophy of C. J. Ducasse* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel), published in 1975. Hare's choice of Ducasse for extended study tells us a great deal about Hare's own interests. Ducasse was a confessedly analytic philosopher who advocated several views extending classical American themes. From metaphysics and epistemology to ethics and aesthetics, Ducasse struck Hare as a philosopher worthy of promotion and preservation.

Hare and Madden had an interest in Ducasse for some years.[1] However, there is no published explanation for the origins of their interest. Madden spent a year at Brown University where Ducasse held his professorship back in the mid-1950s. Hare was aware of Ducasse's close friendship with Dickinson Miller. He noticed how Ducasse's 20–year conversation with Miller about William James had influenced Ducasse's own philosophy. He held a SUNY

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Summer Fellowship on C. J. Ducasse in 1968 and talked with Ducasse before his death in 1969. Hare also secured free access to Ducasse's papers at Brown University, where he discovered the massive evidence of Ducasse's extensive fascination with James.

It is notable that Ducasse had an opportunity to know James personally while he was a graduate student at Harvard. Ducasse took close interest in the issue of the will to believe and the ethics of belief. Another aspect of his fascination with James was a common interest in psychical research. Hare's attraction to Ducasse took a similar turn, extending from the ethics of belief and the question of religious belief to ethical theory, value theory, and aesthetics. Madden's interests naturally fell to Ducasse's work on perception, causation, agency, and metaphysics. These two colleagues were able to do justice to his very wide-ranging contributions. Madden was impressed by Ducasse's non-Humean treatment of causality, dispositions, and capacities. Hare found Ducasse's defense of the right to believe an appropriate way to interpret James. Both eventually decided that Ducasse was quite worthy of a book-length treatment.

But who was Curt John Ducasse? Born in 1881 in France, Ducasse studied primarily with Josiah Royce and earned a Ph. D. in 1912. After teaching at the University of Washington, he went to Brown University and taught there until retiring in 1958. Ducasse wrote on most of the major areas of philosophy. His work on causality, philosophy of mind, epistemology, human agency, ethics, and aesthetics were quite influential. He also contributed to philosophy of language, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, and philosophy of the paranormal.[2]

Ducasse helped to found the Association for Symbolic Logic and the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, and he was elected president of the American Society for Aesthetics, the Philosophy of Science Association, and the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association (1939–1940). Among his many notable students, Roderick Chisholm stands out as most indebted to Ducasse's philosophical positions.

While Ducasse in some ways exemplified analytic philosophy for four decades, Hare and Madden discerned several distinctive positions in his work that connect and overlap with some dominant theses of the American philosophical tradition. Ducasse's basic stance towards the essential work of philosophy appears contrary to the spirit of classical American philosophy. Hare and Madden begin by explaining how Ducasse advocated an "analytic method" for doing philosophy as early as the 1920s. For Ducasse, the analytic method consisted of clarifying definitions of key terms used in philosophy, such as "cause," "belief," and "art." A proper definition of a term never violated ordinary common usage of that term in the English language. Language is therefore the ultimate test for a philosophical theory, keeping philosophy grounded

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in some common sense. Ducasse never adopted any intellectualistic metaphysics, viewing all grand systems as optional choices made more by temperament rather than strict reason.

Why didn't Ducasse enlist under the banner of one or another of his teachers' "isms" of pragmatism or naturalism or idealism? Royce himself declared that the young Ducasse could endorse only "philosophical liberalism" and that label stuck. Although Ducasse studied with American philosophy's giants at Harvard, he belonged to the next generation of scholars graduating from 1895 to 1915 who got caught between their intense crossfire. This fiery crucible tended to produce philosophers struggling to accommodate pragmatically and to synthesize generously as much as they could from their masters. Ducasse's flight away from restrictive metaphysical categories in favor of expansive treatments of separable problems exemplifies his generation's abandonment of the quest for the "one true reality."

Hare and Madden's book proceeds to Ducasse's analysis of causation where he argued against the Humean position on causality. Ducasse says that only events are causes. He held that causal relations are observable since we typically use the word "cause" to refer to two events of change, call them P and R, in which P ends around when and where R does and no other changes occur in this environment during this time. Although causal relations are not observable in the same way that objects are observable, whenever we notice the appropriate conjunction of changes, we observe the causal relation. We can even know that there are natural causal necessities. This anti-Humean stance on causation and necessity coincides nicely with the views of several other American philosophers including James and John Dewey.

Ducasse had no difficulty attributing the status of cause to desires and beliefs. Ducasse was strongly opposed to Cartesian or Kantian dualisms, even though the English language forbids reducing physical terms to mental terms, or vice-versa. On Ducasse's view of causality, there is nothing to prevent the ordinary convention of speaking about mental events causing physical events from honest recognition and respect by philosophy. Not until Donald Davidson's work in the 1960s would more philosophers join Ducasse's position. Like Davidson, Ducasse took the stance that the capacity of mental events to cause physical events does nothing to guarantee that mental events can be ontologically or nomologically reduced to physical events. The kinds of causal relations among mental events cannot be fully reduced to physically causal relations. Furthermore, there must accordingly be mental substance and physical substance. But Ducasse only means that there must be integrated sets of capacities for each order of nature. Where the analytic method demands it, one must simply accept a philosophically liberal position.

Ducasse also opposed strong dualism in the problem of perception. Trying to find a compromise between the neorealists like Ralph Barton

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Perry and the critical realists including George Santayana, Ducasse formulated a new theory. He proposed what came to be called the "adverbial" theory of sensing, and a dispositional theory of perception. There is a false dilemma between whether we only see external objects as they are, or only see internal sense data as they are. Physical objects have dispositional powers to produce qualitative sensings in organisms like us. I see the apple redly because the apple has the constant dispositional power to produce the visual experience of redness in me under appropriate conditions. Perceptions are neither ontologically of, nor intentionally about, anything going on subjectively within my private consciousness. Ducasse hoped that his theory of perception would be able to handle the traditional objections to perceptual and epistemic realism raised by arguments from illusion and hallucination.

It was this approach to perception that gave Ducasse the grounds to build a theory of aesthetics. There are several similarities with Dewey's position on art. Like Dewey, Ducasse was extremely skeptical towards the field of professional art criticism and the notion that art consisted of the fine arts admired in museums and theaters. Ducasse thought that art is everywhere. Art is an activity of creating works of art for appreciative contemplation. Ducasse was notorious for saying that an art critic's views are only more individual opinions. At most, aesthetic judgments could reach objectivity where they manage to predict reliably how a work of art can provoke aesthetic reactions, but such judgments cannot be normative.

He distinguished between the work of art and the aesthetic object. The work of art is the physical object created by the artist with the aim of provoking intended reactions. The aesthetic object is the actual aesthetic perception which arouses meaningful emotive feelings. The aesthetic object is caused by the work of art. Without using the terminology of perspective and context, Ducasse offers a perspectival and contextualist theory of aesthetics. Different people judge a work of art differently, because they appreciate different aesthetic objects arising from different contexts. This is not quite subjectivism, since Ducasse emphatically declares that people directly contemplate the work of art, and they are utterly unaware of directing attention to any subjective or internal aesthetic impression. Furthermore, ordinary language requires that people judge the work of art as beautiful. Therefore people are attributing aesthetic properties to the work of art and not to their own aesthetic object. Nevertheless, Ducasse is an aesthetic relativist.

There is space remaining to cover briefly two more important topics that Hare and Madden treat in their book: Ducasse's views on the ethics of belief and philosophy of religion. Hare argues that Ducasse follows James on the ethics of belief. Ducasse upholds James's stance that a person has the "right" to believe under only those rare circumstances in which the evidence is ambiguous and an option is "living,"

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"momentous," and "forced." Hare and Madden reprint extensive letters between Ducasse and Miller, in which Miller forcefully stresses the long-term evils from permitting people to hold beliefs in the absence of a preponderance of evidence. Ducasse responds by preferring the view that there is nothing unreasonable about a person willing to believe after due attention to available evidence has been given. Ducasse also asks for tolerance towards those who willingly believe despite conclusive evidence, so long as those people continue to search for more evidence along with everyone else.

Ducasse's philosophy of religion proceeds from this "right to believe" position in epistemology. He never pretended that any religious view, any more than a metaphysical system, could be proven correct. He was openly religious himself, adopting a kind of Buddhist pantheism. His openness to Eastern religions led him to design a minimal definition of religion in which religious belief functions to promote a social ethics and a personal fortitude. On this functional definition, a religious belief only has to be firmly believed and does not have to be additionally true. Such functionalism is consistent with Ducasse's ethics of belief, as he upheld the right to hold religious convictions after considering all the available evidence. Where the skeptic would declare as unreasonable any belief lacking sufficient evidence, Ducasse instead found unreasonable the view that people should be discouraged from holding religious beliefs that have proven to make them happier and healthier in this life. This pragmatic outlook strips from religion everything contrary to knowledge and anything destructive of life, while promoting the widest diversity of experimental "overbeliefs" about matters of ultimate concern.

Hare and Madden succeeded with their book to preserve the essentials of a complex and valuable philosophical worldview. In their judgment, Ducasse should be remembered as an important American philosopher and someone deserving to be kept in the conversation of the American philosophical tradition.

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NOTES

1. Prior to the book, his substantial publications about Ducasse were: "Moore and Ducasse on the Sense-Data Issue," with R. Koehl, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 28 (March 1968): 313–331. "William James,

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Dickinson Miller and C. J. Ducasse on the Ethics of Belief," with Edward Madden, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 4 (1968): 115–129. "An Examination of C. J. Ducasse's Philosophy of Religion," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 7 (1971): 58–69. "C. J. Ducasse on Human Agency," with Edward Madden, *Personalist* 12 (1971): 618–621. "C. J. Ducasse's Universal, Progressive Hedonism," with Edward Madden, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 34 (1973): 36–50. Hare also contributed "A Tribute to C. J. Ducasse" for the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* in 1970.

2. Ducasse's major writings were: *Causation and the Types of Necessity* (Seattle, 1924); *The Philosophy of Art* (New York, 1929); *Philosophy as a Science: Its Matter and its Method* (New York, 1941); *Art, the Critics, and You* (New York, 1944); *Nature, Mind, and Death* (La Salle, Ill., 1951); *A Philosophical Scrutiny of Religion* (New York, 1953); *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life after Death* (Springfield, Ill., 1961); and *Truth, Knowledge and Causation* (New York, 1968).

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