PHILOSOPHY in EXPERIENCE

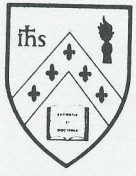
American Philosophy in Transition

Edited by

RICHARD E. HART

and

DOUGLAS R. ANDERSON



FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York
1997

12

Classical American Metaphysics: Retrospect and Prospect

ROBERT S. CORRINGTON

Drew University

THE CONCERN OF THIS ESSAY is to exhibit the major accomplishments of American metaphysics in its classical period and to suggest a direction for the future of this tradition. This future will be successful only if it radicalizes and deepens the achievements of the earlier period. Such a radicalization is already under way and promises to redeem the claims of the classical period. At the same time, the emerging categorial framework will establish a new conception of metaphysical inquiry. This new conception, if successful, would bring American philosophy to the forefront of contemporary thought.

In addressing the broad tradition of American thought, with particular attention to metaphysics, two major streams emerge as primary. The first, which we can in a loose sense call Idealism, is reflected in such thinkers as Emerson, Peirce, Royce, Hocking, Whitehead, and Hartshorne. The second, which we can less roughly call Naturalism, is reflected in such thinkers as James, Santayana, Dewey, Mead, Randall, and Buchler. While other thinkers and perspectives are evident in our tradition, these two streams emerge as fundamental.

Such a distinction should be used with great care and circumspection. Peirce and Whitehead, for example, would insist that their categorial schemes are naturalistic insofar as they emerge from a sustained dialogue with the sciences. Christopher Hookway, in his book on Peirce, defines naturalism as "the doctrine

that philosophy is continuous with psychology and other sciences, able to draw on them in order to provide an adequate account of man and his place in nature."[1] As we shall see, Idealists can also derive insight from the empirical sciences as well as show a concern for the place of the person in nature. In what follows, other differentia will be used to make this distinction helpful for our purposes.

Idealists contend that nature is to some degree spiritual or mental and that mental traits, no matter how muted in form or expression, can be found in the most primitive aspects of experience or nature. Hartshorne's psychicalism is a striking example of a perspective which insists that material explanations of nature's orders will fail to articulate the traits of emergence and novelty. Whitehead's basic ontological components of reality engage in an epochal process of what can best be described as subjective choice whereby both eternal entities and past occasions are selected for positive ingression. For both Hartshorne and Whitehead, to be is to be mental in the important sense that no complex can fail to exhibit the traits of selection, purpose, internal teleology, and primary feeling. For some, Peirce's commitment to panpsychism, the doctrine that matter is effete mind, is aligned with a view of cosmic habit to produce a striking conception of evolutionary convergence. Central to sustaining and articulating this reality is the community of scientific inquiry which drives toward total epistemic validation in the infinite future. In the writings of Royce, the model of self-consciousness becomes normative for rendering the traits of the atemporal Absolute Self. This Self functions as the guarantor of our epistemic claims and as the Fichtean principle of unity for our finite moral wills. With Emerson, Spirit becomes the animating principle behind human creativity and the orders of nature. The moral law of compensation, itself an analogue to the physical law of action/reaction, attests to Spirit's sovereignty over all human and non-human acts.

We can easily make the claim that for all these thinkers the general articulation of a conception or metaphysics of nature is made possible by the model of mentality or consciousness. The traits which are held to be constitutive for human awareness are in turn held to be exhibited in all the aspects of nature. Nature may or may not be spirit in its mode of mere externality. But, at the very least, nature is never bereft of psychic traits.

Whitehead, for example, combines atomism with psychism in order to build a monadology in which each actual occasion opens out to other past occasions as well as welcoming the ingression of universals, or what he calls eternal objects. His careful balance between atomism and continuity attempts to show how atomic realities are located both actually and potentially in terms of the entire processive universe. This bold combination is expressed as follows:

> Thus the ultimate metaphysical truth is atomism. The creatures are atomic. In the present cosmic epoch there is a creation of continuity. Perhaps such creation is an ultimate metaphysical truth holding of all cosmic epochs; but this does not seem to be a necessary condition. The more likely opinion is that extensive continuity is a special condition arising from the society of creatures which constitute our immediate epoch. But atomism does not exclude complexity and universal relativity. Each atom is a system of all things.[2]

Each atomic reality is embedded in the extensive continuum (having helped to sustain and generate it) and open to the entire system of things. Here we see the Idealist emphasis on internal relations sustained by a ground principle of mentality. The 'reach' of a given actual occasion is made possible by its prehensions, which can best be defined as mental and physical feelings. Unlike Leibniz's monads, Whitehead's actual occasions have windows which look out on all past occasions and, through positive and negative prehension in the mental pole, on all eternal entities.[3] Whitehead is an Idealist insofar as he stresses internal relations and the primacy of mentality over the non-mental.

Naturalists, on the other hand, contend that mental traits are located in a much larger domain of natural transaction. This domain need not exhibit those traits in even the most rudimentary fashion. Rather, human mentality, itself a precarious state-of-affairs, is the emergent product of natural and neurological conditions. The existence of emergent mind does not entail that it is merely the intensification of slumbering mental traits found through the rest of nature. Naturalists, with their strong sense of diremption and discontinuity, reject the view that all complex emergent traits must be manifest exhaustively in their antecedent conditions. Dewey and Mead point repeatedly to the numerous

social and biological enabling conditions which surround any emergent mentality. In the more recent naturalism of Justus Buchler, the notion that nature must have one or more universal traits, for example, those of mental life, is purged from his system. All traits are located in specific orders and thus cannot be abstracted from those orders without violating the ordinal nature of the world.[4]

The tradition of naturalism has stressed the radical finitude of those beings funded with mind and has refused any categorial articulations that would discount the full scope and depth of that finitude. To be finite, a condition well understood by American thinkers before the appearance of Heidegger's *Sein and Zeit*, is to be a fragment within constraints in nature which cannot be conquered by human will. Buchler gives this striking statement of naturalism's sense of our finitude:

> Man is born in a state of natural debt, being antecedently committed to the execution or the furtherance of acts that will largely determine his individual existence. He moves into a contingent mold by which he is qualitied and located, and related to endless things beyond his awareness.[5]

To be "qualitied and located" is to receive a human contour from the spheres of resistance that constitute one's world. This contour or overall shape is as much a gift as a human feat, as much the result of natural compulsions as the result of resolute self-overcoming.

Since both naturalists and Idealists represent their positions as being continuous with science, some further distinctions are in order. Generally, naturalists believe themselves more at home with the biological sciences and derive their categorial tools from the framework developed by the neo-Darwinian synthesis. Thus Dewey, for example, can redefine human mentality in terms of the transaction between organism and environment as the organism struggles to convert the problematic situation into one which is stable and filled with meaning. Idealists will often feel more at home in psychology or mathematical physics. Of course, the psychological models used by the particular philosopher will often place emphasis on the freedom of pure consciousness to generate and sustain an intentional universe. Dewey, in his writings before 1890, tried to reground philosophy on the notion of

a neo-Hegelian universal consciousness which would contain enough power and reality to sustain a general ontology. By the time he integrated William James's psychology he was forced toward a naturalist account of how consciousness is embedded in nature.[6] Since Dewey occupied both sides of this distinction, his case is especially instructive.

In addition to differing attitudes toward the specific sciences, Idealists and naturalists will part company when dealing with the problems of human finitude and the intrinsic limitations which that entails. Idealists, while paying lip service to the fact that to be human is to be finite, will drive toward a conception in which emergent mentality transcends or overcomes all finite contexts through a series of internal relations which have no natural terminus. An Idealist need not assert a form of Hegelian *Absolute Wissen* in order to leave finitude behind. The implicit panpsychism of Idealism precludes a judicious account of the natural locatedness of mind in orders not of its own making. Naturalists, on the contrary, locate mind in the innumerable orders of a nature which has no ultimate shape or boundary. The concept of finitude is tied not to the perspectivism of the organism but to its embeddedness in the world. Contemporary neo-pragmatic celebrations of perspectivism, such as those found in the writings of Richard Rorty, simply fail to understand the deeper meaning of finitude which is found in such thinkers as Dewey and Buchler.

Rorty, who claims to be working within the general pragmatic perspective, imposes a Wittgensteinian reading on Dewey's *Experience and Nature* by insisting that it represents a critique of culture rather than a delineation of generic traits:

> Dewey's book consists, very roughly, of accounts of the historical and cultural genesis of the problems traditionally dubbed "metaphysical," interspersed with recommendations of various pieces of jargon which, Dewey thinks, will help us to see the irreality (or, at least, the evitability) of these problems. It is easier to think of the book as an explanation of why nobody needs a metaphysics, rather than as itself a metaphysical system. . . . one can see the book not as an "empirical" metaphysics but as a historico-sociological study of the cultural phenomenon called "metaphysics."[7]

Dewey is painted as a therapist of culture who is concerned with dissolving traditional metaphysics so as to free experience from

horizontal closure and the tyranny of a single perspective. Dewey's own claims to be doing something akin to traditional metaphysics are brushed aside. Rorty ignores the obvious gains of *Experience and Nature* in terms of its rethinking of the nature and scope of experience within the innumerable orders of nature. Dewey's careful analysis of the precarious and the stable, the ontological status of value, the structure of communication, and the fabric of the human subject, are seen as critical tools designed to overcome metaphysics. In opposition to Rorty's account it must be asserted not that Dewey was adding yet one more chapter to the history of perspectivism, but that he rearticulated finite experience to show just how it is embedded in a highly ramified network of real relations and possibilities. The Darwinian foundation of Dewey's metaphysical analysis provides the objective framework which rules out the view that philosophy is concerned only with perspectives and not with nature.

In addition to speaking of metaphysical directions, we may speak of recurrent traits. This list of traits is manifest on both sides of the Idealist/naturalist divide. Any such list is, of course, subject to refinement and counter-example, yet it is clear that such a list can help us to properly locate our analysis of the tradition.

Before detailing these traits we must eliminate a possible confusion. Thus far we have not discussed pragmatism as a distinct perspective in its own right. The reason for this is simple: pragmatism does not present or articulate a single metaphysical perspective. Dewey is quite clear on this point when he states:

> It is often said that pragmatism, unless it is content to be a contribution to mere methodology, must develop a theory of Reality. But the chief characteristic trait of the pragmatic notion of reality is precisely that no theory of Reality in general, *Überhaupt*, is possible or needed. It occupies the position of an emancipated empiricism or a thorough-going naïve realism. It finds that "reality" is a denotative term, a word used to designate indifferently everything that happens.[8]

Pragmatism, even in its richer incarnation as Peircean pragmaticism, is a general theory of forms of inquiry and does not in itself recommend any uniform or unambiguous understanding of the main traits of nature or world.[9] It is more correct to see pragmatism as a sophisticated framework for validation in both the *Geist-*

eswissenschaften and the *Naturwissenschaften.* Both Idealists and naturalists have traditionally availed themselves of pragmatic methodologies. It is clear that if Royce can refer to his perspective as "Absolute pragmatism" then it can function quite successfully outside of naturalism. Pragmatism is thus metaphysically open as to the distinction between Idealism and naturalism.

This is not to say that pragmatism has no metaphysical consequences, or basis. The use of the pragmatic method frees categories from grooved and outmoded pathways so that the rich fabric of experience can be traced with greater care and accuracy. What is asserted is that this liberating methodology can serve either of the two major forms of metaphysical commitment. Consider William James's statements form his 1907 lectures on pragmatism:

> Pragmatism represents a perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy, the empiricist attitude, but it represents it, as it seems to me, both in a more radical and in a less objectionable form than it has ever yet assumed. A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once and for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. . . . He turns toward concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power. That means the empiricist temper regnant, and the rationalist temper sincerely given up.[10]

This higher empiricism serves to elevate metaphysical query beyond the fruitless debates of the past. The so-called rationalist temper for James has served merely to deaden inquiry and reinforce conceptual sterility. Both James and Dewey sought to create a more expansive empiricism which would have metaphysical implications of great scope and interest. Yet, within this new methodology, great latitude would be permitted. This latitude has been liberating for both naturalists and Idealists.

Let us analyze, then, several characteristics of American metaphysics. Six traits have been isolated as central. While a longer or shorter list is obviously possible, it is hoped that the following analysis will be acceptable as a starting point for further reflection.

Anti-Cartesianism

American philosophers in general have been reluctant to return to the grooved thinking of post-Cartesian dualism. The radical

split between extended and non-extended substance has been bypassed in favor of an emphasis on the human process as that process encounters larger orders of biological and social ramification. Mind is seen as part of a more ubiquitous process from which it cannot be removed. For both Idealists and naturalists, mind and nature form an integrated transactional whole in which both dimensions co-determine each other.

Allied to the rejection of a radical mind/body dualism is the denial of the priority of subjectivity and the subsequent supremacy of epistemology. Dewey, in an oft-cited parallel with Heidegger, rejects the notion that the knowledge relation is primary for the person/world transaction. Insofar as epistemology still functions within American thought, with the possible exception of C. I. Lewis, it serves merely as a dimension within the metaphysics of community.

The Cartesian drive toward foundations is radically assaulted in its attempt to find a first principle or ultimate starting point for generic query. While Peirce and Royce retain a less rigid form of foundationalism, it is equally clear that the emphasis shifts toward the perspective that we start categorial reflection from within the middle of nature. In attempting to reflect on the totality of nature (itself a dubious notion), systematic reflection has found no foundational starting point but must continue to move in a variety of directions without finding either a center or a circumference. Consider this brief passage from Emerson's 1837 address "The American Scholar" which poetically catches the spirit of this anti-Cartesianism:

> Far, too, as her splendors shine, system or system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference—in the mass and in the particle, nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind.[11]

Nature, the locus of the ever Protean Spirit, has no overall shape or central point. No first principle of principles can stand firm to build or to encompass this shifting and chaotic reality. Consider the second point in this passage. Nature drives to manifest its trait structure to the human mind. While no primitive foundation can be isolated, it is clear that nature is not completely reticent to reveal its characteristics to human probing. This in itself should warn us of falling prey to a fashionable hermeneutics of suspicion

which would counsel that nature is always in retreat and ever reluctant to show its many faces.

Related to the rejection of foundationalism is the denial that we can have primitive intuitions of self-evident and non-derived truths. This denial is worked out systematically in Peirce's correlation of semiotics and mental life where he shows that we can have neither pure intuitions which are cognitive nor a first—i.e., non-series or context-dependent—sign. In 1868 Peirce states:

> From the proposition that every thought is a sign, it follows that every thought must address itself to some other, must determine some other, since that is the essence of a sign. This, after all, is but another form of the familiar axiom, that in intuition, i.e., in the immediate present, there is no thought, or, that all which is reflected upon has past. *Hic loquor inde est.* That, since any thought, there must have been a thought, has its analogue in the fact that, since any past time, there must have been an infinite series of times. To say, therefore, that thought cannot happen in an instant, but requires a time, is but another way of saying that every thought must be interpreted in another, or that all thought is in signs.[12]

Mental life participates in sign series as these series emerge out of dimly perceived prior semiotic structures. The Cartesian notion of self-evident intuition gives way to the model of convergent validation in the ideal future. It should be remembered, however, that signs not only are human conventions but have a strong relation to the resistances encountered in nature. A neo-Kantian reading of Peirce, such as that being defended by Karl-Otto Apel, fails to grasp the full indexicality of signs and their consequent embeddedness in the ordinal structures of the world. Behind the immediate object and its presentation in the sign is the dynamic object that provides meaningful constraints to inquiry. A sign has indexicality, it relates to objects that are not merely other signs.[13]

The tragi-comic attempts by Continental thinkers to undermine the Cartesian legacy should pay heed to a tradition which has already broken the priority of epistemology, deductive foundationalism, and self-evident intuition.

The Priority of Community

As scholars have pointed out, American philosophy has vacillated between a celebration of the claims of individuality and an equally

strong celebration of the importance of community. The strain that is of greater metaphysical import is that which places priority on communal transaction and its attendant redefinition of mental life.

Royce and Dewey clearly stand out as pre-eminent in their attempts to develop a systematic account of the main traits of community in its religious and political forms. One of the most important and detailed analyses of community is to be found in Royce's 1913 *The Problem of Christianity*, where he integrates Peirce's semiotics, in a slightly transformed version, with his own understanding of the traits of the early Christian communities. From this dual concern emerges a general understanding of the role of interpretation in communal life. Reality itself becomes a community of signs with something like an Absolute Interpreter at its "center." Royce can carry this line of reflection so far as to state:

> Our doctrine of Signs extends to the whole world the same fundamental principle. The world is the Community. The world contains its own interpreter. Its processes are infinite in their temporal varieties. But their interpreter, the spirit of the universal community . . . interprets them all.[14]

Human community is a microcosmic analogue to the communal structure of the world as a whole. For Royce, all complexes share in the process of semiotic validation which is supported by both the emerging universal community and the eternal interpreter. Insofar as the Absolute becomes more concrete in Royce's post-1912 writings, it functions to move human and pre-human communities toward co-transparency and the world of semiotic convergence.

The political dimension of communal transaction is most radically stated in Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems*, where the nature of a fully democratic public is contrasted with non-democratic social transactions. Dewey strips away some of Royce's theological and honorific notions while moving reflection on community toward a more generic conception. At the same time he shows how essential the notion of democracy is to the enterprise of systematic reflection. Like Marx before him, Dewey made it clear that systematic metaphysical reflection can itself suc-

ceed only when democratic institutions are sustaining our reflective tasks.

Epistemology, often seen as that discipline which precedes all others as a starting point for reflection, becomes located in the larger perspective of social philosophy. Any reflection about knowledge claims asks the much larger question about the nature and function of communication and validation in the community. Once communication and validation structures have been laid bare, it becomes possible to reflect on the status of specific epistemic claims. On a more generic level, the reflection on social structures is itself dependent on the analysis of the traits of orders per se. All honorific and factual-historical traits must be left behind to show the traits of any grouping funded with meaning.

The metaphysical reflection on community has served to relocate such disciplines as epistemology and social/political philosophy. Further, it has redefined philosophical anthropology in such a way as to avoid the subjectivism and atomism of other traditions. The correlation of democracy with metaphysical reflection has elevated systematic apprehension to a new level of awareness that could, if taken seriously, augur well for the future.

Darwinism

The interaction of Darwinian biological principles with systematic metaphysical reflection is an event of great importance for Western philosophy. Dewey has celebrated this interaction in a variety of essays and has helped us to focus on the scope and meaning of this intertwining. In 1908 Dewey makes this forceful statement:

> When science is led by the idea of evolution to introduce into the world the principles of initiative, variation, struggle, and selection; and when social forces have driven into bankruptcy absolutistic and static dogmas as authorities for the conduct of life, it is trifling for philosophy to decline to look the situation in the face.[15]

Yet, it is not clear that the full import of this event has been understood. Further, we have the curious fact that Darwin's twin principles of random variation and natural selection have been interpreted and used in a variety of ways. There is a vast difference between Whitehead's teleological regrounding of Darwin to serve

larger cosmological interests and the naturalist understanding of the organism/environment transaction in Dewey. We enter into more complex variations when we consider Hartshorne's aesthetic understanding of evolutionary ramification among organisms. Process thought, here understood as a form of Idealism, has been most insistent on introducing teleological traits into evolution while trying to outflank the dangers of the Lamarckian heresy. Of course, it is a muted and chastened form of teleology which denies an ultimate goal for nature as a whole.

The import of metaphysical Darwinism, which goes beyond Darwin himself, is that it has stressed both our finitude and the possibility of novelty and creativity. It has forced us to take seriously the fact that we are embedded in and reactant to a nature which limits our options while holding open novel and sometimes vagrant possibilities. No eternal or subsistent structures are posited which would somehow stand beneath or behind the endless movement of evolutionary ramification. Instead, thought apprehends traits and orders of unlimited complexity.

Teleology

One cannot fully separate the problem of teleology from that of Darwinism because the Darwinian revolution put more pressure on traditional conceptions of teleology than anything before it. One way of understanding the impact of Darwin on philosophy is in terms of a series of heroic attempts to rescue some form of final cause. Royce preserves teleology by showing how all communities are evolving toward the Universal of Grace-filled beloved Community which will form the interpretive matrix for our understanding of reality. Peirce preserves teleology by his notion of cosmic agapasm which will create thirds and preserve chance in a process of infinite approachable and asymptotic convergence. James understands teleology in terms of moral transformation of habits of both behavior and attention. Dewey rejects the notion of an antecedent fact in order to emphasize the telic structure of validation in the future. A fact is no longer an antecedent state-of-affairs but that which emerges as the result of purposive and selective inquiry. For Dewey, all mental life is telic in that it moves from an indeterminate toward a determinate situation in

order to render at least some complexes stable for personal and social life.

When we consider the metaphysical frameworks of Whitehead and Hartshorne, it becomes clear that teleological traits can be seen to exist in the most basic constituents of reality. To be is to strive for a satisfaction which can only be sensed as a future event which in effect uses efficient causality for its own internal purposes. The radical inversion of final and efficient causality is one of the more striking reactions to the Darwinian turn in thought. If we consider the amount of conceptual ground encompassed by everything from Dewey's rethinking of the reflex arc to Hartshorne's understanding of Divine teleology, it becomes clear how important are post-Darwinian attempts to save some version of teleology.

The Priority of the Scientific Method

Not surprisingly, the Darwinian turn made clear how successful scientific and statistical methods could be in rendering an account of nature. Hence, it became natural for American philosophers to adopt some form of scientific method as normative for philosophic investigation. Yet, the pragmatists in particular avoided the facile positivism that became attractive to their later European counterparts. Thinkers as diverse as Peirce, Dewey, Whitehead, and Buchler have sought to broaden the understanding of scientific method to include the quest for values. These values were, especially for Dewey, to be seen as amenable to communal and scientific apprehension. Peirce advanced the general theory of method by working out his distinctions between deduction, induction, abduction, and musement. Abduction is the process of hypothesis formulation which goes beyond the sampling and statistical submethods of inductive generalization. It is more robust and fecund than other forms of scientific method and may align itself with metaphysical inquiry. On an even more generic level is Peirce's method of interpretive musement which lifts inquiry beyond the instrumental structures of abduction. In his 1908 article "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," he gives this evocative account of this higher methodology:

> There is a certain agreeable occupation of mind which, from its having no distinctive name, I infer is not as commonly practiced as it deserves to be; for indulged in moderately—say through some five to six percent of one's waking time. perhaps during a stroll—it is refreshing enough more than to repay the expenditure. . . . In fact it is Pure Play. Now, Play, we all know, is a lively exercise of one's powers. Pure Play has no rules, except this very law of liberty. . . . There is no kind of reasoning that I should wish to discourage in Musement; and I should lament to find anybody confining it to a method of such moderate fertility as logical analysis.[16]

Musement frees thought from the instrumental pursuit of means/end which govern ordinary forms of inquiry. It rises up into the Pure Play of signs and sign systems. For Peirce, this higher methodology inevitably moves thought toward a contemplation of God. Within classical pragmatism, Peirce's account of interpretive musement represents the high-water mark of the theory of methodic probing of reality. While continuous with his theory of science it transcends the limitations of deductive and inductive inference.

In the ordinal naturalism of Buchler, the concept of method becomes a specific theme for sustained reflection. Rejecting some naturalists' temptation toward scientific reductionism, he develops a critique of methodic activity per se. On the positive side, Buchler advances his own notion of what he calls "query" as that moment within method when inventiveness eclipses routine:

> No inventive process can be said to obviate groping on the part of those who engage in it. For every direction is vague in some degree when it starts with the prospect of uniqueness and unknown value in the product. Method that promises invention is query—the human effort to make the interrogative temper bear fruit. A good method for query does not mechanize effort; it only permits imaginative power to take form. Nor does it necessarily minimize effort; it only makes more likely greater substance in the reward.[17]

Query emerges whenever methodic probing goes beyond mere routine and luxuriates in sheer exploration of possibilities. Query is not limited to science or to art but underlies all forms of methodic interaction with the complexes of nature. Like Peirce's musement, query moves beyond the pursuit of instrumentalities

of simple control which would only foreclose inquiry. It represents reason's moment of fullest self-transparency into its own proper stance toward a world of indefinite complexity and richness.

It is fair to say that intense reflection on scientific method enabled the classical American thinkers to advance to a new and richer conception of method per se. The generous and open spirit which animates earlier reflection has borne fruit in more recent attempts to rethink hermeneutic and historical methods. By preserving both fact and value and by emphasizing an ethical notion of scientific community, thinkers as diverse as Peirce and Dewey have enabled us to avoid any understanding of scientific method which would cut off general questions of value and meaning. Because of this pioneering work it is no longer possible to make the facile distinction between 'mere' ontic knowledge and so-called ontological apprehension. A broadened understanding of methodic activity cuts across such much-touted distinctions. In the generic rethinking of the concept of methodic activity, American thought has opened new possibilities for metaphysics.

The Radicalized Concept of Experience

For many contemporary thinkers, especially those attuned to problems in phenomenology, the single most important contribution of American thought to general systematic reflection is its radicalization of the concept of experience. Both Idealists and naturalists quickly went beyond orthodox empiricism with its atomic analysis of sense data. Further, the empiricists' insistence that relations were less real than the relata was rejected in favor of the view that both relations and qualities were equally important. For James and Dewey, experience has a "stretch" which reaches out into a personal and social "fringe."

Experience stretches into social orders and into the future. The passive and present-bound perspective of empiricism gave way to a neo-Hegelian sense of dialectical expansion and organic encompassment. It would not be incorrect to see experience as a third term which stands between person and world and which governs and directs the movement of that transaction. The traits disclosed by experience are funded with value and teleological lures. For

Dewey, experience is both in and of nature and functions dialectically in the twin dimensions of doing and undergoing. Any genetic analysis of constitution must, after Dewey, pay heed to the compulsive power of orders of nature which force us to undergo far more than we can fathom or control.

While Peirce worked out a detailed conception of the relation among the three categories as both metaphysical and phenomenological, it is Dewey who actually worked through a phenomenological account of experience. Peirce, not unlike Husserl, prescinds from the push and pull of that nature within which experience is located. Peirce states:

> Phaneroscopy is the description of the phaneron; and by the phaneron I mean the collective total of all that is in any way or in any sense present to the mind, quite regardless of whether it corresponds to any real thing or not. If you ask present when, and to whose mind, I reply that I leave these questions unanswered, never having entertained a doubt that those features of the phaneron that I have found in my mind are present at all times and to all minds.[18]

The drive toward some form of consciousness-in-general moves Peirce away from that more naturalistic phenomenology which is much more faithful to the fits and starts of lived experience. The true legacy of American phenomenology can be traced through the writings of Dewey to the regrounding of Dewey's project in Buchler's theory of proception.[19]

At this point we are ready to make a few suggestions as to the future of American metaphysics. Unlike previous generations, we have the good fortune of attaining a more rounded perspective on the still evolving tradition of classical American thought. The radicalization and regrounding of this tradition is one of the fundamental philosophical projects of our time.

Of initial importance is the continuation of the metaphysics of nature. The post-Darwinian reflections on evolutionary ramification need to be grafted onto a stronger metaphysics of the orders of nature as these orders function to locate each other in a nonhierarchial way. An ordinal analysis of nature, derived from the pioneering work of Buchler, can locate the evolutionary perspective in a more general horizon.[20] At the same time, such a generic clearing can reign-in the categorical excesses of a process philosophy which would import panpsychism into all the complexes of

nature. A proper place will be found for genuine teleological traits without violating the spirit of the Darwinian understanding of random variation. From this it does not follow that nature itself (if such an expression be allowed) is itself teleological or under the impress of a natural or divine providence. Teleological traits are order dependent and are not to be envisioned outside of particular orders.

The use of aesthetic categories, especially by such thinkers as Whitehead and Hartshorne, must be made more circumspect to protect the ethical and the religious spheres from an aestheticizing bias that would deny the autonomy of these orders. This is especially clear when the problem of evil becomes deflated to one of the correlation of intensity and harmony within creation and the human process. Such a view fails to take the sheer power of the demonic seriously enough. By the same token, the categories of religion, as themselves dependent on prior metaphysical analyses, must remain free from any attitude that would reduce them to products of the aesthetic imagination.[21] While the articulation and analysis of the religious requires categories of a general nature, it does not follow that the religious realm is a product of some other sphere.

The dangerous and pervasive tendency of conflating honorific and descriptive categories must be sharply curtailed. Such a strategy confuses a paradigmatic case with each instance of its potential instantiation. Royce's honorific analysis of the Beloved and Grace-filled Community, while evocative and useful in certain contexts, has little to do with the traits of community per se. Such traits must be carefully described regardless of the reigning paradigm of what 'ought' to be involved in any human community.[22] This distinction thus entails a rethinking of all of the classical American thinkers.

In general, American philosophy has not contributed greatly to our apprehension of the Divine natures. Taking some cues from Hartshorne, we can proceed to delineate those traits of the Divine which are finite, which are located in a nature which itself may encompass the Divine. It must be shown how the Divine both sustains the complexes of nature while yet being ordinally located. Further, the Encompassing itself must be shown to eclipse both nature and the Divine. Classical American philosophers have often

been suspicious of any notion of an unconditioned or non-finite reality. Yet, certain concepts can, when radicalized, lead us in the direction of the Encompassing. The Spirit, as the agent of hermeneutic growth within the community, coaxes experience beyond the limitations of given horizons toward the elusive presence/absence of the Encompassing. And Buchler's notion of the sheer Providingness of nature (*natura naturans*) may also be rethought so as to point toward the Encompassing. The multi-form reality of the Divine as locating and located will emerge from this analysis.[23]

In the tradition of Dewey we must take far more seriously the idea that metaphysics and democracy require each other. We need not limit ourselves to the insights of the Frankfurt school to realize that our institutions exert pressure on our categorial analysis. Buchler's notion of "ontological parity," the insight that all complexes are equally real, must become the central core of any political reflection. A totally democratic metaphysics would undermine traditional foundationalisms while making all hierarchical structures impossible in principle. The counter-pressure of such a democratic metaphysics would be felt, in the long run, by those institutions which serve to govern and direct the human process.

Current critiques of foundationalism and metaphysical privileging have opened up new areas of inquiry and have provided us with an ample warning against returning to more traditional forms of metaphysics which reinforce alien and distorted hierarchies. The assault on foundations in epistemology and in the ontology of first principles has given us new eyes with which to take a fresh look at the classical American thinkers. What has not yet been done is to apply the critique of foundations to the correlation of priority schemes and political life. Non-democratic social hierarchies must be analyzed from the side of a post-foundational metaphysics of community. This entails that we must be alert to those categories which silently reinforce priority frameworks.

Finally, the correlation between metrics and phenomenology must be radicalized to show the necessity of a metaphysics attuned to the traits of experience. Fortunately, this is a project which is already well under way among thinkers faithful to the classical American tradition.[24] New models for both phenomenology and

metaphysics must be developed which preserve generic power and interpretive sensitivity. An ordinal phenomenology would function as the proper prolegomenon for systematic apprehension. Such a phenomenology would be fearless in probing into the generic traits of nature and the Divine natures. Unlike Continental phenomenology, an ordinal phenomenology would honor the recalcitrant and resistant aspects of experience. Further, it would deny the Cartesian and subjectivistic turn which has blunted the efficacy of classical Husserlian analysis. Peirce's category of secondness, of the sheer otherness of reality, would receive its full gesticulation not only as a category but as lived from within finite human experience. Metaphysics would thus be redefined as the articulation of the generic traits of nature as these traits emerged from a careful reflection of the human process. It would provide an experiential and categorial clearing of historical and philosophical importance, thereby vindicating the oft-tarnished claims of the perennial tradition of metaphysics.[25]

Notes

1. Christopher Hookway, *Peirce*, The arguments of Philosophers Series (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.2.

2. Alred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, ed.David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, corr. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1978), pp. 35–36.

3. Ivor Leclerc contrasts Leibniz and Whitehead as follows, "Leibniz, on his interpretation of ideality, regards all order as phenomenal. . . . Whitehead, on the other hand, with his different conception of form or ideality, is able to admit to real problems. Relations are real because every relation is a relating, an actualization of form" ("Whitehead and the Problem of Extension," in *Alfred North Whitehead: Essays on His Philosophy*, ed. George L. Kline [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963], pp. 120–21). Hence, each actual occasion becomes open to other occasions through the actualization process. This is a real relation and not merely phenomenal or derived from confused perceptions.

4. The nature of ordinality has been carefully articulated by Beth J. Singer as follows, "It defines nature to be an infinitely dense, indefinitely extended and ramified multiplicity of orders, intersecting in limitless ways. The principle entails that every discriminable complex is a network of related components and is embedded in an indefinitely ramified

network of relations. There are no discrete or independent or atomic entities" (*Ordinal Naturalism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler* [Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1983], p. 160).

5. Justus Buchler, *Nature and Judgement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 3.

6. Andrew J. Reck details Dewey's evolution from a neo-Hegelian account of universal mind to a post-Jamesian understanding of habit and the object dimensions of nature. Reck argues that Dewey's reading of James's *Principles of Psychology* had implications for his moral theory as well: "The implications of this new position for Dewey's moral theory was profound. Interpreting capacity in terms of activities that can be observed here and now, and that are associated with goals achieved in past experience, Dewey sought to formulate the ends for conduct by means of the observation of actual human behavior" ("The Influence of William James on John Dewey in Psychology," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 20, No. 2 [Spring 1984], p. 102).

7. Richard Rorty, "Dewey's Metaphysics," in *New Studies in the Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Stephen M. Cahn (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977), pp. 45–46.

8. John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 89.

9. Sandra Rosenthal argues that pragmatism entails a process metaphysics in which the main traits of human experience are continuous with the temporal traits of the world. Further, such a pragmatic metaphysics is pluralistic and, in different respects, anti-dualist. See her *Speculative Pragmatism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986). I would argue that pragmatism is not limited to the process perspective and could also generate a framework in which formal possibilities are given an equal place to the traits of process. More important, pragmatism can be better seen as a general stance that opens up a greater number of conceptual and generic possibilities than its alternatives do.

10. William James, *Pragmatism*, The Works of William James No. 1, ed. Frederick Burkhardt (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 31.

11. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. William Gilman (New York: Signet Classics, 1965), p. 225.

12. Charles S. Peirce, "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man," *Writings of Charles S. Peirce.* II. *1867–1871.* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 207–208.

13. Apel traces the evolution of Peirce's semiotics from the early formulation in 1868, which stressed the centrality of thirdness (generality), to the formulation of 1885, which stressed the importance of secondness

(the indexical of denotative), to the final formulation in 1902–1903, which stressed the importance of firstness (the Qualitative or iconic). He shows how the semiotic turn enabled Pierce to rework the Kantian problem of the unknowability of the thing-in-itself by defining the noumenal sphere as the limit condition of semiotic convergence in the infinite future. Yet Apel's own Kantian bias drives him away from the orders of nature toward the transcendental conditions of the possibility of communication and intelligibility. This forces him to downplay secondness for an emphasis on firstness and thirdness.

14. Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 362.

15. John Dewey, "The Practical Character of Reality," *Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. McDermott, p. 209.

16. Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers* of Charles Sanders Peirce I–VI, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1931–1935), 6.458, 6.461

17. Justus Buchler, *The Concept of Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961; repr. University Press of America, 1985), p. 85.

18. Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.284.

19. In his Introduction to the second revised edition of his *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgement* (New York: Dover, 1979), Buchler locates his own theory of proception against Dewey's account of experience. He argues that Dewey places too much emphasis on conscious manipulation in experience: "Dewey seems to lay more emphasis on a certain kind of packaging by the individual than on what is relevant to the individual's continuing course of life. Moral and aesthetic considerations seem to take precedence over metaphysical coherence and adequacy. Are not the effects of disease or social disaster, however gradual and imperceptible they may be, of as much importance to an individual as anything he would initiate? . . . he confuses the traits of experience with the traits of morally important experience." By including such dimensions of the human process within his theory of proception, Buchler broadens and deepens Dewey's project and moves it toward a more just and generic account which will in turn prove fruitful for phenomenological reflection.

20. For an analysis of Buchler's general metaphysics, see my "Justus Buchler's Ordinal Metaphysics and the Eclipse of Foundationalism," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 25, No, 3 (September 1985), 289–98.

21. William M. Shea shows precisely how the religious order has been reduced to the aesthetic within the classical American tradition. See his *The Naturalists and the Supernatural* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984). See also my review of this work in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 23, No. 4 (Fall 1987), 597–604.

22. For an analysis of the concept of community that attempts to avoid conflating honorific and descriptive elements, see my *The Community of Interpreters* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1987).

23. For a more detailed treatment of these matters, see my "Naturalism, Measure, and the Ontological Difference," in *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 23, No. 1 (Spring 1985), 19–32, and my "Toward a Transformation of Neoclassical Theism," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 27, No. 4, (December 1987), 393–408.

24. In particular, see, *Pragmatism Considers Phenomenology*, ed. Robert S. Corrington, Carl Hausman, and Thomas Seebohm (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America and the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, 1987).

25. I have moved further in this direction in the following works: *Nature and Spirit: An Essay in Ecstatic Naturalism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), *An Introduction to C. S. Peirce: Philosopher, Semiotician, and Ecstatic Naturalist* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993), *Ecstatic Naturalism: Signs of the World*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), and *Nature's Self* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996. For an excellent study of my work, see Todd A. Driskill, "Beyond the Text: Ecstatic Naturalism and American Pragmatism," *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, 15, No. 3 (September 1994), 305–23.