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The Landscapes of Pragmatism¹

Simon Blackburn

RESUMEN

En este artículo dibujo un mapa con algunas de las cuestiones que surgen cuando nos planteamos si se puede desarrollar el pragmatismo como una tesis global, como hacen Robert Brandom y Huw Price. En detalle, ¿la luz que da el pragmatismo global apaga la iluminación que ofrecen los pragmatismos locales, confinados a áreas concretas del discurso? Defiendo que no.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *explicación, expresivismo, naturalismo, pragmatismo, representación, verdad.*

ABSTRACT

In this paper I chart some of the issues arising when we think whether pragmatism can be developed globally, as in the work of Robert Brandom and Huw Price. In particular does the light shed by global pragmatism extinguish the illumination offered by local pragmatisms, confined to particular areas of discourse? I argue that it does not.

KEYWORDS: *Explanation, Expressivism, Naturalism, Pragmatism, Representation, Truth.*

I. TWO PRAGMATIST STREAMS

It is a salient fact about recent discussions of pragmatism that they gravitate in one of two directions. One is in effect global: pragmatists following Sellars and Rorty, of whom Robert Brandom, Huw Price, and Michael Williams may be the most prominent, hope for an overall view of meaning and thought that deserves calling by that name. A major component of this view is that the ‘language game’ of giving and asking for reasons is to explain more overtly semantic notions, and in particular ‘representation’ and its two principal sub-species, which are truth and reference. Or, where it does not conceive of itself as explaining them, it may take on a more crusading edge, and counsel that they are due for retirement. This culturally revisionary attitude is, of course, more prominent in Richard Rorty than in the others I have mentioned. The slogan for this kind of pragmatism is that it privileges processes (Wittgenstein’s stream of life in which sayings are embedded) over relations of reference and representation.

The other direction is more local. It considers an area of discourse, such as mathematics, modal talk, or ethical talk, and counsels that the sayings in such an area are best understood as doing something other than representing how things stand. Varieties of the approach include fictionalism, expressivism in ethics, and perhaps other kinds of constructivism. Rather than responding to how things stand, these pragmatists say, we must see ourselves as inventing a language in which to do other things, such as coordinate attitudes, lay down rules of language, voice other stances or postures of the mind. This kind of pragmatism insists on a kind of functional pluralism, whereby some parts of language are properly seen as representative, but others are not. Its stock in trade is therefore the contrast between one part of discourse and another. In this paper I want to sketch some advantages of this kind of local pragmatism before ending with some comments on the other, global, variety, and the consistency or otherwise of the two approaches.

II. REPRESENTATION AND METAPHYSICS

I start by talking of a discussion Huw Price gives, of a passage from my book on *Truth*. I had written about Rorty's substitution of a norm of solidarity for a norm of truth:

To many of us, however, the solution looks worse than the problem: language is not there to represent how things stand — how ridiculous! It is as if Rorty has inferred from there being no innocent eye that there is no eye at all. For after all, a wiring diagram represents how things stand inside our electric bell, our fuel gauge represents the amount of petrol left in the tank, and our physics or history tells how things stand physically or historically [Blackburn (2005), p. 153].

Price quotes this, alongside a similar passage from Frank Jackson, expressing astonishment at conferences where people attack representational views of language 'who have in their pockets pieces of paper with writing on them that tell them where the conference dinner is and when the taxis leave for the airport' [(1997), p. 270]. Price takes us as examples illustrating how something called 'anti-representationalism' often meets with something close to incomprehension, and he goes on to quote as an ally Robert Brandom who also talked of the way a representationalist paradigm is 'taken for granted' even in fields outside analytical philosophy.

But Brandom had other disreputable branches of philosophy and theory in mind, whereas the opinion voiced in my passage, and I think Frank Jackson's, was not intended as a philosophical defence of a philosophical position called representationalism, and certainly not, in my own case, any kind of 'global' representationalism. It was intended only as a Wittgensteinian re-

minder that the term representation and its cousins have perfectly good *everyday* uses. A historian may represent the court life of James I in a somewhat lurid light. Captain Cook's charts represented the coast line of New South Wales with astonishing accuracy. The petrol gauge and the wiring diagram and the pieces of paper can do what they are supposed to do, or fail. These are not philosophers' sayings, but simply parts of the everyday. We mention them in the same spirit as Wittgenstein reminds us of everyday sensation talk, not as something that all by itself demands a particular philosophical approach, but as something like the data that any such approach must end up respecting. In Moorean vein, I would suppose that any philosophy that ends up denying them is less likely to be right than they are. My problem with Rorty was that he was not, in my judgment, respecting them, but at any rate in his persona as cultural agitator and prophet, gleefully bent on trampling on them.

Price and David Macarthur did not present themselves as cultural stormtroopers, bent on excising reference and representation from the everyday. Rather, they say that for the pragmatist the crucial thing is not to answer questions about the function of language in ways that encourage *metaphysics* [Macarthur & Price (2007), p. 95]. On this I am entirely at one with them, and neither petrol gauges nor timetables, nor in general the Wittgensteinian reminder of the everyday that I offered should encourage metaphysics, I hope. We need to be careful here in deploying Quine's rejection of an external/internal boundary. This could lead some to suppose that if 'representation' usually has no proper use, since it introduces metaphysics, in answering the external-sounding question, then it must have no proper use in the internal workings of the discourse itself. And then by contraposition, anyone defending the propriety of the everyday is seen as half way towards murky metaphysics. I think this is a flat mistake.

The reason is that simply insisting on the propriety of an everyday use of 'representation', across the board, is quite compatible with offering different *interpretations* of it, such as those offered by expressivists or instrumentalists in their various domains. The propriety of everyday talk offers a datum, but it does not offer a self-extracting philosophical 'ism': representationalism, which the propriety of the sayings therefore establishes. It just means that if we set such an 'ism' up either as a good thing or as a target, then we ought to be sure what it is. And if the propriety of the everyday talk is a datum, then pragmatists would do well to ensure that what they attack as 'representationalism' does not encompass the everyday, so that the ordinary human baby gets thrown out with any undesirable bathwater.

One could, indeed, see Rorty himself as simply offering an interpretation of the everyday use of 'truth', 'description', or 'representation', in spite of his frequently derogatory remarks about them. The interpretation I went on to discuss was that in offering everyday remarks that allow sayings to be

true or to say how things stand, or to represent the way things are, we deploy nothing more than a norm of solidarity with others [Blackburn (2005)]. I argued that this was wrong, for familiar reasons: justifying ourselves to our peers is different from getting things right, and only offers any pale surrogate for truth provided our peers are fully paid-up members of the community that matters: fellow historians, if we are doing history; fellow legal practitioners if we are interpreting law; fellow scientists if a scientific question is on the table. But to achieve *that* status, these peers must have mastered techniques and norms of practice that go beyond what is properly comprehended as ‘discursive’ or belonging to discourse. For their opinions to be worth listening to they need to be more than good inference makers, for example. They need to be masters of the sextant or the archive or the laboratory, or at least to be well attuned to the results of those who are masters of these things. They need to be plugged into techniques or practices, and they need to follow the norms that belong to them. It is those that entitle them to a hearing in the *après-truth* coffee lounge where we try to become of one mind about something.

In other words, we must not gaze at this coffee lounge where the scientists and historians, or everyday folk, congregate to chat and try to become like-minded about things, without remembering that it is a small oasis surrounded by the laboratories and instruments and libraries and everyday things with which they work. One could, indeed, in desperation, try saying that the laboratories and instruments and libraries are in turn simply parts of a normative discursive practice: their use is the way to find yourself successful where it matters, in the coffee lounge. That is like saying that training as a footballer is not done with the purpose of enabling you to cope with the ball, but in order to garnish applause and solidarity from the team afterwards in the dressing room. It’s an odd opposition to mount, and a false way of looking at the run of footballers once it is mounted.²

I could put this in Sellarsian terms by saying that Captain Cook, for instance, might literally have had an entry rule for an element of his chart. You do not write a figure indicating a depth unless you have dropped a piece of lead to the bottom and measured the number of marks on the line. Had he not followed many such rules meticulously, his charts would not be revered, as they are, for their representational accuracy. There are also exit rules or in other words, ways to use his chart to navigate the waters around the coast. The chart is useful, of course, because there is a harmony between the entry rule, getting the chart to say that there are two fathoms of water in a strait, say, and the exit rule or practice, which gives you success in sailing a boat drawing anything less than two fathoms, but no more, through the strait. But there is no useful contrast here between coping and copying: the chart enables you to cope because it represents correctly the amount of water in the strait. *There is no other explanation of the successes that attend sailors who use it.*

Price has asked how, if I stand so close to Wittgenstein as I have claimed, I yet cast aspersions on Rorty, who represents himself — if we may now be permitted the term — as standing equally close. The answer in my own mind is that Wittgenstein, trained as an engineer, was far more prone to emphasize norms of *technique* or *practice*, than purely conversational norms. In fact there is something rather comical about imagining the aristocratic and misanthropic Wittgenstein paying much attention to conversation at all, unless he was conducting it. In this respect it is notable that in recent work one ‘global’ pragmatist, Robert Brandom, has stressed more than hitherto the salient place of practical intentionality in what might otherwise be criticized as a self-contained ‘game’ of giving and asking for reasons [Brandom (2008), p. 178]. That practice — for it is not a game — is embedded in firstly observation, or the intelligently directable process of (knowingly) placing of oneself in a position to receive, causally, information from the world. And secondly it is *for* something outside itself, namely the direction of action upon the world.

This is why the notion of a ‘game’ of giving and asking for reasons is misleading. Games are essentially self-contained activities, in which ways of achieving an end internal to the game are constrained by rules, whose point is to make the activity of achieving the end in conformity to them artificially difficult, and which thereby constitute the activity or game itself. This description does not apply to observation, inference, or the formation of intention.³

III. LOCAL PRAGMATISMS AND DEFLATION

A pragmatist, or anyone else, would be perfectly right to insist at this point that the norms governing investigation are *our* norms. It is we who determine what we want to know, and how to set about finding it out. In one sense this is obviously true, but in another it may be misleading. For it is not simply down to us and our conventions whether any particular investigation is well adapted to give us results about what we want to know. Finding which do and which do not can be a long and sticky and fallible process. We cannot solve it by decision or convention. It is a matter of making ourselves into good instruments for detecting how things stand, and that is no easier than making a good petrol gauge or a good sextant.

I think that the practices of everyday assertion are sufficient as well to help with one problem Price raises for me. Here he contrasts a *heterological* practice with an *autological* one, introducing the contrast with two kinds of exam. The one asks whether Aristotle was Belgian, in order to test the pupil’s knowledge of where Aristotle was born. The other asks in order to find out what the pupil thinks. A sincere answer is all that is required in the second practice; the first deploys another more exacting norm or standard. Price

points out, rightly, that for all deflationism tells us about the truth predicate, we could be in either practice. The autological pupil can say ‘it is true that Aristotle was Belgian’ as easily as saying ‘Aristotle was Belgian’ and still get the tick. Hence more remains to be said about norms of assertion than anything deflationism gives us. For in general we are in heterological practices. Sincerity is not enough, (I say in general because there are, I think, conversational practices which pretty much approach it. Much vocalization in art galleries, for instance, and especially modern art galleries, is little more than autological. We effuse and compare effusions rather than trying to get something right.) As Price knows, I have been concerned to defend the heterological parts of ethics, which does not stop with the swapping of responses, but includes a healthy practice of disagreement and doubt and persuasion, at least partly because it is more important for us to be of one mind and to have a tale about why we are minded as we are, when the topic is whether early term abortion is to be banned, than when the topic is whether Jackson Pollock was a disaster. In the empirical sciences, heterologicality is more visibly a part of the practice, since our responsibility to verification procedures is a firm norm for assertion, and falling short in implementing them is a firm reason for criticism and dissent. In Bernard Williams’s terms, we do not merely want the person producing the timetable to be sincere, but to be accurate. With ethics the elusive nature of the ‘right’ verification procedures is one of the problems, and one of the pressure points that starts theory on its road.

So much for the everyday. With it firmly in place — although, as I have already said, potentially ripe for further interpretation — what remains of an ‘ism’ for pragmatism to oppose? Well, Price gives us a great deal of help here, in the kind things he says about my quasi-realist program as a kind of Trojan horse for introducing pragmatism into the representationalist citadel, or as a shining example for the rest of the movement to follow. He has also said some very useful things about the relation between the kind of expressivism that quasi-realism tries to help, and deflationism in semantics. Putting the two sides together, I think we can identify local pragmatism in something like the following terms:

You will be a local pragmatist about an area of discourse if you pose a Carnapian external question: what is the most perspicuous representation of this kind of discourse and thought, and the functions they serve? What is the most illuminating description of this bit of our language game? And then:

- (1) you offer an account of what we are up to in going in for this discourse, and
- (2) the explanation eschews any use of the referring expressions of the discourse; any appeal to anything that a Quinean would identify as

the values of the bound variables if the discourse is regimented; or any semantic or ontological attempt to 'interpret' the discourse in a domain, to find referents for its terms, or truth makers for its sentences [Macarthur & Price (2007), p. 96].

- (3) Instead: the explanation proceeds by talking in different terms of what is done by so talking, or by offering a revelatory genealogy or anthropology or even a just-so story about how this mode of talking and thinking and practising came about, and the functions it serves.

I do not offer this as a prescriptive, defining description of neo-pragmatism. Some thinkers who like the label may reject the whole enterprise of answering a Carnapian external question, rather than giving an answer of a certain shape to it. And others may dislike the pluralism in the area, believing, in fact, that their own investigations into global notions somehow sideline any such project. But with this account of local pragmatism in front of us we can now put in place Price's compelling use of deflationism about truth and other semantic notions, as a useful, or perhaps vital prop for any kind of contemporary pragmatism:

- (4) A pragmatist who has completed his explanation need not worry at finding truth, or other semantic notions, woven into the target discourse. By deflationism, they will be serving the same logical purposes, such as enabling generalization to take place, there, as they do anywhere else.

All this is very much in accord with the approach expressivists such as Gibbard and myself have taken to the ethical, and which can encompass the more general area of the 'normative'; it shows us standing on the same podium as pragmatists, and possibly with a few campaign decorations showing as well.

What then of the fear, voiced by many writers that deflationism is inconsistent with expressivism, or at least deeply in tension with it? That would certainly arise if pragmatism included a zeroth law, along the lines of this:

- (0) it is worries about whether ethical terms represent, or ethical sentences can be true, or about what truth makers they have, that alone motivate us to set out on the explanatory story crafted according to (1), (2), (3) and finally making use of (4).

For then there is a threat that the deflationism made use of at the fourth stage, would not itself dismiss and dissolve the worries that set the whole enterprise going. But we can now see that there are two answers to this charge,

which eventually coincide. One would be that it is not *those* worries, or *just* those worries, that motivate the enterprise. The other would be that it *is* those worries, but that they can be expressed without the explicitly semantic vocabulary. After all, *deflationism itself* forces this possibility upon us. If there is a legitimate worry somewhere, put by employing a notion of truth, then by deflationism it ought to be capable of expression without it. If we can skip up or down Ramsey's ladder without cost or concern, then equally we must be able to frame genuine problems that arise when we do use the vocabulary, without so doing. In a nutshell, it wasn't *facts* that were the problem, ready to be dissolved by deflationism, but morality.

Thus, suppose we express a discontent with our understanding of ethics, by saying with John Mackie that we do not see how we can credit ourselves with knowledge of moral facts, when we are conscious that a faultless difference, such as being born in another, equally admirable culture, would have led us to an opposite opinion on what those facts are. And suppose someone tries to soothe us with deflationist thoughts about facts. There is no worry, they say, of this kind, since we no longer theorise in terms of facts: deflationism shows us how to dispense with them as thick or robust elements in any theory. Well and good, we should reply, I now express my worry without mentioning facts: I do not see how to claim that I know that p when I am conscious that a faultless difference, such as being born in another, equally admirable culture, would have led me to think that $\neg p$. In general, I continue, I adhere to norms that suggest that I should not maintain knowledge when I also accept that an equally defensible view suggests the negation of what I claim to know. And I can't see how to exempt myself from the accusation that this is what I am doing in the present case.

I do not say that this 'argument from relativism' is particularly compelling — in particular, the admission that the other culture is equally admirable is usually one we do not make, and without it the worry solves itself — but it is just as compelling put without mention of truth as with it.

Or again, suppose Mackie comes out with an argument from queerness, framed in terms of the mysterious magnetic properties of supposed moral facts. Thanks to deflationism we can rephrase this: Mackie fails to see how being convinced that p can by itself involve being motivated to do some related thing, without there being an additional, independent, and contingent component of desire in the agent. Again, we may or may not be impressed, but the new phrasing is on all fours with the old.

In other areas we find the same kind of transformation. If a worry about numbers were put in terms of the difficulty of referring to abstract, non-located, causally inefficacious objects, and deflationism about reference gallops in to help, the worry will relocate itself in the question of how we know about abstract, non-located, causally inefficacious objects. Or, it might tellingly ask why we should be concerned about them. And the philosophy

of mathematics again gets a motivation and a foothold. A similar transformation could be offered for puzzles about reference to possible worlds. In each case, the substantive puzzle can be relocated away from the insubstantive notions of representation and reference.

To return to the characterization of pragmatism given above, we should now see not a binary opposition, between pragmatism and some competitor called representationalism, but at least a fourfold division of alternatives. We could hold out for pragmatic stories *everywhere*. The opposition would be representationalism *somewhere*. Or, we could hold out for pragmatic stories *somewhere*, and the opposition would be representationalism *everywhere*. The last of these is, I suppose, the position manifested by those conservative philosophers with whom I started, who automatically react to any pragmatic story by reaching for notions of truth, truth-condition, truth-makers, and their kin, and proclaiming that these lie beyond the pragmatist's grasp. Let us call these *global* representationalists. I stand shoulder to shoulder with Price and I hope many others here in finding that attitude reprehensible. Still, all that is needed to oppose it are *local* pragmatisms, for which, of course, I am more than happy to sign up.

There is, however, a danger now in presenting the opposition as one between pragmatism and representationalism. Suppose that Brandom and Price are successful in showing how semantic vocabulary can be introduced on the back of some social, normative, pragmatic and intentional stories about what is actually done with language. Then 'representation' will take its deflated place alongside truth as of right, and it will do so whether we are talking of possible worlds, duties and rights, numbers, powers or universals, or chairs and tables. So it is natural to think that it will not be representationalism that marks an opponent to pragmatism, but at best something else — and what would that be, apart perhaps from detailed niggling about the success or the direction of the social and normative stories? I try to fend off this threat by distinguishing where we begin and the vocabulary we end with as we try to give our best perspicuous representation of the discourse of an area. But Brandom and Price may reasonably respond that since their global social/normative story gives global illumination, detailed lights are not additionally necessary or helpful. Light has dawned over the whole landscape.

My reason for resisting this is that explanations have to stand somewhere. The Humean genealogy of justice, for example, takes us as human beings with limited capacities, very definite needs, situated in a relatively niggardly environment where it is hard to satisfy those needs, and therefore having to evolve cooperative mechanisms regulating mutually beneficial conduct, restraint, and coordination. A wider Humean genealogy of values in general talks of natural propensities to pain and pleasure, love and hate, and an ability to take up a common point of view with others. It postulates a human nature in which some particle of the dove is kneaded together with the

wolf and the serpent, and provides a story of our evaluative practices on that basis. I suppose a Fregean genealogical story of arithmetic and then mathematics more generally would start by placing us in a world of kinds of objects with distinct identity conditions, such as tigers and eggs and warriors, and a capacity to tally them, with there being an advantage to us in being able to rank pluralities of them by magnitude: three tigers are more of a problem than one, five eggs are better than three; eighteen warriors coming our way make for a disaster, although we could probably fight off ten. And so on.

Such genealogical stories start with a common-sense background of ourselves and others, and a world of physical objects, with distinct locations, changing only according to distinct regularities with a distinct speed limit. In the books in which he provides a genealogy of morals, Hume simply takes all that for granted, just as a Fregean account of arithmetic takes the tigers and eggs and warriors for granted. If we ask the Carnapian external question about all *that*, then I suppose we face a choice point. It may be that we take an Aristotelian, or perhaps Wittgensteinian, line on the priority of the everyday. There is simply no place for 'first philosophy' to stand behind the *endoxa*, the given in our common-sense situation. This attitude would accord well with Price's association of pragmatism with *quietism*, or the rejection altogether of metaphysical questions. If we insist on posing the Carnapian external-sounding question: how come that we go in for descriptions of the world in terms of surrounding middle-sized dry goods? — then the answer is only going to be a stutter or self-pat on the back: it is because we are indeed surrounded by middle sized dry goods. That answer, obviously, draws on the referential resources of the object language, and according to the account in front of us, amounts to a victory for representationalism over pragmatism. A similar fate awaits us, in many peoples' view, if we pose a Carnapian external-sounding question about at least the coastal waters of science. How come we go in for descriptions of the world in terms of energies and currents? Because we have learned to become sensitive to, measure, predict and control, and describe and refer to, energies and currents. That is science's own view of how we have got where we are, and there is none better.

We may think our spade is not turned so quickly, and that we can dig below our everyday landscape. Hume thought so when he tackled the external world in Part Four, section two, of Book I of the *Treatise*, but he never revisited the dig, perhaps because the trench could not be shored up with the materials he had left himself, and collapsed upon him. Berkeley thought our spade was not turned so quickly, and others influenced by Descartes, such as Hobbes, did so too. The aim will be to see reference to everyday objects as an instrument for coping with something else, and the only plausible candidate will be the orderliness of experience, the only 'given' that looks capable of distinguishing experience of a real independent world from a mere 'rhapsody of sensation'. As Peter Strawson so marvellously indicated in *Individuals*, the

possibility of spatial organization of the world requires orderliness, stability and repetition, giving rise to the idea of a revisit to the same place, and the reidentification of the same kind of thing, rather than the substitution of a qualitatively identical but different thing. But whether this is a genuinely distinct and satisfying 'genealogy' for the concepts of a public world is, obviously, extremely doubtful, and to most contemporary philosophers it would be complete heresy, facing a battery of objections, from those centred on the impossibility of recognizing orderliness, or effecting reidentifications, in a purely private world (Wittgenstein) to those querying the possibility of even something so basic as awareness of time in such a world (Kant).

It would be very odd if either classical pragmatism in its early American dress, or neo-pragmatism as we have it now, depended on the old Cartesian priority of the Inner against the Outer. And it would be even more odd to see Wittgenstein as any kind of champion of a global pragmatism which is trying to take over the common sense homeland of representationalism by using materials fashioned from the inner life of consciousness. It would be nearly as odd to take Davidson as a similar champion of the Inner. Instead, global neo-pragmatism in the writers I listed at the beginning attempts a genealogy by taking certain *social* facts for granted, including conversation, inference, scorekeeping, and other discursive activities, and constructing its genealogy of reference and everyday ontology on that basis. I see this as an exercise with its own value and its own successes. But I find myself very unclear about the motivation: epistemologically or cognitively I should have thought that what people say is a special case of what things do, and the child's reidentification of its rattle and bricks and its ability to locate itself, comes at around the same time and presumably requires the same cognitive resources (it may require different neural resources) as its similar reidentification of its mummy and daddy and its discernment of structure, pattern, and repetition, in what they are saying to it. Similarly, as someone who thinks that genealogical stories about norms and values are our best examples of local neo-pragmatism in action, I am sceptical about reversals which give the learner's sensitivity to norms priority over its sensitivity to the recurring elements of its environment. Generally speaking, you learn that you must stop at red lights only after you have learned to recognize red lights.

It has been well said that every explanation must start somewhere, but there is no particular place that every explanation has to start. So one could imagine a kind of rolling global pragmatism. Whenever an area of discourse becomes a target for philosophical theory, and we find ourselves worrying about its ontology or the kind of epistemology or the kind of saying about the world that constitute it, step aside to a place which, at least for the moment, seems not so worrisome, and essay a pragmatic story about the utility of the target way of thought and talk, given an environment composed in the other, less demanding way. A rolling pragmatism would differ from a foun-

dational pragmatism in that there would be no objection to patching it together from piecemeal, and together potentially circular, explanatory projects. You might explain our penchant for ethics and normativity taking middle-sized dry goods, and some facts about human nature and human needs for granted. You might explain the way we think about the ongoing identity of human beings in terms of our concern with psychological connectedness, and you might explain our talk of psychology in turn in terms of sensitivity to behaviour. You may talk about our sensitivity to powers and dispositions, and talk of that kind of talk as a way of organizing patterns in the Humean mosaic and reactions to them, as Hume's own theory of causation did. But then thought in terms of a Humean mosaic might in turn be explained as a kind of abstraction out of things presented to us in our lives in the external world. And if the external world is the problem, then rolling pragmatism might equally step aside to construct a genealogy from our exposure to the Humean mosaic. Global pragmatism would be a patchwork of local pragmatisms, living by taking in each others' washing. There never comes a point at which our spade is turned and explanation can go no further, although as the case of the external world suggested, it may often be open to doubt whether the explanations on offer always deserve the title, or always avoid drafts covertly drawn on the kinds of thing talk about which is allegedly being explained. I am not sure that rolling pragmatism would appeal to pragmatism's founding fathers — James, for instance, at least in his later empiricist and neutral monist phase, seems much closer to being a closet foundationalist — but it is the best I can do to sympathize with anything worth calling a global program.

IV. ROLLING PRAGMATISM?

In terms of rolling pragmatism, "explaining" a mode of discourse simply by citing our having cottoned on to an ontology, or the facts, or the truth-makers, would be abandoning the only kind of worthwhile philosophical explanation there could be. It would be announcing that our spade had been turned, and then, amazingly, patting ourselves on the back for this fact.

But we might want to ask why Rorty, of all people, with his desire to sink philosophy and its explanatory pretensions, should have minded about that. Common sense's answer to the Carnapian sounding question, from within common sense, and science's answer from within science, should surely be a model for freedom from philosophy, not a target of contempt. What they model is the vanity of any philosophical ambition to step outside and to do better. It is the rolling global pragmatist who is an addict of new, philosophical, explanatory perspectives! The representationalist, on this account, is the true deflationist, modestly and sometimes admirably shying

away from theory. ‘Representationalism’ on this story is what is left when philosophy becomes very, very, boring. But some, such as Wittgenstein, Davidson, and especially Rorty, might say, in at least some areas, none the worse for that.

Let me return to Carnap and the distinction between external and internal theory. One way of vindicating Frank Jackson and me, insisting on perfectly proper everyday talk of representation, is supplied by pragmatists themselves:

Realism manifestly is a theory of very great pragmatic value. In ordinary life we all assume that we live in an “external” world, which is “independent” of us, and peopled by other persons as real and as good, or better, than ourselves. And it would be a great calamity if any philosophy should feel it its duty to upset this assumption. For it works splendidly, and the philosophy which attacked it would only hurt itself [Schiller (1907), p. 459].

Contrary to Dewey, perhaps far from burying it, pragmatism should be seen as vindicating realism. This view has a pedigree: it is found in James, and perhaps most famously in Quine. In effect, what is happening here is that Carnap’s external question is allowed. It is not dismissed as ‘metaphysical’, but instead it is given a pragmatic answer. The ‘language’ or mode of thought that embraces external, independent, public, objects earns its living. It works, and nothing else of which we have the faintest conception does so. So we are to embrace it.

Theorists who like their pragmatism, or their realism, global rather than local may scent an opening here. If in this way pragmatism vindicates realism about chairs and tables, why not about possible worlds, numbers, rights and duties, selves, the passage of time, and all the other posits of our everyday speech? These parts of thought or language also earn their keep, so should we not accept the inevitable, and announce ourselves as representationalists and realists about them too?

No, because if we look back at the description of pragmatism that I gave, we find there is a huge asymmetry between the case of common sense and what I called the coastal waters of science, on the one hand, and cases like possible worlds, numbers and rights and duties or the passage of time on the other.

In embracing the common sense scheme, we embrace not only the tables and chairs it posits, *but a distinct view about our relation to them*. We must think of ourselves as causally influenced by them, and sensitive to their multitude of properties: their position, creation, destruction, and changes. To say that we mirror their doings now becomes a way of summarizing a whole host of facts about our sensitivities that come along with first positing them: that if my chair collapses, I will notice it; that if the table dances around or bursts into flames, I will register that; that were it to grow in size it would

have all kinds of other consequences that I could also register and so on and so on. A mirror is quick to reflect the surrounding scene; I am not quite so quick, but I do such a good job that comparing myself to a mirror becomes almost irresistible.

Furthermore nature itself has imprinted its demands upon us. Our visual systems, for example, are hard-wired, and modular in the sense that their output lies outside our control and outside the influence of other cognitive functions. We might know that the conjurer is not producing an egg out of thin air, but we cannot stop seeing the act as if that is exactly what he is doing. Other areas lack this fixity: ethics, for instance, attracts attention partly because while its demands seem so absolute to those of us who were well brought up, we also know that they are interpreted differently, or even invisible to those who were not.

Finally, the doings of the items of common sense are directly witnessed, reflected in experience or what Kant called intuition. Their whole life, as it were, consists in their role as systematizers and explainers of experience. There is therefore *no option of embracing the scheme, while holding back on its own explanations of why we do so*. Whereas in the other cases, there is every prospect of bracketing the existence of possible worlds and the rest, and coming to understand why we go in for the mode of thought in question in other terms. In other words, there is every prospect of giving an anthropology or genealogy which is itself free of the commitments in question.

As already touched upon, there is the traditional empiricist option of wrestling the common sense example into the same shape as the others, by going fundamentally private: indeed one might argue that this option is already foreshadowed by Quine with the very idea of a 'posit', since the model is one of a theoretical entity posited in order to help with some independently known phenomenon. But as I have said, this seems not to be the neo-pragmatist intention, taking us back, as it does, to the dark days before Wittgenstein and Sellars. From this point of view, Quine's cheerful assimilation of common sense to basic science was a throwback to the bad old days in Vienna.

A different strategy for a global theory would be to urge that more is involved with the common sense scheme than meets the eye. It is only to a superficial glance, it might be said, that chairs and tables form part of a scheme that can be separated from modality, arithmetic, or normativity. It is here that various arguments against the possibility of 'disentangling' the one part of discourse from the other come into play. I believe that they all fail, and that the natural presumption of difference remains. The natural presumption is that we can know about the things around us without having the tools to think of them in connection with numbers (except perhaps adjectivally) or possible worlds, let alone rights, duties or values. There is a hierarchy of modes of thought, some at the bottom available to quite simple creatures, and others further up available only to very complex, self-conscious crea-

tures who have developed specific tools for dealing with the world - dealing with what is just there anyway. And it is those modes of thought that form the precise, local, topics on which pragmatist modes of explanation get a grip.

V. COMPLEMENTARITY

Let us now pause to take stock. With deflationism in place, there is a legitimate, harmless, and unilluminating place for terms like truth and representation. But for an 'ism' to be born, we need more than that. I have been suggesting that we look instead at whether we have an ineliminable use of the referring expressions of the vocabulary in providing our best explanation, or most perspicuous representation, of why we use it — this is substantially what Price refers to as the Eleatic Criterion [Macarthur & Price (2007), p. 108]. We talk of chairs and tables because we are in a world of chairs and tables. We talk of the moons of Jupiter and forces and electrons because we are sensitive to the moons and the forces and electrons. But we do not have to give these flat-footed answers everywhere, and it is where we do not that pragmatism blooms.

Price and Macarthur represent pragmatism as the combination of a starting point in the explanation of some tract of language, and add to that 'a rejection of the semantic or 'representationalist' presuppositions which otherwise lead our theoretical gaze from language to the world — which turn an anthropological concern into a metaphysical concern, in effect' [Macarthur & Price (2007), p. 97]. What I am querying, in these cases, is first whether the anthropological concern can be pursued without our gaze including *some parts of the world*, and second whether this makes that gaze specifically metaphysical. I urge that we talk of chairs and tables because we are surrounded by them and often have our attention fixed on them and our intentions targeted upon them, and that saying this is no more metaphysical than saying that we sit on chairs and eat at tables because it is comfortable to do so. In other words, there is nothing metaphysical, to my ear, about the in-shore waters of science and common-sense, and it is those that generate these answers. We only stray from common-sense to metaphysics when we start giving the same form of answer in other cases: we talk of possible worlds because the actual world is surrounded by shells of possible worlds; we talk of numbers because there are numbers, and talk of rights because people have rights. Deflationism allows us to say that it is true that there are possible worlds and numbers and rights, and true that there are facts about them, but it does not force us to regard these as ineliminably featuring in the best explanations of why we think and talk in such terms.

It does not force us, but perhaps it does not forbid us either. In some contexts there is no problem about offering explanations of this and that, us-

ing these vocabularies. Why did John take immodium on holiday? Because there is a real possibility of a stomach upset when you travel in the third world. Why do some cicadas only breed every thirteen or seventeen years? Because these are prime numbers. The peasants revolted because their rights were infringed [Sturgeon (1985); see also Blackburn (1993)]. Explanation is notoriously contextual and interest-relative, so why should it be censored in philosophical contexts?

I take it that the simple answer to this is that we do not want our philosophy to remain flat-footed and disappointing. If an external question is worth asking, it must be because the area in question has generated some kind of puzzle, and a flat-footed explanation will be one that fails to address it. It is ill-adapted to engage with whichever motivations that prompted the question in the first place. Here, clearly, there is room for differences of taste, and the soothing voice of the quietist will be heard, reassuring us that there was no need to be puzzled from the outset.

But quietism in turn is harder to believe in some cases than others. Consider for instance David Lewis's complaint that his modal realism was apt to be met by an 'incredulous stare', and let us ask why that was so. Lewis himself presented the realism simply as a consequence of things we all believe and say about what might have been the case, or what would have been the case had other things also been the case. Why should philosophers have found themselves incredulous when presented with a credible paraphrase or systematization of things they believed all along?⁴ Was it the geographical imagery — but what harm does that do? Some may mutter darkly about desert landscapes and profligate ontologies, but again, nobody has ever shown the benefits of the former nor the dangers of the latter. So why couldn't we all join in a relaxed realism? My answer is that it does not help with the puzzles that prompt us to want some explanation of our temptation to modal thought and talk in the first place. Mired in actuality, how is it that we are interested in mere possibility? If we know that something is universally the case, why should it bother us whether it is necessarily the case? In other words, what motivates us to think in modal terms, and what confidence do the results of that thought inspire? Modal realism, conceived as simply a systematic rephrasal of the kinds of ways we do think, gives us no answers to such questions. A neo-pragmatism, starting with the utility of everyday thought about what would happen if... or what would have happened if... alone offers any prospect of illumination.

Price and Macarthur hint, as moral realists sometimes do, that there is something underhand about using the Eleatic Criterion, making explanatory presence into a criterion for realism. It is, as it were, tailor-made to privilege common-sense and the inshore waters of science, and tailor-made to exclude vocabularies that have different rationales and roles. I think this is right, but it should not worry us. It is precisely where we find those different rationales

and roles that the space for a different kind of anthropology or genealogy opens up. We have to remember that the pragmatist's genealogical and anthropological stories are themselves advanced as *explanations*. Or, as suggested above, if we don't like the term 'explanation' then we might say that they offer what Wittgenstein constantly sought after as *Übersichtliche Darstellung*: a perspicuous representation of a piece of language that would otherwise raise fruitless puzzles and perplexities. But ordinary talk of middle-sized dry goods is not, on the face of it, a region of discourse that does invite those puzzles (it did to Descartes and Kant of course, but the 'externalist' revolution pioneered by Wittgenstein and Sellars is supposed to have got us beyond all that). And to repeat, science and common sense tell us that the best explanations of our belief that Jupiter has more than four moons, and our coming to think in terms of chairs and tables, are respectively that Jupiter has more than four moons, and we are surrounded by chairs and tables.

Price and Macarthur also say that quasi-realism should not be too quick to accept use of the Eleatic criterion, since quasi-realism takes its emulation of realism to be a 'matter of entitlement to the semantic trimmings', whereas if we adopt the Eleatic Criterion, it would need 'quasi-causation, not quasi-truth' [Macarthur & Price (2007), p. 109]. Well, quasi-realism does need quasi-causation sure enough, or at least an account of what evaluative and normative utterances do when they are embedded in sentences offered as explanatory ('the peasants revolted because they were treated unjustly'). But the first part of the complaint takes us back to whether the global pragmatist illumination is so bright that it renders other flickering local candles unnecessary. Obviously, I have a vested interest in saying that it is not. But surely the move in recent writings beyond the inadequate idea of a self-contained game of giving and receiving reasons, into a more thorough account of the engagement of semantics with our practical lives, gives plenty of scope for pluralism. Our practical lives may take account of possibilities, numbers, properties and universals, ethics, and things we bump into. And our semantic talk may make all these things look alike. But underneath, as Wittgenstein so constantly insisted, lie differences of function, differences of role in practice, and these differences make all the difference. What is illuminating in one context may cast the deepest shadows in another.

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NOTES

¹ This paper is intended to be self-standing, but it owes its existence to the generous, yet critical, work of Price and others. See Price (2006); Macarthur and Price, (2007); Price, 'One Cheer for Representationalism', forthcoming in the Richard Rorty volume of the Library of Living Philosophers series.

² False because vulnerable to the same kinds of argument that Bishop Butler advanced against the similar relocation of human motives in psychological egoism.

³ The definitive account is given in Suits (2005).

⁴ Perhaps some Quineans had trained themselves not to believe them, but the incredulous stares were more widespread than that.

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