



# Pragmatic naturalism & realism

edited by John R. Shook.

PRAGMATIC  
NATURALISM  
&  
REALISM



# PRAGMATIC NATURALISM & REALISM

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edited by  
JOHN R. SHOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

*John R. Shook*

This volume presents fourteen essays focused on the relevance of pragmatism to a variety of issues concerning naturalism and realism. Eleven of these essays originated in papers read at The Future of Realism in the American Tradition of Pragmatic Naturalism, a conference held in October 2000 to honor Dr. Peter H. Hare, SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, State University of New York at Buffalo. Of the other three essays, one is Peter Hare's 1990 Presidential Address to the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, and two (by Frank Ryan and John Ryder) are invited contributions for this volume.

The essays display a remarkable overall coherence and collective focus, exceeding even the expectations of the conference organizers (Jorge Gracia, John Kearns, John Shook, and Eileen McNamara). The conference's stimulating examination of the most fundamental philosophical questions on pragmatism and realism was not entirely fortuitous; the carefully crafted topic, and the contributors' admirable efforts to directly address this topic, naturally engendered frank and rewarding discussions. The reader will discern as many agreements as disagreements, typical for a pluralistic tradition of thought that encourages respect for perspectives. Perhaps the surprising agreements reached, despite starting from quite different perspectives, suggest that serious discourse is capable of taking some measure of reality? Well, the essays suggest their own conclusions, but a pragmatic naturalist wouldn't rule out such a possibility.

## THE RELEVANCE OF PRAGMATIC NATURALISM

Pragmatism, the philosophy native to America, has once again grown to prominence in philosophical debate around the world. During the first four decades of the twentieth century, the works of Charles Peirce, William James, John Dewey, George Mead, and many other pragmatists were at the center of important controversies from metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of science to social philosophy, moral theory, and aesthetics. The breadth and depth of this major intellectual movement ensured that it could not be completely forgotten even as European-inspired philosophies dominated post-WWII thought. In the latter part of the twentieth century, mainstream philosophy took a renewed interest in pragmatism, stimulated by such figures as W. V. Quine, Richard Bernstein, John E. Smith, Joseph Margolis, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty. The type of pragmatism that has best weathered the many decades of neglect, and today is proving to be of greatest value for fostering discussions with other worldviews, is pragmatic naturalism.

Pragmatic naturalism, like all varieties of pragmatism, finds that too much of what passes for philosophy is really just extreme intellectualism in the worst sense: abstractly divorced from real problems and concerns of actual life. Unlike other philosophies that go to the opposite extreme by rejecting intellectual inquiry entirely, pragmatic naturalism works with the natural and social sciences to develop a view of the general nature of things and an understanding of the operations of human inquiry in that natural context. Thus the standpoint of this volume deliberately turns away from another renascent branch of pragmatism: the "neo-pragmatic" form of antifoundationalism championed by Richard Rorty. Pragmatic naturalism, by taking a naturalistic stance on the world, finds that the sciences and their methodologies are superior to other modes of inquiry into the human environment. The "pragmatist" label placed on naturalism indicates that all genuine inquiry must be conducted in a consistently empirical manner and be responsive to genuine human problems.

While pragmatic naturalism is formulated to advance inquiry into all areas of human concern, this book is specifically aimed at discussing one topic presently animating mainstream philosophy: the future of realism. A survey of contents of major philosophical journals quickly reveals that realism has once again become problematic. Hotly disputed areas include the theory of knowledge, the structure of nature, the relationship of thought and language to reality, and the nature of moral and religious values. Simplistic answers have crumbled, and the customary answers no longer seem satisfactory. In an age that cannot ignore ethnic, linguistic, religious, moral, and cultural pluralism, the problems of humanity can no longer be approached from a naive standpoint assuming an independently static reality capable of establishing agreement and consensus. There is no way to transcend lived human experience in all its complexity to point out fixed and permanent markers of the real, as if our problems could be thereby solved with a vision of the "true." Rather, as pragmatism has long insisted, agreement and consensus on what is real and valuable and justifiable must be forged within the social processes of scientific deliberation on human problems. Other schools of thought are showing signs of recognizing this wisdom. The essays of this volume all tackle these issues of realism in the context of pragmatic naturalism. They carry the tradition of pragmatism forward into the future by engaging in dialogue with the wider philosophical world on matters of immediate concern.

Some preparation for the terms "pragmatic" and "naturalism" as generally used by the essays may assist the reader. Pragmatism is a form of empiricism which understands all intellectual operations as phases of practical problem solving of obstacles to successful activities of human flourishing. Naturalism, in the broad sense used here, is a rejection of dualism and supernaturalism, by asserting continuities between all realities. Pragmatic naturalism is pluralistic, not monistic or deterministic, and it must not be confused with any form of scientific materialism, since it cannot endorse reductionism or eliminativism. The diverse attempts by the classical pragmatists to affirm both naturalistic continuities

and pluralistic creativities cannot be neatly categorized. However, it can be said that pragmatic naturalists understand their work more or less consciously as a significant break with many fundamental tenets of Western philosophy.

In Western philosophy the ongoing quest for certainty has closely paralleled the pursuit of independence. The ultimate mode of independence is complete individuality, so philosophers have been tempted, to varying degrees, to locate in the independent individual the grounds for the true and the real. The reality of the individual's own experience is thus removed from questioning; what remains to be questioned is the reality of objective entities not of experience and the possible modes of experiencing that could permit human knowledge of those entities. The paradigm of independent individuality likewise set the parameters for trans-experience real objects: an object is real if it can exist independently from everything else.

Philosophy after Descartes largely followed his exaggerated stress on the individual's special mode of attaining mental certainty and propelled the real object completely outside the realm of experience altogether. The object's reality was guaranteed if its existence was not dependent in any way on the mind. This principle generated the curious paradox that the only way to determine whether an object is real is to use the single, special mental mode of attaining certainty to *simultaneously* achieve a knowing relationship with the object *and* a knowing confirmation that the object has no dependence relation to the mind. The realist-idealist debate was thus immovably entrenched, since the idealist's point—that we can only know the object as an object in relation to the mind—can be matched by the realist's statement of faith that we are still free to believe (without the possibility of confirmation) in the object's independence. The paradox can be removed, of course, if more than one relationship with the object is possible: if two modes of attaining two different kinds of relationships with the object could be used, it would be possible to compare them to assess an object's ways of being.

The empiricist-rationalist debate accordingly avoided the

paradox by setting the mode of reason against the mode of experience. The rationalist declares that real objects must satisfy logical or mathematical or scientific principles, and passes judgment on the "objects" of experience accordingly. The empiricist prefers the objects of experience and denies any existential relevance to pure reason. In the context of Cartesian mind-world dualism, empiricism became entangled with subjectivism, since the objects known through experience are known only through each individual's mode of knowing. Subjective empiricism fell into the paradox of the exclusive knowledge mode. Rationalists reveled in exposing empiricism's dire need to adjudicate among people's diverse perspectives to ascertain the "real" object among the appearances, lest empiricism abandon certainty and degrade into complete relativism or solipsism. Rationalism can supply the saving method: reason can certainly identify the real object among the appearances. Yet stubborn empiricists (some having read Sextus Empiricus) were skeptical of this assistance, since rationalists (even those depending on their intuitions) notoriously disagreed over the proper rational methodology, and a non-question-begging justification for preferring one method instead of another seemed to be lacking. And some rationalists even discarded experience as complete illusion, themselves falling into the paradox of the exclusive knowledge mode. The rationalist claim that reason was uniquely universal and not diversely relative to individuals seemed to have no more justification than the empiricist claim that experience could be good enough knowledge by itself.

The original pragmatists were all aligned with empiricism, but they fully understood that empiricism must avoid the paradox of the exclusive mode of knowledge. Some empiricists from John Locke onward did not help matters by aligning with modern materialistic science. By attempting to make the world completely responsible for empirical knowledge through the medium of sensory impact, materialistic empiricism again suffered from the paradox of the exclusive knowledge mode. Could all sensory experience really be veridical? However implausible, empiricists could avoid that result either by (1) falling back on some indepen-

dent rational principles for distinguishing genuine sensory information from error, or by (2) attempting to show how rational principles can be generated from accumulated experience and then used to distinguish genuine sensory information from error. The first option simply leads back to the traditional empiricism-rationalism impasse, while the second option inevitably requires a vicious circle of justification.

Thus, the original pragmatists rejected the rationalism of materialism, declaring that the objects of scientific knowledge (present-day or perfected knowledge) are not the only kind of reality and hence cannot be the cause of human experience. They also rejected the rationalism of logicism, attacking its manifestation in the absolute idealisms of their era. But these rejections only cut off post-Cartesian growths springing from deeper Cartesian assumptions. The pragmatists wanted to strike a decisive blow against the supports for Descartes's dualism, and thus Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead all concluded that the fundamental prejudices inherent in philosophy—certainty and independence—must be exposed and questioned. Is the natural world really independent from experience? Is one person's experience completely separate from that of others? Is the logic of deductive proof the only reasonable method, or reasonable at all? Must the reality of an object be characterized by its aloofness from human activities? Must a reasonable methodology stand universally and uniquely independent from our cultural-historical situations? The intriguing negative answers to such questions led the pragmatists away from most of the rest of modern philosophy. But these answers only brought the pragmatists to ask further complex questions, and their diverse approaches to the newly discovered options has immeasurably enriched philosophy.

## THE ESSAYS

The essays in this volume continue the discovery and exploration of novel options available to pragmatic naturalists. The lead-off

essay by Joseph Margolis, "The Benign Antimony of a Constructive Realism," recounts the recent struggles of some prominent analytic philosophers against their Cartesian heritage. This heritage, despite their best efforts, has obstructed the attempt to overcome the dualism of mind and world. In *Experience and Nature*, Dewey had already reconciled the "benign antinomy" of the *ontic* priority of independent nature and the *epistemic* priority of the conditions of human cognition. His reconciliation is accomplished through a pragmatic account of realism, which superceded the Cartesian assumptions that wedged apart the way the world really is from our ability to gain knowledge of the world. These Cartesian assumptions, despite the rebellious struggles of recent Anglo-American philosophers such as Donald Davidson, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty, has continued to impede the progress of naturalism in dealing with the problem of epistemology. Margolis argues that Dewey's pragmatism, by incorporating the Hegelian respect for the embeddedness of inquiring practices in the historically situated social/environment context, is the single most distinctive contribution of modern philosophy.

Sandra Rosenthal's essay "The Pragmatic Reconstruction of Realism: A Pathway for the Future" continues the theme of attempting to grasp experience's proper relationship with nature. She argues that the uprootedness of experience from its ontological embeddedness in a natural world is at the core of much contemporary philosophy, which, like pragmatism, aims to reject foundationalism in all its forms. Pragmatism, by rejecting foundationalism and its respective philosophic baggage, does not embrace the alternative of antifoundationalism or its equivalent dressed up in new linguistic garb. Instead, pragmatism attempts to instill an awareness of the interactive openness of humans and the natural universe in which they are embedded, an openness which provides an indefinitely rich interactive epistemic and metaphysical unity at the heart of lived experience. Rosenthal portrays this unique paradigmatic structure of pragmatism as a thorough reconstruction of realism, and argues that pragmatism and realism must be mutually supportive.



The relocation of experience back within nature, demanded by pragmatic naturalism, completely alters the question of the role of reason in achieving knowledge of the world. John Ryder provocatively pursues this question in his "Reconciling Pragmatism and Naturalism." He argues that two pairs of propositions, traditionally drawn up in opposition to each other, are actually all correct and coherent together as a set: (1) Natural phenomena have objectively determinate traits, (2) The traits of natural phenomena are knowable, (3) The process of inquiry is necessarily conditioned and perspectival, and (4) Human interaction with the rest of nature, cognitive or otherwise, is active and creative. Their reconciliation requires a reconstruction of "experience" which permits experienced objects of knowledge to be both conditioned by human cognition and objectively real.

The essay "Naturalism and Subjectivism: Philosophy for the Future?" by Peter Manicas expresses an enthusiasm for naturalism while harboring some reservations about Dewey's version of pragmatic naturalism. The first part of the paper offers a brief overview of how epistemology became the preeminent philosopher's problem, and traces the consequences of this problem, especially as regards ontology and the philosophy of science. Dewey receives credit for solving epistemology's difficulties through his pragmatic theory of inquiry. In the second part, Manicas argues that Dewey's naturalism was unstable, requiring what he seemed unwilling to promote: a critical realism which is necessary if his ecological conception of inquiry and problem solving is to be sustained. Dewey's instrumentalist skepticism toward the objects postulated by science appears to be inconsistent with the need to assert the existence of natural processes that sustain our experienced interactions with the environment.

Vincent Colapietro's "Realism Thick and Thin" starts from considerations of the philosophies of James and Peirce, stimulated by directions suggested by the contemporary feminist Naomi Scheman and, to a greater degree, the psychoanalytic theorist Hans Loewald. The distinction between two kinds of realism established by Colapietro is that between the abstract definition of

the real and pragmatic clarification of the real. Abstractly defined, reality means otherness (what is independent of what you or I or any other finite mind, or even community of such minds, happens to think); but pragmatically clarified, its meaning is bound up with the efficacy and frustration of our habits. The pragmatic clarification of the real can be advanced through a psychoanalytic consideration of the human psyche: pragmatically, coming to terms with reality entails coming to terms with our selves and doing so in a manner expressly attentive to the human psyche as an involuted career of erotic attachments. The world is principally not an object of dispassionate knowledge but an array of erotically charged attachments. Colapietro suggests that thick realism requires one to thematize these aspects of our encounters with reality.

Randall Dipert also is intrigued by making a pragmatic clarification of kinds of realism in "The Varieties of Realism Worth Wanting." Dipert holds that the meaningfulness of any claims for the reality, or irreality, of an attribute are inextricably tied to a pragmatic methodology. A claim that something is real must qualify this something with one or more attributes to avoid having no cognitive content. Furthermore, such a claim must describe how something's attributes directly or indirectly manifest themselves in working experience. Dipert concludes that *only* pragmatists are entitled to be realists—or irrealists—so long as they make intellectually serious claims. He points out that there are some pragmatists, and others, who adopt a general irrealism and avoid making *any* claims about what is real or what is not real. But this position, perhaps best labeled as Rortyism, actually blocks the road of inquiry.

Kenneth Westphal's "Can Pragmatic Realists Argue Transcendentally?" attempts to break the deadlock between "internal" realists and genuine realists by adapting Kant's and Hegel's transcendental argument for mental-content externalism, which concludes that human beings can only be self-conscious in a world that provides a humanly recognizable regularity and variety among the things (or events) we sense. This feature of the world cannot result from human thought or language. Hence, semantic arguments

against realism can only be developed if realism about the world is true. Some of Putnam's arguments for internal realism are taken as a case in point, and criticized accordingly. Pragmatic realists can use this transcendental argument, Westphal argues, because its strong modal claims are consistent with fallibilist accounts of justification.

The next essay, "Pragmatic Realism and Skepticism" by Chi-Chun Chiu, continues the critical examination of transcendental arguments and Putnam's type of realism. Chiu tries to show that Putnam's pragmatic realism, inspired by the brain-in-a-vat (BIV) argument, has two ways to challenge skepticism. One is to reject one of the premises of the skeptical argument, which holds that we do not know that the BIV hypothesis is false. Based upon his investigation of the preconditions of reference and thought, Putnam argues that the BIV hypothesis is self-refuting and thus is false. Chiu finds that there is another, far more radical, way to challenge skepticism utilizing Putnam's arguments. Putnam successfully defeats the three presuppositions of skeptical argument: the mind-independency of the external objects, the totally detached perspective, and the cleavage between truth and epistemic justification. If these presuppositions are abandoned, then the strength of the skeptical argument will fall into doubt.

The surprisingly deep connections between transcendental arguments and pragmatic naturalism are pursued further by Sami Pihlström in "Pragmatic Realism and Ethics: A Transcendental Meditation on the Possibility of an Ethical Argument for Moral Realism." This essay investigates the possibility of arguing, both pragmatically and transcendently, in favor of moral realism, the view that moral statements can be true or false and that there are genuine moral values guiding our lives. Drawing from Putnam's "companions in the guilt" argument, Pihlström shows that the pragmatic way of defending moral realism in terms of what is given in human practices can be interpreted as a transcendental argument establishing the conditions for the possibility of some actual features of our life. To illustrate pragmatism's emphasis on fallibilism, Pihlström criticizes Karl-Otto Apel's version of transcendental philosophy, and explores the possibility of an ethical grounding of

philosophical argumentation in a fallibilistic setting lacking any ultimate justification. The pragmatic and transcendental argumentation presented in this paper amounts to an impressively original defense of the metaethical commitment of moral realism.

Peter Hare's "Problems and Prospects in the Ethics of Belief" also anticipates the dissolution of purely epistemological and metaphysical perplexities over the ground of knowledge. Hare finds that it is time that pragmatists participated in the development of a social and responsibilist epistemology that is emerging from research in cognitive science, analytic philosophy, and virtue epistemology. The question of the possibility of an "ethics of belief," raised to prominence by William James, at present signals widespread discontent with evidentialist and reliabilist theories of knowledge that have detached knowledge from our psychological functions and overall adaptive capacities. For example, tentative progress has been made in understanding how cognitive attitudes of optimism or skepticism influence our interpretation and incorporation of "evidence" and thus of our belief acceptance. What is now required, advises Hare, is mutual cooperation among pragmatism and these research programs. Pragmatism can supply a metaphysical standpoint on the interaction of experience and nature, a theory of the complex self-society relationship, and an understanding of the role of cognitive processes in the pursuit of ends.

The remaining four essays study the contested role of the theory of knowledge in establishing a pragmatic naturalism against its rivals. Robert Meyers, in "Immediacy, Knowledge, and Naturalism," argues for a primary thesis of Peirce's, that all knowledge is representational or relational and not just a matter of immediate or intuitive knowledge of physical objects. Concentrating on Russell's account of knowledge by acquaintance, Meyers argues that direct realism about physical objects is subject to the same objection which direct realists make to a representative theory of perception, namely, that present experience does not provide immediate knowledge that the physical object exists. This argument is then expanded to cover all knowledge regardless of the nature of the object; that is, knowledge is representational even

in the case of necessary truths and immediate experience. Russell holds that acquaintance is a two-term relation between a knower and an object that exists in some sense and, that by examining this object, we can have immediate knowledge about the object. Unfortunately, we do not immediately know that we are acquainted with anything in this sense, and therefore we have no reason to think that when we introspect, we are reading facts off an existent object rather than just thinking about some object that may or may not exist in any sense. Meyers concludes that the basic cognitive attitude is not acquaintance, but the pragmatic framing of a conjecture, which must then be supported by further experience.

Murray Murphey's "A Pragmatic Realism" also concerns the question of the contested role of empirical knowledge by arguing for two theses. First, empirical knowledge rests on sense experience, which is known as reported in statements about what is perceived. Against Wilfrid Sellars, Nelson Goodman, etc., Murphey explains that we can be certain of our sensory experience, though not of its causes, and reminds us that the function of knowledge is to explain sensory experience. Second, against Thomas Kuhn, Murphey argues that the only plausible explanation for science's increasing power and adequacy is that there is a real world of which science gives us increasingly accurate information. If reality is knowable by the human mind, we are justified in assuming that continuing inquiry will in the long run lead to a true theory of the real. Murphey concludes by explaining the value of Peirce's conception of the real as that which would be held to exist by the best theory—i.e., the theory that will ever after be affirmed.

Frank Ryan, like Murphey and Meyers, utilizes the philosophy of Peirce in "Scholastic Realism as Pragmatic Contextualism." Although Peirce has been aligned with a dizzying array of idealisms and realisms, Ryan claims that he is most constructively construed as a forerunner to Dewey's pragmatism. Early in his career, Peirce turned to scholastic realism to banish the *ding an sich*. John Duns Scotus's "common nature" inspired Peirce's "it-general," an integral unity of particular and universal that undercuts the separation of mind and world, subject and object. The "it-gen-

eral" manifests the interpenetration of Peirce's phenomenological categories of thirdness and firstness. Ryan depicts this development in Peirce's theory of the categories as creating a pathway to understanding Dewey's essential notion of primary experience.

John Shook, in "A Pragmatically Realistic Philosophy of Science," develops a theory of scientific knowledge indebted to both Peirce and Dewey. Shook proposes that the proper object of scientific knowledge is the technologically created natural object in human experience. This definition has three components: (1) the object of scientific knowledge can be experienced (pragmatism's empiricism), (2) scientific knowledge is directed toward natural objects (pragmatism's naturalism), and (3) the object of scientific knowledge is technologically created (pragmatism's productionism). Peirce and Dewey had no trouble locating the ground of our conviction in nature's own processes in immediate experience. Unless we thought that nature did have its own processes, we would hardly bother to attempt to theoretically model them for our constructive purposes. But pragmatists should not be realists about the never-experienceable transcendent entities postulated by successful science, since the terms describing such entities are embedded in propositions having no existential function. Shook argues that this refusal is not a leap backward into phenomenism or global skepticism, since we can believe in nature's stable processes while withholding belief in the existence of the postulated transcendent entities of science.

## THE CAREER OF PETER H. HARE

This volume of essays on pragmatic naturalism is a most fitting tribute to the philosophical career of Dr. Peter H. Hare. Hare earned his Ph.D. at Columbia University where, from the time of Dewey's residence to the present, pragmatic naturalism has thrived. Among Hare's teachers were John Herman Randall, Jr., Herbert W. Schneider, and Justus Buchler, who were the inheritors of Dewey's naturalistic perspective and each a major contributor

to American philosophy in general and to naturalism in particular. Other prominent graduates from Columbia University who have enriched the tradition of pragmatic naturalism with their own thought include Irwin Edman, Sidney Hook, Abraham Edel, Joseph Blau, John E. Smith, H. Standish Thayer, Paul Kurtz, Joseph Margolis, Ralph Sleeper, Isaac Levi, Stephen Ross, Steven Cahn, Joseph Ransdell, Beth Singer, James Gouinlock, and Naomi Zack. The list of their students who in turn have been imbued with respect for American philosophy would run many pages; it suffices to say that at the start of the new century, pragmatic naturalism flourishes as a viable and vocal alternative worldview.

A good measure of credit for this flourishing, both nationally and internationally, belongs to Peter Hare. During the recent decades of dominance by other philosophical schools, at a time when mere survival would have been sufficiently astonishing, the voice of classical American philosophy only grew more powerful. This voice had its own forum, the *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, and this forum was somehow always large enough to accommodate quality scholarship on any facet of American philosophy. What other philosophy journal has ever had such an amazingly broad capacity matched to such a narrow-sounding title? Of course, the subtitle conveys its true mission; and for decades that mission has been executed admirably by the *Transactions* and its primary editor, Peter Hare. Not only were the journal pages consistently open to the breadth of American philosophy, but Hare's tireless and enthusiastic support of younger scholars and international professors has enriched the study of the history of American thought beyond calculation. A finer ambassador of American philosophy to the wider philosophical world could hardly be imagined. And the world has responded to such generosity. The numerous international communities of scholars active today, eagerly applying ideas born in America to global problems, testify to the power of so simple a thing as communication.

The following award citation composed by Edward Madden, Peter Hare's close friend and colleague at SUNY Buffalo, best con-

veys the scope and lasting impact of Hare's devotion to American philosophy. The occasion was the Twenty-third Annual Meeting of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy, at the University of Toronto in March 1996. Peter Hare received the Herbert W. Schneider Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Society, "for distinguished contributions to the understanding and development of American Philosophy."

1996 HERBERT W. SCHNEIDER AWARD CITATION:  
PETER H. HARE

It seems appropriate at this time to honor and thank Peter H. Hare for all that he has done for the advancement of American philosophy—in his fine publications, papers read at conferences and colloquia, as president of the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy and the Charles S. Peirce Society, and in his many editorial labors, most notably as longtime coeditor of the *Transactions of the C. S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy* which he, with the never failing help of Richard Robin, took over as an in-house publication and built into one of the major philosophical journals of our time. Through all of these activities he certainly has *earned* the Herbert Schneider Award of 1996.

Professor Hare's publications in American philosophy span a wide range of topics, including numerous clarifying articles on James's will-to-believe doctrine and a splendid introduction to the Harvard edition of James's *Some Problems of Philosophy*. His scholarship has range as well as depth. He has also written substantial articles (or sections of books) on Whitehead, Royce, Tillich, Hartshorne, Ducasse, Mead, Sheldon, Buchler, Dewey, and Dickinson Miller. And he has written numerous valuable articles for recent and current dictionaries, encyclopedias, and companions of philosophy, pieces generally dealing with figures in American philosophy. Peter has written a good deal on American naturalism and several entries for the *Encyclopedia of Unbelief*; but it is clear that he has not entirely escaped his Puritan heritage: for him, laziness is *the* Unpardonable Sin.



Peter's editorial work has been far-reaching in its influence. In addition to the *Transactions*, he is the editor of a series of books entitled *Frontiers of Philosophy*, one of which includes a symposium on William James. He has edited individual books as well, and was a long-term member of the editorial board of the *American Philosophical Quarterly*. His editorial significance lies in the fact that he has made every effort to see that all aspects of American philosophy are given a hearing. I can think of no dimension of American philosophy that has not been included some time or other in the *Transactions*, many written as a result of his encouraging authors to write on diverse subjects. His openness, his desire to have all sides heard, is more than an ideological commitment to pluralism but also reflects his heartfelt commitment to all democratic principles.

We all know, of course, that Peter is past president of our Society. That honor came as the result of many years of labor on every conceivable committee of the Society and his participation in organizing annual and sectional meetings, including the excellent international meeting in Buffalo, where the interest of foreign scholars in American philosophy was cheerily evident. From the day he received his Ph.D. from Columbia University he has worked tirelessly and effectively for the recognition of American philosophy.

In still another way Peter has promoted American philosophy from his home base at SUNY at Buffalo. In the near future he will have chaired more Ph.D. committees than any other person in the history of the department, the majority of students writing their dissertations in American philosophy and who, in turn, carry on this interest in their own teaching careers. But even more impressive is the fact that he has been a member of fifty-six dissertation committees at Buffalo. He has sunk many baskets himself but, to his credit, he also has had an overwhelming number of assists. Peter has always been helpful to young philosophers beyond measure, whether they be friends or bare acquaintances, whether they be Buffalo students or young people he met at a convention. Helping others is not a prominent feature of our world and deserves to be honored when it assumes a large role in a scholar's life.

With his advancement of American philosophy in numerous and diverse ways no one can deny that Peter Hare richly deserves the high honor bestowed on him today by this Society, the Herbert W. Schneider Award. This award, which recognizes one's contributions and dedication to American philosophy, also has a significant moral overtone. Like most areas of life nowadays, academia is not known for its benevolence, so it is reviving and refreshing to be present when a most kindly and benevolent Peter Hare is honored — by an official award, yes, and one accompanied by overwhelming affection from the members of this Society.

Edward H. Madden  
Professor Emeritus, SUNY at Buffalo

## THE PUBLICATIONS OF PETER H. HARE

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# 1 THE BENIGN ANTIMONY OF A CONSTRUCTIVE REALISM

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I

When I consider the grand puzzle of realism, now that the twentieth century has played itself out, two impressions nag that I cannot easily shake off: one, the abiding sense that for all its fatal weaknesses, it is René Descartes's conception in the *Meditations*, that has, after all, completely dominated the philosophical tradition from his day to ours; the other, that pragmatism, particularly the pragmatism of Charles Peirce and John Dewey, which easily and effectively defeated the Cartesian vision they rightly found pernicious, is now, in its second incarnation, in as sorry a state as the analytic naturalism it was bound to contest. The plausibility of these two intuitions is confirmed by the plain fact that, give or take a little, analytic philosophy is a kind of thinned-down Cartesianism, and that the two leading pragmatists of our day, Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty, have pretty well exhausted their own foray into the realism puzzle by falling in with the Cartesians — innocently perhaps, but disastrously nevertheless.

I mean this as a provocation of course. But you must remember that, in his Dewey Lectures, Putnam rejected the "internal realist" position he advocated in *Reason, Truth and History*<sup>1</sup> and *The Many Faces of Realism*.<sup>2</sup> He rejected it because he saw, quite rightly, that



he had, without being aware of it, yielded to a kind of Cartesian representationalism, which signified a contradiction in his insistence against a principled division between the "subjective" and the "objective."<sup>3</sup> Putnam was absolutely right, though strangely slow, about his mistake. But he put the entire recovery of pragmatism unnecessarily at risk by failing to perceive that rejecting representationalism did not require rejecting "internalism" (witness Hegel). He has yet to explain the fate of his notorious *Grenzbegriff* or what might replace it in a reconstituted realism.<sup>4</sup>

Putnam believes he has now found a way to escape his original error via John McDowell's Kantian-oriented recovery of realism, liberated from Kant's own representationalism—that is, from the encumbrances Kant mentions in his famous 1772 letter to Marcus Herz. But McDowell does not subscribe to Putnam's objection to any disjunction between the subjective and the objective, and Kant's own transcendentalism requires just such a disjunction.

McDowell has the best minimalist treatment of the realism issue judged in light of the views of Putnam, Rorty, and Donald Davidson. His solution—the right one, I would say, for the classic realist position, but not for a constructive realism that embraces the "internalist" insight—which he offers by way of bringing Kant and Aristotle together (with a touch of Hegel), centers on the following remark which he pursues (to good effect) against Rorty's defense of Davidson's brand of realism, that is, as Rorty reads Davidson:

I . . . assume [he says] that philosophical concerns about the possibility of knowledge express at root the same anxiety as philosophical concerns about how content is possible [empirical and conceptual content], an anxiety about a felt distance between mind and world. Davidson and Rorty usually focus on concerns of the former sort, whereas I focus on concerns of the latter sort; I take it that the underlying thought is the same, that we ought to exorcise the feeling of distance rather than trying to bridge the felt gap.<sup>5</sup>

The charge applies to Putnam as much as to Rorty and Davidson—implicitly, on Putnam's own admission. But McDowell's argument

also shows that Rorty, functioning as a self-styled pragmatist, is, in however attenuated a way, committed as was Putnam to something akin to Cartesian realism. Rorty's "Cartesianism" (also Davidson's) is very much thinned down—enough to make the charge seem unlikely. For instance, it abandons indubitability and mind/body dualism and a reliance on objective "ideas." McDowell correctly sees that this commitment of Rorty's is systematically linked to the defense of Davidson's coherence theory of truth and knowledge and that, in effect, Davidson is committed to the same Cartesian vision as is Rorty. Here is what Rorty says, in advancing (in one breath) Davidson's view, his own, the engine of pragmatism, the nerve of the new naturalism Davidson advocates, and the key to recovering a viable realism—quite a lot in one swoop:

A common feature of all the forms of this dualism which Davidson lists ["the dualism of scheme and content"] is that the relations between the two sides of the dualism are non-causal. Such *tertium* as a "conceptual framework" or an "intended interpretation" are non-causally related to the things which they organize or intend. They vary independently of the rest of the universe, just as do the skeptic's relations of "correspondence" or "presentation." The moral is that if we have no such *tertium*, then we have no suitable items to serve as representations, and thus no need to ask whether our beliefs represent the world accurately. We still have beliefs, but they will be seen from the outside as the field linguist sees them (as causal interactions with the environment) or from the inside as the pre-epistemological native sees them (as rules for action). To abjure *tertium* is to abjure the possibility of a third way of seeing them—one which somehow combines the outside view and the inside view, the descriptive and the normative attitudes.<sup>6</sup>

Rorty gives us no reason to suppose that the causal interaction between belief and world *can* capture what would otherwise be tendered as the epistemic connection between the two.

McDowell sees very clearly that these views of Davidson and Rorty cannot fail to reinstate all the paradoxes of the Cartesian skeptic's commitment, for they entrench the separation between