The Nature of Human Truths:
The Pragmatism of FCS Schiller and Cognitive Science

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For Lindsey,
You make me live.

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Abstract

Over the past several decades, Cognitive Science has been experiencing a "pragmatic turn" as a result of philosophers within the field examining the literature of classical Pragmatism. One outgrowth of the current "turn" has been the development of various enactivist models of cognition and perception. In his 1990 book, *The Fragmentation of Reason*, philosopher and cognitive scientist Stephen Stich promotes the adoption of what he calls an "epistemic pragmatism" and arrives at the startling conclusion that truth and true beliefs have no value whatsoever, either intrinsic or instrumental. I understand Stich's conclusion about truth to be motivated by what I refer to as a "predicament" (i.e. that traditional analytic approaches to evaluating beliefs are limited and idiosyncratic, their deployment ultimately resting on subjective intuitions) and an apparent "dilemma" (i.e. the perception that there is an essential and unavoidable bifurcation between truth and practical success). While I agree with the majority of Stich's assessment of traditional analytic methods of cognitive evaluation, I take exception with his conclusion that truth and true beliefs have no value. Furthermore, I consider his "dilemma" to be false, or at least only applicable in a case where one accepts certain analytic notions of truth. Refuting Stich's conclusion regarding the value of truth serves as the first aim of this project. The second aim (though it is perhaps more prominent throughout) regards the presentation of a pragmatic theory of truth from a prolific classical pragmatist philosopher, F.C.S. Schiller (b. 1864), a close friend and colleague of William James, whose work has gone largely unconsidered since his death in 1937. Schiller's comprehensive and detailed account of truth dissolves the apparent horns of Stich's "dilemma" and provides a strong basis for examining truth within the conceptual framework of enactivism. In presenting Schiller's account of truth, I hope to further elucidate and strengthen the relationship between classical Pragmatism and Cognitive Science, while also contributing to the ongoing "turn" by presenting an approach to truth that fits within the broader enactivist paradigm. The three main chapters of this dissertation (2-4), present an overview of Schiller's pragmatic understanding of metaphysics (2) and truth (3), offer various criticisms of at least one version of the correspondence theory of truth (3), and provide some answers to common objections raised against the pragmatic theory of truth (4), particularly its dimensions of relativity and subjectivity.

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Preface

> "The true is the opposite of whatever is instable, of whatever is practically disappointing, of whatever is useless, of whatever is lying and unreliable, of whatever is unverifiable and unsupported, of whatever is inconsistent and contradictory, of whatever is artificial and eccentric, of whatever is unreal in the sense of being of no practical account."
>
> — William James, *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), chapter 3

It might be asked what a quote from William James about truth is doing at the beginning of a dissertation that is in large part dedicated to the presentation and discussion of F.C.S. Schiller's account of truth, and this is a fair question. The main reason is that, as James and Schiller were friends and colleagues during their careers, so their formulations of Pragmatism, particularly as regards truth, most properly go together. Throughout *Pragmatism* (1907) and *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), James continually connects his ideas to those of Schiller, and in one place states that

> "Schiller's doctrine and mine are identical, only our expositions follow different directions. He starts from the subjective pole of the chain, the individual with his beliefs, as the more concrete and immediately given phenomenon… I begin with the abstract notion of an objective reality."[1]

For James to say that he and Schiller espouse identical doctrines, though presented differently, is a strong statement indeed. And it is one that I not only take

[1] *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter 12.

seriously in that it comes directly from James, but as expressive of a conclusion that I myself have arrived at in my reading through the bulk of their corpuses in the interest of this project and for years prior.

What I have found is that while Schiller has been all but completely ignored by contemporary pragmatists, James has not, but in reading James (whose prose can be notoriously difficult, terminologically inconsistent, and oratory in style) contemporary pragmatists like Rorty persistently misread him. Such misreading has given rise to an analytic brand of pragmatism focused on the implications of linguistic relativism (sometimes called "Neo-pragmatism"), which in turn has frustrated prominent neo-Peircean "new" pragmatists like Misak, who then essentially condemn James as the supposed source of the cavalier disregard for objective truth on the part of the neo-pragmatists.[2] But, when Schiller is read as a sort of in-depth critical commentary on the pragmatism of James, in a very real way he redeems James from both neo-pragmatic misreading and new-pragmatic blame. As such, throughout this dissertation, while I have most definitely focused on presenting the philosophical writings of Schiller, I nevertheless regularly cite James. In doing so, my hope is that the understanding of Jamesian Pragmatism (of which Schiller was perhaps the most prominent exponent) will be broader and more exact. They considered themselves to be a philosophical duo in life and as I have said, so far as I am concerned, their respective formulations belong side-by-side.

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[2] E.g. Cheryl Misak, "Pragmatism and Analytic Philosophy" in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Michael Beaney (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1098-1116.

Throughout the chapters that follow, I have decided to cite the works of William James and F.C.S. Schiller like one might classical literature, referencing only the title and chapter, referencing no edition or pagination in particular. The exceptions to this are journal articles and posthumous publications; these are cited in the usual style.

I also took certain liberties with archaic spellings and stylization. For instance, when James uses "tho", I have written it fully as "though," and so on. None of these changes affects meaning whatsoever. Further, particularly in *Pragmatism* (though it occurs in *The Meaning of Truth* as well), which is a transcription of lectures delivered by James, he emphasizes parts of the text by placing them in all caps. I have always found this to be jarring as a reader, as well as aesthetically displeasing. As such, in quotes from James that contain capitalized words (e.g. VALIDATION), I have replaced them with italics (i.e. *validation*), which is better stylistically and creates the same effect for the reader that James sought to provide for his listeners when he delivered the chapters orally to audiences in Boston and at Columbia in New York between late 1906 and early 1907.

This project is as much as an exercise in the history of philosophy as it is an attempt to add momentum to the current "pragmatic turn" within philosophy of cognitive science. My interpretive approach has been (in the case of both James and Schiller) to read them closely as primary sources *first*, and to seek clarification in secondary sources regarding their ideas only after much reading and note-taking, usually to try and sort out difficulties and to get a broad sense of how one might read them. In this way, I have guarded against picking up preconceived notions of what James or Schiller supposedly intended from other readers. I have made every attempt to allow them to explicate and clarify their own writings by viewing them in the light of other of their writings. In this

way, I have tried to be as broad and holistic as possible and have even sought clarification from them by consulting their collected correspondence — all before consulting secondary sources. As a result, I have found that my reading of both James and Schiller differs in significant ways from other of their readers in the past century. I am not deterred by this and hope that my method and approach has allowed James and Schiller to be better understood in a fresh light, as I have arrived at my interpretations by comparing them with themselves, as well as with each other, across the breadth of their respective corpuses.

To be sure, there is more to do, but I offer the following as a substantial beginning to a process of unpacking Schiller, and perhaps clarifying and redeeming his esteemed philosophical mentor, James, as a precious ancillary benefit.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter overview:

1.1 Cognitive Science

Cognitive Science is an interdisciplinary field situated at the junction of Philosophy, Psychology, Linguistics, Neuroscience, Anthropology, and Computer Science, which is focused on the study of the mind and cognition. Each cognitive scientist approaches their research questions from the locus of their primary discipline(s) while drawing on the methods, models, and outcomes of adjacent disciplines. The interdisciplinary nature of Cognitive Science makes for a very broad landscape in terms of what falls within its scope, as well as a high degree of variation among cognitive scientists in terms of their respective emphases, training, and expertise.

Cognitive Science generally divides along a line between "disembodied" and "embodied" approaches to cognition, or what Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have dubbed "first generation" and "second generation cognitive science."[3] First generation cognitive

[3] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999), 74-78.

scientists view cognition as essentially the calculations of the brain as it operates on symbol-systems (or "mental representations," which our symbol systems are supposed to stand for), and is the domain of computationalism and representationalism. Second generation cognitive scientists, however, have not only embraced the basic principles of embodiment (i.e. that cognition occurs throughout, and is based on, the entire body; it is not "skull bound"), but have also constructed a new and growing paradigm that views cognition as *embodied, enactive, embedded, and extended* – usually referred to as the "4E" approach to cognition. However, there are those who advocate for the addition of *affective*, making "4E" into "4EA."[4] Johnson (2017) has posited the addition of more "e's" still, opting for the first four (*embodied, enactive, embedded, and extended*), then *emotional* in place of *affective*, and then the addition of *evolutionary* and *exaptative*, resulting in 7E.[5] And there are sure to be more "e's" added as the field progresses. This new and growing paradigm is usually referred to as Enactivism, based on *enactive cognition*, a revolutionary concept first introduced by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in their now classic text *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (1991).

This dissertation is firmly within the embodied, second-generation, enactivist paradigm – specifically as expressed within the current "pragmatic turn" (see section 1.4 below).

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[4] See Madzia, Roman and Matthias Jung, *Pragmatism and Embodied Cognitive Science: From Bodily Intersubjectivity to Symbolic Action* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2016), 2.

[5] See Johnson, Mark, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 33-34.

1.2 Philosophy of Cognitive Science

The place of philosophers within Cognitive Science is still relatively unsettled[6] and, in my own experience, it is discounted as often as it is misunderstood. In my view, the irony of this cannot be overstated, since philosophy is one of the "mother disciplines" of Cognitive Science, and distinctly philosophical concerns drove its primary research questions and concerns,[7] and arguably still does. Nevertheless, philosophers proper are a newer edition to Cognitive Science, relative to the primary disciplines of its architects, and Philosophy shares a similarly "troubled relationship" to the field along with Anthropology.[8] Hopefully what I accomplish in the chapters that follow will aid in strengthening the relationship between Philosophy and Cognitive Science by making it clear that there is still much to consider that is squarely philosophical.

I suppose I am more of a traditionalist and a metaphysician, in the sense that I think of the purview of Philosophy as primarily focused on issues of language, logic, concepts, and metaphysics *qua* broad syntheses of scientific research. Within Cognitive Science, philosophers should ideally be in a dynamic relationship with the empirical disciplines, using traditional tools and methods (and developing new ones) to guide scientific inquiry, while also being informed by the outcomes of such inquiry to stay in

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[6] Andrew Brook, "Introduction: Philosophy in and Philosophy of Cognitive Science," *Topics in Cognitive Science* 1, 2 (2009): 217.

[7] Bechtel, W., A. Abrahamsen, and G. Graham, "Cognitive Science: History," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, eds. Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes (New York: Elsevier, 2001), 2154-2158.

[8] See Beller, Sieghard, Andrea Bender, and Douglas L. Medin, "Should Anthropology Be Part of Cognitive Science?", *Topics in Cognitive Science* 4, 3 (2012): 1-12.

touch with the world and to thereby offer better guidance. Thus, interchange and collaboration between Philosophy and the other cognitive disciplines are essential. As Ayer has said, "If science may be said to be blind without philosophy, it is true also that philosophy is virtually empty without science."[9]

In 2009, Brook introduced a distinction between Philosophy *in* Cognitive Science and Philosophy *of* Cognitive Science. Philosophy "in" is conceptual and refers to work done on topics such as mind and language, philosophy "of" refers to a philosophy of science that engages in meta-study.[10] Included in "of" is also the consideration of various normative issues, namely, those in epistemology, including prediction, control, and rationality[11] among others. In 2012, Samuels, Margolis, and Stich enumerated "five broad categories of issues [that] cover much of what is usually taken to fall within the domain of the philosophy of cognitive science,"[12] two of which are:

> "*Meta-theoretic issues*: Issues concerning the practice of cognitive science and its foundational assumptions.

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[9] A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 152.

[10] Brook, "Introduction," 218.

[11] Ibid, 227

[12] Samuels, Richard, Eric Margolis, Stephen P. Stich, "Introduction: Philosophy and Cognitive Science" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Cognitive Science*, eds. Richard Samuels, Eric Margolis, Stephen P. Stich (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

> *Conceptual issues*: Issues concerning the explication and clarification of the core concepts of cognitive science."[13]

Given these distinctions, it is somewhat difficult to gauge where the proper place for the content of this dissertation might be. The topic is *truth*, which is definitely a philosophical concept to be analyzed (i.e. Philosophy "in" Cognitive Science), but it is also a normative epistemic issue which invites at least a modicum of meta-study and considerations that are connected to Philosophy of Science (i.e. Philosophy "of" Cognitive Science), each of which are definitely featured in this project. Thus, aspects of this dissertation occupy both sides of Brook's distinction. Similarly, regarding the broad categories of Samuels, Margolis, and Stich, *truth* is both a "conceptual issue" and a "meta-theoretic issue," since it is both a core concept of Cognitive Science (or *any* science) and apropos to its foundational assumptions. Nevertheless, it makes the most sense to place the content of this dissertation into Philosophy *of* Cognitive Science and to characterize its main concerns as meta-theoretic.

These ends are pursued, in large part, via an exercise in the history of philosophy, through unpacking and expounding on the ideas of an early pragmatist philosopher, Ferdinand Canning Scott (F.C.S.) Schiller (1864-1937), whose work on truth and metaphysics is unabashedly psychologistic and might suitably be described as "proto-cognitive" in that he (much like his older friend and colleague, William James) wrote presciently about the nature of human perception and cognition. The conclusions of Stich

[13] Ibid.

regarding truth in *The Fragmentation of Reason* (1991), along with the widespread unfamiliarity with the philosophy of Schiller, created an opportunity whereby I have been able to not only provide an answer to Stich's main concerns, but also to present the work of an important defender of Pragmatism to not only Cognitive Science in its current "turn" (see below), but to the larger world of Philosophy.

1.3 Pragmatism

"Pragmatism" was not coined to describe the kind of crassly expedient, short-sighted, devil-may-care attitude with which the term has become colloquially associated. Rather, Pragmatism emphasizes the role of practical working, experimentation, and verification in establishing truths, which is the main topic of this dissertation. Despite the usual demand for a concise logical definition of its conception of *truth*, usually in a single

statement,[14] Pragmatism defies any such reductionism.[15] Rather, when it comes to Pragmatism – especially in its descriptions of truth and related concepts – complexity and

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[14] For example, the pragmatic theory of truth is often represented (usually by its critics) in statements such as "*x* is true iff *x* is useful" and "*x* is true iff *x* works".

In an essay entitled "Two English Critics" (published as the fourteenth chapter of *The Meaning of Truth*), James shows the error of these kinds of statements in that, while they are intended to give a *definition* of the pragmatic conception of truth, what they do is substitute one or another *description* of truth. According to the reductive formal-logical method behind such reductive statements, definitions should operate like strict synonyms such that, if truth is said to be useful or expedient (in the sense of "works"), then "useful" and "expedient" should be interchangeable with "truth" in any possible sentence. But, as James points out, the propositions (a) "*x* exists" and (b) "it is expedient to believe that *x* exists" are *not identical*, nor are they logically interchangeable, and belong to what he calls "different universes of discourse": (a) from the universe of discourse regarding what exists, and (b) from the universe of discourse regarding what it is expedient to believe. The larger error, however, is maintaining that if the Pragmatist describes truths as "useful" then it means that if *x* is useful, then *x* is true. But this gets it backward; all A's may be B's, but this does not mean that all B's are A's. The Pragmatist makes no such mistake.

Toward the end of the essay, James addresses both of the above logical errors on the part of the anti-pragmatist (in this case, "Messrs. Russell and Hawtrey) with an example:

"A horse may be defined as a beast that walks on the nails of his middle digits. Whenever we see a horse we see such a beast, just as whenever we believe a 'truth' we believe something expedient. Messrs. Russell and Hawtrey, if they followed their anti-pragmatist logic, would have to say here that we see *that it is* such a beast, a fact which notoriously no one sees who is not a comparative anatomist."

In other words, all horses are beasts that walk on the nails of its middle digits, but not all beasts that walk on the nails of their middle digits are horses. And the statement that "horses walk on the nails of their middle digits" does not belong to the same universe of discourse as (i.e. is not logically identical to) "a horse is a member of the category of beasts that walk on the nails of their middle digits"—one regards horses themselves and for the other horses are incidental.

[15] In one place, F.C.S. Schiller lists seven definitions of Pragmatism, which he fully acknowledges will not satisfy the passing reader or critic: "…what I call pragmatism [is defined] as, (1) the thorough and methodical recognition of the influence of the purposiveness of mental life on all of our cognitive activities; (2) as the conscious application to the theory of knowledge of the teleological psychology suggested by a metaphysical voluntarism; (3) negatively, as a protest against abstracting from the actual purposiveness of our experience in constructing theories of thought and reality; (4) as the doctrine that 'truths' are values and that 'realities' are arrived at by processes of valuation, and that consequently our 'facts' and *not* independent of our 'truths,' nor our 'truths' of our 'goods'. To these definitions I may now also add three of a more distinctly logical complexion, *viz*., (5) that *meaning depends on purpose*, and… that (6) the meaning of a rule lies in its application, and (7), *a fortiori*, that *the 'truth' of an assertion depends on its application*" (italics original). Schiller then states: "Now it is of course obvious that these definitions are verbally very various, and so sure to bewilder any critic who declines to look beyond the expression to the facts referred to. A thinker however who is really trying to grasp the meaning of pragmatism may find them helpful and may finally discover that for this purpose the expressions are really equivalent. In any case one who has not yet discovered their equivalence has little claim to flatter himself that he understands what the question of pragmatism is about" (This passage is from "The Definition of 'Pragmatism' and 'Humanism'" in *Mind* 14, no. 54, April 1905, p. 237). In the first chapter of *Studies in Humanism*, Schiller repeats these seven definitions in an expanded form.

appeals to "continuities, contexts, and potentialities"[16] is the name of the game, as the pragmatist seeks to understand "everything about mind and cognition in evolutionary, developmental, and practical terms… in interrelated and ecological ways."[17] Much of the difficulty in formulating a precise definition is that the method of logical definitions arises from the holistic nature of Pragmatism, and such holism does not conveniently lend itself to needs of first-order quantification.

Narrowly considered, Pragmatism is primarily a method of truth[18] and of settling metaphysical disputes.[19] William James (1842-1910) writes that it is "first, a method; and second, a genetic theory of what is meant by truth."[20] That is, it is primarily a *method* of determining which of our ideas are true, as well as a *descriptive account* of how truths are determined and adopted by human thinkers. In the following chapters, the pragmatic approach to metaphysics and its conception of truth will be laid out in detail, and many of these statements will hopefully become clearer.

As a philosophy,[21] Pragmatism arises from, and is ensconced within, a wider set of theoretical assumptions, namely those of Radical Empiricism. While I won't traverse

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[16] John R. Shook, *Pragmatism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2023), 7.

[17] Shook, *Pragmatism*, 7.

[18] See *The Meaning of Truth*, chapters 3 and 9.

[19] See *Pragmatism*, Lecture II.

[20] *Pragmatism*, Lecture II

[21] Like so many movements or schools within philosophy, Pragmatism is more a cluster of similar formulations (formulations that might be said to share "family resemblances"), rather than a single set of uniform tenets. No two classical Pragmatists enunciated their views in the same way, and there were definite and important differences between them on various issues. James, however, made a considerable effort to identify his philosophical outlook with that of Schiller and Dewey, both by promoting them as quintessential expressions of what he himself had put forward and portraying them as the same

the length and breadth of Radical Empiricism, the most straightforward way to describe it vis-a-vis the standard empiricism of, say, Hume, is that whereas the latter views the world as a conglomeration of objects existing "out there" in the world[22] and relegates the relations between objects (usually associated with causation) as figments, habits, or constructions of the mind, the former does not privilege objects in this way, but views even relations as a sort of object of experience. Thus, for the Radical Empiricist, everything is part of the flux of our ongoing experience and might be viewed as a sort of "materia prima" of what we call "reality." Another line of distinction between the Radical Empiricism adopted by Pragmatism and standard empiricism is the nature of experience. Whereas standard empiricists tend to view experience as reducible to sets and series of "percepts" or "impressions" of an objective world onto the passive senses of a human agent, Pragmatism views experience as robust and all-encompassing, such that the organism and its environment constitute a unity in which its sensation of the world ("experience") is a dynamic event that occurs within that unity. Thus, an organism doesn't sort discrete percepts it receives from the world, but rather disambiguates a flux

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philosophical approach in different forms (cf. *Pragmatism*, Lectures II and VI; *The Meaning of Truth*, preface and chapter 1). Despite the similarities in the views of James, Schiller, and Dewey, a standard definition (i.e. a strict verbal definition that might be used for formal-logical purposes) between them was never forthcoming. But this was not an oversight or failure on their part. Rather, the demand for such reductive verbal definitions is the clarion call of the analytic tradition, which Pragmatism departed from in various ways.

[22] It is important to note that the Radical Empiricist also believes in the stuff of a world "out there" (i.e. something transperceptually stable between observers), but considers the categorization and identification of objects, and classes of objects, to already be a human cognitive addition to the transperceptual world. Thus, the disagreement between the Standard and the Radical Empiricist does not regard the existence of a world external to human observers, but with what aspects of the objects we categorize and identify as such lie on the objective side of the subject/object divide.

of experience which constitutes the entirety of the "world" in which it lives and exists (see section 2.3 for more on Radical Empiricism).

The origins of Pragmatism are unclear, since it depends on whether one accepts the above description of it – which is thoroughly Jamesian – as accurate. However, James famously attributed his insights, or at least their germ, to Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), the irascible but undisputed genius and intensive polymath who first introduced the principle that would later be called "the pragmatic maxim" in his 1878 paper *How To Make Our Ideas Clear*:

> "Consider the practical effects of the objects of your conception. Then, your conception of those effects is the whole of your conception of the object."

James unveiled his philosophy of Pragmatism in a more or less comprehensive form in a series of lectures in 1906, which were later published as *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* in 1907. Just prior to this lecture series, in 1905, and especially after them, Peirce publicly distanced himself from the ideas of James and denied that he had anything in common with them, rebranding his own philosophy, not as "pragmatism" but "pragmaticism,"[23] which he stated was "ugly enough [of a name] to be safe from kidnappers,"[24] by which he meant to refer to James and others.[25] Despite this

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[23] See Cheryl Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism: From Peirce and James to Ramsey and Wittgenstein* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 61. See also Schiller in *Must Pragmatists Disagree?* (1934), 95.

[24] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 95.

[25] Apparently, "pragmaticism" is too ugly for modern Peirceans as well (e.g. Misak, Haack, Talisse), as is evidenced by their own use of "pragmatism."

effort at creating distance between his own philosophy and that of James, even to the point of renaming it, Peirce is nevertheless commonly referred to as the "founder"[26] of Pragmatism. It is true that Peirce was responsible for introducing the term "pragmatism" to the philosophical literature,[27] but in the end he opted to separate himself from both the term and the approach which it was increasingly becoming associated with, which was that of James.[28]

Due to the stark differences between the philosophy of Peirce and James, there were those who considered James to have been the "real" founder of Pragmatism,[29] who ultimately took the important notion of relating truth to practical implementation which Peirce had stumbled upon and developed it into a powerful philosophical principle in its own right.[30] One such person was Ferdinand Canning Scott (F.C.S.) Schiller.

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[26] See Robert Burch, "Charles Sanders Peirce" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/peirce/ for an example of how standard it is. Modern Peirceans, such as Haack and Misak, also repeat this; see Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry: Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1997), 201, and Cheryl Misak, "Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914" in *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce,* ed. Cheryl Misak (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

[27] A.J. Ayer, *The Origins of Pragmatism* (San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper & Company, 1968), 3.

[28] Ibid.

[29] See Schiller, *Must Philosophers Disagree?* (1934), 95, where he names James as Pragmatism's "real progenitor."

[30] See *Studies in Humanism*, ix, where Schiller attributes the formulation of "our present Pragmatism" to James in saying that "the central thought of our present Pragmatism, to wit the purposiveness of our thought and the teleological character of its methods, should have been clearly stated by Professor James so long ago as 1879." This refers to an 1879 essay by James (published in the year following Peirce's seminal "How To Make Our Ideas Clear") entitled "The Sentiment of Rationality." Also, in *Axioms as Postulates*, Schiller attributes the naming of Pragmatism to James when he says that "the whole subsequent argument has already had its main lines mapped out by our introductory discussion of the *Weltanschauung* which Prof James has called *pragmatism* and *radical empiricism*" (p. 63, italics original).

1.3.1 F.C.S. Schiller[31]

Ferdinand Canning Scott (F.C.S.) Schiller was born on August 16th, 1864, in Germany and studied at Rugby and Balliol College, Oxford, then taught German language at Eton College before returning to Oxford to complete his M.A. In 1893, Schiller left Oxford to study at Cornell University where he was an unsuccessful Ph.D. candidate but was subsequently called back to Oxford in 1897 where he served as an assistant tutor at Corpus Christi College, eventually earning his D.Sc. in 1906 and being appointed fellow. Schiller also served as treasurer of the Mind Association, became president of the Society for Psychical Research in 1914, the president of the Aristotelian Society in 1921, and fellow of the British Academy in 1926 – the same year that he began to spend part of the year at the University of Southern California, first as a visiting lecturer and then eventually as a professor in 1929. In 1935, he made the permanent move to California and married a fellow member of the faculty at USC, Louise Strang Griswold. Schiller died in California on August 9th, 1937, just shy of turning 73. Schiller was an incredibly prolific and persistent writer throughout his career, producing ten books on philosophy (along with well over a hundred book chapters, papers, essays, and book reviews. It should also be noted that, due largely to his embrace of Darwinism, Schiller took an interest in the field of eugenics, which had just emerged in the first decades of the

[31] The following brief biography of Schiller is compiled from three sources: (1) Schiller's obituary, as published in *Nature* on September 11, 1937 (140, pp. 454–455), (2) *The Pragmatic Humanism of F.C.S. Schiller*, authored by Reuben Abel in 1955 (pp. 3-13), and (3) the entry for Schiller, also written by Abel, in the 2006 *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., edited by Donald M. Borchert (Vol. 8., pp. 623-626).

twentieth century, writing three books on the topic – one in 1924,[32] and two in 1926.[33] Although the topic of eugenics (or any related concern) does not appear anywhere in his philosophical writings on Pragmatism, which comprises the vast majority of his corpus, it is nevertheless an unfortunate part of his later work.

Schiller originally developed his formulation of Pragmatism (similar to that of James) independently[34] while at Oxford, where he spent much of his time arguing with exponents of the philosophical movements at the time, such as positivism and idealism – and such argumentation would continue for the duration of his career. But it wasn't until he encountered the writings of James during the time that he was across the pond in the United States, studying at Cornell, that his prominence and profile as a pragmatist philosopher began. Schiller's attraction to James was immediate because of the affinities between his own position (which he had been calling "personalism" and "humanism") and that of James's "pragmatism,"[35] and particularly his "will to believe" idea. This eventually led to a lifelong collaboration and friendship[36] in which James and Schiller viewed themselves as a philosophical team[37] engaged in the general reformation of

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[32] *Tantalus, or The Future of Man* (1924)

[33] *Eugenics and Politics* (1926) and *Cassandra, of the Future of the British Empire* (1926; later published in 1936 under the title "The Future of the British Empire–After Ten Years")

[34] See *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, ix.

[35] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 75.

[36] The closeness and admiration of Schiller for James can be seen in the dedications of his *Humanism, Philosophical Essays* (1903), which reads "To my dear friend, the humanest of philosophers, William James, without whose example and unfailing encouragement this book would never have been written," and of his *Formal Logic* (1912) which states "To the memory of the Last Great Liberator of the Human Spirit, William James" and is followed by an inscription in Greek (εἷς ἐμοὶ μύριοι, ἐὰν ἄριστος ᾖ), which is a passage from Heraclitus (292) that translates to "one counts for more than ten thousand, if he is noble."

[37] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 75.

philosophy itself, united against the likes of Russell and Moore.[38] The main thrust of this reformation was the Radical Empiricism, mentioned above, along with the "will to believe," or what Schiller referred to as "the right to postulate,"[39] which is a description of the way in which organisms formulate and choose hypotheses ("postulates") which are then subjected to testing and verification within the course of experience.[40]

Due to mostly unknown factors,[41] and despite continual and avid mention by James in both *Pragmatism*[42] and *The Meaning of Truth*,[43] Schiller has been largely forgotten and ignored by not only the larger philosophical community, but by many pragmatist scholars as well. This dissertation is an effort to reintroduce the pragmatist ideas of Schiller to the philosophical world, not for the immediate purposes of answering problems raised by Stich (see below) in the Philosophy of Cognitive Science only, but to provide a presentation such that interested parties may read through the central three chapters (2, 3, and 4) and gain a general understanding of Schiller's Pragmatism at a basic level.

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[38] Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 75.

[39] See *Logic For Use*, 338 and 340, as well as *Axioms as Postulates*, 90 and 91.

[40] Ibid.

[41] It may be that Schiller's reputation as a "rude… and biting satirist" (Misak, *Cambridge Pragmatism*, 75-76) who routinely leveled jibes and jokes at his interlocutors had something to do with his works having been ignored subsequent to his passing. However, Schiller would not be the first philosopher to engage in such exchanges with his contemporaries and is likely among the most vocal and prolific of them. It seems likely that the circumstances are an aggregate of unknown factors that led to him slipping through cracks, as it were, rather than a concerted effort to ignore or suppress his work.

[42] Schiller is mentioned by name 25 times in *Pragmatism*, many of which are enthusiastic endorsements of his published work and formulations of pragmatic philosophy.

[43] Schiller is mentioned by name 34 times in *The Meaning of Truth*.

In this dissertation, "Pragmatism" will be used to specifically refer to the philosophical system of Schiller, which is heavily associated with the philosophy of James.[44]

1.4 The "Pragmatic Turn"

Over the past several decades, Cognitive Science has been experiencing a "pragmatic turn," the nature and extent of which have not yet been settled among cognitive scientists and philosophers of cognitive science. The content of and occasion for this "turn" comes from an examination of the philosophy of the classical pragmatists, such as James, Schiller, Dewey, Peirce, and Mead, and a consideration of how pragmatic models and conceptions help to explain and reorient Cognitive Science at its philosophic base. While writers such as Engel, et al,[45] and Dominey, et al,[46] restrict the current arc of the pragmatic turn specifically to models of cognition (i.e. moving away from representationalistic assumptions and toward enactive, or action-oriented, frameworks), others such as Gallagher[47] have begun to recognize a fundamental philosophical

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[44] This designation leaves Dewey's Pragmatism aside, though mostly for historical reasons. James and Schiller were close colleagues and operated as a kind of "team," a dynamic that did not exist between either of them or Dewey. Thus, "Pragmatism" as I use it here could certainly be inclusive of Dewey's ideas and approach, but operatively, for present purposes, it does not.

[45] Engel, Andreas K., Karl J. Friston, and Danice Kragic. "Introduction: Where's the Action?" in *The Pragmatic Turn: Toward Action-Oriented Views in Cognitive Science*, eds. Andreas K. Engel, Karl J. Friston, and Danice Kragic (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2022), 1-15.

[46] Dominey, Peter F., Tony J. Prescott, Jeanette Bohg, Andreas K. Engel, Shaun Gallagher, Tobias Heed, Matej Hoffman, Gunther Knoblich, Wolfgang Prinz, and Andrew Schwartz. "Implications of Action-Oriented Paradigm Shifts in Cognitive Science," in *The Pragmatic Turn: Toward Action-Oriented Views in Cognitive Science*, eds. Andreas K. Engel, Karl J. Friston, and Danice Kragic (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2022), 333-356

[47] See Gallagher, "Pragmatism in Cognitive Science: Before and After Enactivism." Presentation at *Colloque international et multidisciplinaire 2021* at the University of Montreal on August 24, 2021

relationship between Pragmatism and Cognitive Science, which implies both an earlier beginning to the current turn, as well as a broader scope for its impact than merely a focus on cognition-as-action.

This dissertation project takes the broader view of the relationship between Pragmatism and Cognitive Science and seeks to contribute to the ongoing "turn" by presenting an approach to *truth* that fits within the broader enactivist paradigm.[48]

1.5 Stich, The Fragmentation of Reason, and Truth

In his 1990 book, *The Fragmentation of Reason*, philosopher and cognitive scientist Stephen Stich promotes the adoption of what he calls an "epistemic pragmatism," that is, a "pragmatic account of cognitive evaluation."[49] To this end, Stich argues that, when evaluating cognitive systems (that is, when assessing human cognitive performance), we should adopt a pragmatic standard of belief, that is, we ought to evaluate beliefs by their usefulness relative to the agent's values, nothing more. Stich settles on such a proposal after arriving at the conclusion that *truth and true beliefs have no value whatsoever*, and that "once we have a clear view of the matter, most of us will not find any value, either

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(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iybh1kpHhUc), as well as "Phenomenology and Pragmatism: From the End to the Beginning," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, 2022, Vol. XIV (2).

[48] For enactivism, everything relevant to the cognition of an organism arises from the dynamic interactions of the organism–environment system. Since truth is relevant to human cognition, it needs to be explained in terms of this system.

[49] Stephen Stich, *The Fragmentation of Reason: Preface to a Pragmatic Theory of Cognitive Evaluation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1990), 24.

intrinsic or instrumental, in having true beliefs."[50] Refuting this general conclusion regarding truth serves as the impetus to this project.

Stich arrives at his admittedly startling conclusion about truth on the basis of what I have decided to call a "predicament" and a "dilemma":

i. The *predicament* regards the nature and application of traditional analytic theories of truth, especially correspondence-type theories. Stich's attempt at operationalizing analytic notions of truth via formal interpretation functions meets with limitations and idiosyncrasies,[51] such that the various considerations involved with the construction and deployment of interpretation functions terminate in decidedly subjective considerations. For Stich, this signals "the failure of the analytic strategy" in ascertaining objective truth.

ii. The *dilemma* arises from the perception that there is an essential and unavoidable bifurcation between truth and practical success, which is typical of objectivist conceptions of truth. The apparent choice according to Stich is that while we may want truth we cannot ascertain it, but we can ascertain what our goals and values are. Thus, the question of how to evaluate cognitive systems becomes one of either optimization for objective truth or the attainment of values (goals;

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[50] Ibid, 101.

[51] See *Fragmentation*, 130, where Stich states that, per his efforts, "analytic… accounts of cognitive assessment came to grief," leading to a complete "failure of the analytic strategy" to isolate objectively truth or any such objective criterion for true beliefs.

purposes) and, especially if the predicament stands, it makes sense to opt for a focus on the latter.

In this project, I will affirm Stich's *predicament* while rejecting his *dilemma*, and in effect will be resolving both. This resolution will involve rejecting the objectivist notion of truth-as-correspondence (or "mapping") that Stich assumes, as well as rejecting the brand of "pragmatism" that he endorses as the solution to his predicament.

A fuller explanation of Stich's predicament and dilemma will be presented in chapter 2.

1.5.1 Stich's "Pragmatism": Pseudo-Pragmatism

The conclusion of *Fragmentation* is that Cognitive Science should adopt, in Stich's words, "a proposal that is in the spirit of pragmatism."[52] One might think that the qualifier "in the spirit" should indicate something that is *like* Pragmatism *but isn't*. However, after this initial hedge, Stich proceeds to unqualifiedly refer to his proposal as a "pragmatic alternative" (i.e. an alternative to traditional analytic epistemology) and a "pragmatist account."[53] But without a theory of truth that isn't eliminationist or skeptical, Pragmatism becomes something like crass expediency or what Haack refers to as "vulgar

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[52] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 129.

[53] On page 131 of *Fragmentation*, Stich insists that his account "grows out of the pragmatist tradition," but never gives any indication as to *which* "pragmatist tradition" he is referring to. Likewise, he also states that "pragmatists will insist," but again, *which* "pragmatists" is he referring to? Those who subscribe to his view or those who subscribe to the views of classical pragmatists like James and Schiller? Without giving much of an indication of where he is drawing from or whom he is referring to, along with the fact that no classical pragmatists dispense with truth, I can only conclude that Stich is overreaching here in the identification of his own views with those of Pragmatism.

pragmatism."[54] In other words, it isn't Pragmatism at all, but something else. The central concern of Pragmatism is truth; what it is and how it is arrived at—to reject truth as Stich does is to reject Pragmatism itself.

Stich describes his own account of cognitive evaluation as "consequentialist," that is, concerned with the consequences of actions, and views cognitive processes as "akin to technologies" which are useful for the achievement of various goals. From the standpoint of authentic Pragmatism, this is so far so good. But once he takes the step of declaring truth to be irrelevant and without any kind of value, he is no longer a fellow-traveler with pragmatists, but is on a different train entirely. To be sure, Stich is on the right track, but without regard for truth, he can have no criterion of error or falsity – and subsequently crass expediency becomes the order of the day. And even if Stich would like to object that his system does not abide crass expediency, he is left without much recourse. In fact, to do so, he would need to invoke some kind of category under which beliefs are placed, albeit in degrees, which distinguish them from those which are false – and call it what you want, that category is "truth."

The main problem, as will be shown, is the assumption of an objectivist notion of truth at the outset *and* that the only way to determine this truth is by analytical means. But if there is nothing to stop truth-seekers from adopting one analytic system of truth-determination over another, then even if there is a supposedly single, universal, absolute, and objective Truth, we are left with a clamor of formalisms, each with their own truth-conditions (i.e. producing TRUTH, TRUTH*, TRUTH**, and so on after their own

[54] Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry*, 202.

particular criteria), claiming to yield Truth, but which are clearly different – and sometimes even mutually exclusive. This leads to what Stich calls the "'who cares' complaint":

> "Without some reason for thinking that true beliefs stand us in better stead than TRUE* ones, or TRUE** ones, and all the rest, it is hard to see why anyone would care whether his beliefs are true rather than, say, TRUE****. Moreover, if you don't care whether your beliefs are true rather than TRUE****, if attach no greater value to having true beliefs rather than TRUE***** ones, you're not likely to care whether your cognitive processes lead to true beliefs rather than TRUE***** ones."[55]

The choice of a formal analytic theory of truth terminates in subjective considerations which are relative to purposes, and as Stich notes, human reasoners do not seem to be particularly concerned about the analytic exactness of their truths, and philosophers do not seem to be able to objectively determine which interpretation function is the final and correct one. As such, Stich makes the move to not caring about truth at all and posits that since we cannot in any reliable way determine what Truth is, but we can reliably determine what our values and goals might be, the best answer to the "'who cares' complaint" is to only care about goals and entirely set aside any kind of truth category.

[55] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 131.

Thus, for Stich, not unironically, the objectivist conception of truth leads to its rejection in practice.

In this dissertation, I reject the thesis that truth is of no value and maintain that it is only the wider distinction between truths and errors which serves to distinguish between Pragmatism and "pragmatism". Throughout this project, I have decided to make a semantic distinction between the authentic and principled Pragmatism of James and Schiller, which not only values truth but makes it their primary concern, and the consequentialist program of expediency proposed by Stich. The former will be called by its name, Pragmatism, while the latter will be called pseudo-pragmatism, to keep it separate from its historical and philosophical sense.[56]

1.5.2 The Difference Truth Makes

In 2000, Mišćević wrote a critique aimed in large part at the conclusions of Stich in *Fragmentation* regarding the value (viz. worthlessness) of truth.[57] In it, he takes what he calls the "relativist-pragmatist" position of Stich (and others) to consist of three basic tenets:

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[56] Schiller already makes such a distinction, cf. "Pragmatism and Pseudo-Pragmatism" in *Mind* 15, 59 (July 1906): 375-390, esp. 382.

[57] See Nenad Mišćević, *Rationality and Cognition: Against Relativism-Pragmatism* (Buffalo, New York: University of Toronto Press, 2000). In chapter 1, the author refers to Stich as a "protagonist" of the relativist-pragmatist interpretation of cognitive science; in chapter 6 he refers to Stich as one of his main "interlocutors"; in the preface, he mentions that *Fragmentation of Reason* served as a central impetus for the project of his book.

1. *The Irrelevance of Truth*: There is no common goal of cognition because truth is irrelevant.
2. *Radical Descriptive Pluralism*: There are many radically different cognitive strategies and styles.
3. *The Incomparability Assumption*: Since there is no common goal, the strategies are mutually incompatible.[58]

Against these tenets, Mišćević proposes the following:

a. Truth (or some related item from the truth family) is the goal of cognition in a naturalistically respectable way.
b. Although cognitive strategies are diverse, they are goal-comparable, and they might also be structurally comparable.

Now, while the details of Mišćević's particular project[59] are beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that, opposed as I am to Stich's position on truth, I can fully-affirm Mišćević's (a) and (b). As a pragmatist, I also affirm that the common goal of cognition is *truth* (albeit not of the absolutist or objectivist variety, if such were possible), and I likewise affirm that despite the differences in our cognitive strategies,

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[58] Mišćević*, Rationality and Cognition*, 135 and 227.
[59] One page 228 of *Rationality and Cognition*, Mišćević concludes on the basis of his counterproposals (a) and (b) that: "Therefore, the criteria centered around the truth family can ground a common normative core for a naturalistic epistemology." As such, I have little to no truck with Mišćević's stated project, and his arguments in favor of a traditionally cognitivist and formalist epistemology have little to no purchase with my project.

common goals mediate and mitigate between them, and our common embodiment (i.e. sharing a physiology) makes them structurally comparable as well. So, if it were not for Stich's rejection of truth in the name of his so-called "pragmatic alternative," I wonder what Mišćević would have written – but that speculation will have to be reserved for another essay altogether. Nonetheless, the simple admission that truth is valuable is what unites a traditional cognitivist such as Mišćević and a thoroughgoing pragmatist-enactivist such as myself. And indeed, truth is the common goal of cognition and, if it is valued, forming beliefs based upon it and acting in accordance with it is the practice of the rational and the prudent.

Pseudo-pragmatism operates on the basis of a disregard for facts. Of course, Stich would likely object to this characterization. I don't think he would have much of a leg to stand on should he do so, however, given his straightforward statements about truth having no value whatsoever, either intrinsic or instrumental. Stich describes his position as "consequentialist" and concerned with the achievement of goals and values – all supposedly without any concern for truth. The question then becomes: How will such a position relate to *facts*? Will it care about them? If so, how? Schiller describes truths as arising from *facts*, which have in turn arisen (or have been constructed) from *data* – pragmatist or not, this general process seems intuitive – we collect data to determine the facts, then based on the facts we arrive at truths, and this process is ongoing.

But how do facts fit into a consequentialist, goals-only (pseudo-pragmatic) approach where truth is not relevant? Caring only about consequences with respect to goals (sans any concern for truth) means that either (i) facts *do not* matter, or (ii) facts *do* matter and relevant facts may conceivably be things like "despite being aware of *x*, I

judge that I could still get away with *y*" (*x* being some piece of information that, if heeded, would inhibit the goal or action represented by *y*), "if I can keep so-and-so away from awareness of *x*, then I may be able to obtain *y*," and so on. It would seem that to care about avoiding errors or lies, or even to define "errors" and "lies" (as opposed to simply "failures" to get what one set out to obtain, by whatever means), then truth must at the very least exist as a category. Really, *truth* as a category (however it is or isn't called) seems to be essentially inevitable precisely because we *do* discriminate between truth and lies, between our best accounts of what is or was the case and what is or was not. Pseudo-pragmatism may claim not to do so and may insist that truth is irrelevant and has no value, but as soon as pseudo-pragmatists care about whether they make errors, or whether they tell lies or are being lied to, they need a category to make sense of that, to name what it is that they desire in the place of lies and errors: and that category is truth.

I do not think it is possible to not care about facts or to refrain from constructing them in any sustainable way. The *data* → *facts* → *truths* process noted above is simply part of how humans cognize and make sense of the world. Our data set may be defective, our facts may be constructed poorly against background beliefs inimical to many of our goals,[60] and the truths (admittedly in a fallibilistic, pragmatic sense) we arrive at may not serve us as long or as reliably as we would hope, but as we navigate our environment, the *data* → *facts* → *truths* process continues so long as we are alive. And it goes on in one of four ways: (i) while caring about truth (i.e. as opposed to error), (ii) while in denial (i.e. a state of "ignorance is bliss"), which ironically admits that there is more to know than one

[60] The construction of facts from data will be discussed further in chapter 2 (esp. 2.3.3).

is currently aware of, (iii) while caring about truth, but only in as much as it serves one's own immediate goals – i.e. the interest or person of others be damned, or (iv) under some kind of mental duress (such as schizophrenia) where the disruption of this process prevents a person from obtaining or deriving facts (and perhaps even apprehending data), to no fault of their own. In (i), (ii), and (iii), the knower admits of a category of "truth," even if tacitly, and likewise is aware of the business of constructing or deriving facts from data, and in (iv) the knower may certainly admit it as well. It is not clear how either the basic category of *truth* or a concern for *facts* is avoidable in any principled way. A purely consequentialist view of cognition that supposedly does not include a category of truth (and by extension, facts) doesn't seem plausible.

Pragmatism, though it rejects an objectivist account of truth, nevertheless upholds it as a category after its own conception. Pragmatic truth is continually updatable and subject to revision, and the pragmatist attempts to achieve their goals on the basis of (i.e. in concert with) the facts as they best understand them – not by ignoring them or in spite of them. Accounting for all known and relevant facts means caring about truth, and even a fallibilist, relativist, constructivist, pragmatic truth allows one to make sense of errors, lies, fictions, epistemic rigor, serious inquiry, and so on. As Haack, herself a pragmatist, has duly noted, "each of the concepts of inquiry, justification, and belief is internally connected with the concept of truth."[61] In other words, in order to coherently make a whole host of distinctions, one needs a category of truth – whether it be called "truth," as James and Schiller opted for, or whether it be called "warranted assertability," as Dewey

[61] Haack, *Evidence and Inquiry*, 199.

suggested. Something has to take that conceptual place, and simply claiming to not care about it in some kind of consequentialist fashion is not enough.

1.5.3 Answering Stich

The central claims of Stich's argument (S) are:

i. S: *Assessing beliefs in terms of truth is impossible.*
ii. S: *There is an intractable divide between truth and practical success.*
iii. S: *Truth and true beliefs have no value whatsoever.*
iv. S: *We (cognitive scientists) should adopt a pragmatic standard of belief.*

As can be seen, claim (i) is Stich's predicament, and claim (ii) is his dilemma. Claim (iii) is his conclusion based on the predicament surrounding (i), and finally, claim (iv) is what he concludes based on (i), (ii), and (iii).

In this project, as I have already said, I will be seeking to provide enough information and material from Schiller's (and James's) formulation of Pragmatism on issues of truth and metaphysics to answer these four claims. These will be discussed explicitly and in more detail in the first part of chapter 3, but then will be revisited again in chapter 5.

1.6 Project Thesis

The basic thesis of this project, responding to the four claims of Stich above, is:

i. Assessing beliefs in terms of truth *is* possible, albeit not analytically, but pragmatically.

ii. There is *not* an intractable divide between truth and practical success, at least not one which would require a person to choose exclusively between truth and achieving their goals and values.

iii. Truth is not only valuable but is the central value of cognition.

iv. The most appropriate conception of truth for Cognitive Science (that is, for the cognitive domain) is a properly pragmatic one (especially that put forward by F.C.S. Schiller).[62]

As already mentioned, I will fully address Stich's four central claims in chapter 5.

1.7 The General Format of the Project

The general format of this project, in terms of its style and depth, will be similar to many traditional treatises which address the topic of truth. It will promote and explain a particular theory of truth (the Pragmatic Theory of Truth), offer an account of the metaphysics which accompany it, and address common or possible objections to it.[63]

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[62] Although as a pragmatist the only theory of truth to which I subscribe is a properly pragmatic one, across all areas of knowledge, the specific focus of this dissertation and the case it makes should be understood within the narrower scope of the cognitive domain, as understood in enactive terms.

[63] See the beginning of the next chapter for a list of texts on the topic of truth which are generally structured after this fashion.

Though it may provide examples and thought experiments in practical terms which are designed to illustrate various points, it will ultimately remain theoretical. That is to say, the application of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth to any particular area remains outside the scope of this project, and any implications of the theory which are addressed, will bottom out, as it were, in a discussion of metaphysics (pragmatically understood, of course). In this way, I have been inspired by Horwich,[64] Englebretsen,[65] and Ayer.[66]

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[64] E.g. *truth* (Oxford, 1998)

[65] E.g. *Bare Facts and Naked Truths: A New Correspondence Theory of Truth* (Routledge, 2006)

[66] E.g. *Language, Truth and Logic* (Dover, 1952)

Chapter 2 – Pragmatic Metaphysics

Chapter overview:

The purpose of this chapter is to present a general pragmatic approach to metaphysics, especially the approach of Schiller regarding the nature, function, and content of metaphysical speculations, as well as relating his approach to that of Kuhn in *Structure*. The comments of Devitt on metaphysical realism and incommensurability are used as the occasion for accomplishing this purpose, since what he writes regarding his Realism/Constructivism distinction sets up a ready framework in which to contrast the traditional analytic, objectivist approach to metaphysics with the pragmatic approach.

Introduction

In most traditional analytic discussions of truth, metaphysical theories which may be related to theories of truth are also discussed (e.g. Ayer 1952; Armstrong 1973; Putnam 1981; Devitt 1984; Kirkham 1992; Schmitt 1995; Horwich 1998; Englebretsen 2006;

Burgess and Burgess 2011[67]), and I will be doing likewise here. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly discuss (and come down on one side of) the Realism-Constructivism debate, especially in light of the cognitive science of perception, and then to present an overview of pragmatic metaphysics generally and Schiller's metaphysical schema of reality in particular. Finally, I will discuss how the pragmatic approach to metaphysics and the basic Schillerian schema of reality actually replace the negatively-valenced "gap" placed by the traditional objectivist approach between human thinking and an absolute reality with a positively-valenced "expanse" between current and future truths, which helps us to avoid entrenchment and spurs us toward progress in human knowledge.

2.1 Constructivist Metaphysics and Incommensurability

[67] These volumes on the topic of truth, also contains discussions of metaphysics (by publication year):

1. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (Dover, 1952) – discusses metaphysics (albeit their "elimination") in chapter 1 and truth in chapter 5.
2. Armstrong, *Belief, Truth, and Knowledge* (Cambridge, 1973) – Part II, chapter 9, is dedicated to a discussion of truth and metaphysics.
3. Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (Cambridge, 1981) – discusses metaphysics in chapter 6 and truth in chapters 2 and 3.
4. Devitt, *Realism & Truth* (Basil Blackwell, 1991) – the title here says it all, but it discusses truth and metaphysics together in Part II, chapters 2-7.
5. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth* (MIT, 1992) – discusses metaphysics in chapter 3 and theories of truth in chapters 4, 5, and 8.
6. Schmitt, *Truth: A Primer* (Westview, 1995) – metaphysics is discussed at the outset in chapter 1 and then theories of truth are discussed in chapters 3-6.
7. Horwich, *truth* (Oxford, 1998) – discusses metaphysics in chapter 4 and truth in chapters 1-3.
8. Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths: A New Correspondence Theory of Truth* (Routledge, 2006) – the discussion of metaphysics occurs throughout the text, interspersed with discussions of various aspects of the correspondence theory of truth, but there are concentrations in the introduction, the ends of chapters 2 and 3, and chapters 4 and 5 where the focus is metaphysics.
9. Burgess and Burgess, *TRUTH* (Princeton, 2011) – discusses metaphysics in chapter 5 and 6, and truth in chapters 1-3.

In his "Incommensurability and the Priority of Metaphysics" (2010),[68] Devitt argues against all forms of Constructivism on the basis of a commonsense Realism. Constructivism, as defined by Devitt, is the notion that,

> "The only independent reality is beyond the reach of our knowledge and language. A known world is partly constructed by the imposition of concepts. These concepts differ from (linguistic, social, scientific, etc.) group to group and the worlds of groups differ. Each such world exists only relative to an imposition of concepts."[69]

Although this formulation does not reflect the exact position taken by Schiller in his basic Pragmatic metaphysics, on comparison there is enough commonality between them to definitively exclude Pragmatism from Devitt's Realist camp and place it firmly into a Constructivist one. As he explains there,[70] in not so many words, Constructivism (as Devitt understands it) is made up of three basic ideas: (1) any independent reality is beyond our knowledge and language, (2) reality as known by us is constituted partly by us and partly by an independent reality, and (3) relativism. Though, as will be seen, Schiller takes issue with Kantian metaphysical assumptions, these three ideas (or

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[68] This essay was published as the fifth chapter of *Putting Metaphysics First: Essays on Metaphysics and Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 99-120.

[69] Devitt, "Incommensurability," 102. In the Preface to the same volume, Devitt gives a brief definition of Constructivism as "the neo-Kantian metaphysical doctrine of '*Constructivism*' according to which we make 'phenomenal' worlds with our theories. Different theories make different worlds; so the worlds we live in are theory-relative" (4).

[70] "Incommensurability," 101-102.

something very similar to them) are the scaffolding of Pragmatic metaphysics such that, when Devitt takes aim at "Constructivism", he is aiming at Pragmatism as well.

The focal point of his criticisms is the principle of *incommensurability* put forward by Kuhn and Feyerabend,[71] which is the idea that the conceptions and experience of the world between competing paradigms involve such a thoroughgoing self-referential[72] set of terms, concepts, theories, and sense of reality, that they are incommensurable in that they cannot be translated one into the other.[73] As Kuhn writes in *Structure*, "the most fundamental aspect of the incommensurability [is that]... the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds."[74] Thus, maintains Devitt, because members of competing paradigms live in different worlds,[75]

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[71] Though Devitt notes the connection of *incommensurability* with each of them, he makes it clear that the focus of his criticisms will primarily be with the formulations of Kuhn in *Structure*.

[72] That is, *paradigm*-referential.

[73] In *Road*, Kuhn clarifies that in using "translation" to describe incommensurability, he did not intend to conflate *translation* and *interpretation*, as he considers his critics to have done (which he ultimately traces to Quine's "radical translator"). On page 38, Kuhn notes that while translation is an activity of systematic substitution engaged in by someone who knows two (or more) languages, interpretation is the enterprise of historians and anthropologists, and an individual engaging in it may only have command of a single language at first but attempts to derive the meaning of an initially unintelligible group of symbols by observing associated behaviors and contexts. As Kuhn explains there, these are fundamentally different processes, and even where *translation* is possible, it does not entail (or even require) *interpretation* – and it is not this thin sense of "translation" (i.e. of merely substituting words associated with one paradigm for those associated with another) that Kuhn intended when speaking of the incommensurability between paradigms. Of course, this kind of simple verbal translation can be accomplished, and it often is in classrooms when one is teaching the history of science and human knowledge (as Kuhn there notes), but "translation" is in the fuller sense of being enabled by interpretation requires acquaintance with the world of the other, and thus paradigm shifts are compared to *gestalt* shifts (see *Structure*, 150). Incidentally, Devitt makes this same mistake in criticizing incommensurability by referring to it as "a semantic doctrine" (see there, 102), when it is not. Paradigms are not semantic entities, but encompass the perspectives, practices, and experiential ways of observing the world – yes, they involve matrices of linguistic terms, but this no more makes paradigms semantic entities than the use of language to describe plant science makes horticultural theory merely a matter of semantics.

[74] *Structure*, 150.

[75] I cannot here go into all the ways that Devitt misconstrues and misapprehends the nature of paradigms and what incommensurability actually implies, but it bears mentioning that in his essay he reduces

each constructing their realities, there is no way that they can agree or disagree about common objects. As he writes, "they cannot agree or disagree about *x* or *F*s because they are not talking about the same *x* or *F*s."[76] For Devitt, agreement or disagreement – or any meaningful communication at all – between inhabitants of disparate paradigms cannot take place unless they each posit the existence of the same objects which exist absolutely, such that there is no change of world when changing between theories.[77] This makes Realism the only viable option for a coherent metaphysics of science that isn't a "disaster."[78] Only under an objectivist realist set of assumptions, posits Devitt, is any theory comparison possible. Constructivism necessarily shuts out the proponents of competing paradigms, or even competing theories, from any meaningful negotiation with one another.

Now, this is certainly overstated.[79] Constructivism and incommensurability do not necessitate a complete impasse when communicating between theories, or even entire paradigms. Rather, as Kuhn notes, such communication is merely difficult and takes

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competing paradigms to "rival comprehensive theories" (see there, 103), which is a stripped-back and narrow notion in comparison to what paradigms are actually meant to encompass and imply. Kuhn describes paradigms as the conceptual structure of any period of "normal science" that include laws, theories, applications, and instrumentation together as they are instantiated within a given scientific community (see *Structure*, 11). Thus, paradigms are for their inhabitants all-encompassing, and this is why Kuhn associates them with fundamental conceptions or experiences of reality, and not mere theories, comprehensive or otherwise.

[76] Devitt, "Incommensurability and the Priority of Metaphysics," 103.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] In *Road*, 34, Kuhn notes that: "Most of all discussions of incommensurability have depended upon the literally correct but regularly overinterpreted assumption that, if two theories are incommensurable, they must be stated in mutually untranslatable languages." And Devitt is certainly no exception. See footnote 67 above for an explanation of why this assumption is incorrect and goes too far.

place in large jumps between conceptions based on the willingness of participants to shift their conceptions and cannot "be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience."[80] Since no experience is "neutral," but necessarily tied to an individual perspective, there will always be resistance and communication will be difficult, but not impossible. As Kuhn, in the same section, clarifies:

> "To say that resistance is inevitable and legitimate… is not to say that no arguments are relevant or that scientists cannot be persuaded to change their minds. Though a generation is sometimes required to effect the change, scientific communities have again and again been converted to new paradigms. Furthermore, these conversions occur not despite the fact that scientists are human but because they are."[81]

Pragmatically, even in the most dire of communicative circumstances where interlocutors share neither a language nor common cultural context, minimal communication that is *good enough* for accomplishing purposes is possible, despite difficulty.[82] Popper likewise

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[80] *Structure*, 150.

[81] Ibid, 152.

[82] Christiansen and Chater (2022, 2016) describe language as a collaborative game and cite the example of crew members of the HMS Endeavour effectively communicating with an indigenous people known as the Haush, with whom they shared nothing in common regarding language or culture, using only gestures and non-linguistic sounds.

criticized the overstatement of incommensurability,[83] stating that its proponents "put before us standards of mutual understanding which are unrealistically high,"[84] and that:

> "I contend that it is a most dangerous exaggeration to say that a fruitful discussion is *impossible* unless the participants share a common framework, [but] I am very ready to admit that a discussion among participants who do not share a common framework may be *difficult*. A discussion will also be difficult if the frameworks have little in common. And it will be easier the greater the overlap between frameworks."[85]

Again, communication between paradigms, perspectives, or frameworks may be *difficult* but not *impossible*, a fact that Kuhn himself made clear in subsequent discussions of *Structure*.[86] Thus, Constructivism does not entail communicative paralysis or an inhibition to developing understanding, or any kind of perceptual solipsism, as Devitt implies. Paradigms and perspectives are often bridged by those inhabiting them, and this

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[83] Popper, in his *The Myth of the Framework: In Defense of Science and Rationality* (New York: Routledge, 1994), takes as the object of his criticism relativism in general, which he considers to be spurred on by assumptions about underlying "frameworks," which are something like Kuhnian paradigms. In *Myth*, Popper has in mind the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (p. 49), Quine's ontological relativity (p. 50), and Kuhn's incommensurability thesis (pp. 54-56), among others whom he describes as "relativists."

[84] Popper, *The Myth of the Framework*, 33.

[85] Ibid, 35.

[86] On page 53 of *Road*, Kuhn explains that, even when the initial possibility of translation is unavailable, "communication can be established in its absence."

occurs quite regularly in human discourse. The nature of agreement and disagreement between paradigms and individual perspectives will be discussed further in chapter 4.

2.2 Realism and Perception

Devitt defines Realism as:

"*Realism*: Tokens of most commonsense, and scientific, physical types objectively exist independently of the mental."

His definition of Constructivism is a bit idiosyncratic, the details of which are less important and lie beyond the scope of the present chapter.[87] Suffice it to say, however, for Devitt Constructivism is any conception of reality and perception that does not meet the definition of Realism. But realism in perception, conceived of as involving a world-independent mind passively receiving information from a mind-independent (absolute or objective) world, is an untenable conclusion in light of current cognitive science, as it is overwhelmingly recognized that perception and cognition – indeed, our entire phenomenological experience of reality – is *constructed*, or at least partially so.

Everything that enters our experience is a construction of our perceptual and cognitive systems based on the interaction between our bodies and our environments.

[87] Devitt attributes Constructivism to Kantian assumptions about a distinction between noumenal and phenomenal worlds, along with an additional assumption of perceptual relativism. He then adds on top of these claims a framing of them in terms of knowledge and language, making it into a discussion of semantics. Constructivism in general, and especially that espoused by pragmatists like Schiller, does *not* rely on Kantian assumptions and is *not* concerned with rationalistic conceptions of knowledge and language, as Devitt clearly is. As such, I have decided to set aside Devitt's cluster of assumptions when dealing with Constructivism and to focus on non-realist theories generally.

Nothing is ever completely "in the world" or "in our brains," but is rather the complex product of the interaction between them, arising from an amalgamation of past experiences and current stimuli in what is known as "predictive processing" (sometimes called "predictive coding"). Under predictive processing, there is an embodied, constant dynamical interaction between an organism and its environment, through which its various systems develop expectations, upon which they create predictions, and which is then used to construct the reality that it experiences. When current stimuli meet the preponderance of expectations in their many associations throughout active memory and sensorimotor integration, then reality is experienced as constructed (predicted) and the organism continues in its course without adjustment or question, and when current stimuli do not meet expectations in their associations, this results in "prediction errors," which then are used to "update" the relevant systems to form more accurate predictions. This is *not* a passive process, nor is it static, but it is constant and active, forming the interactional basis on which organisms navigate their environments. Perception is thus a (mostly) top-down inference, in essence creating what we "should" expect to experience rather than a bottom-up uploading of what is objectively in the environment.

But predictive processing is not merely the newest cognitive-scientific stand-in for the passive calculation of traditional ideas of mind. Predictive processing is the informational infrastructure which underlies the actual functioning of our various sensing systems, in that it is the metaphor many cognitive scientists use to represent and relay their best explanation as to what is occurring in their observations.[88] But it should not be

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[88] The basic idea of predictive processing goes back to Helmholtz, who first introduced the idea of the brain as a hypothesis testing machine (see Jakob Hohwy, *The Predictive Mind*, New York: Oxford University Press 2013, 5-6).

understood as merely the system of calculation that brains use to make reality as we know it. What predictive processing underlies are the interactional properties of our experience, based on how our organs relate to the environment around us. A common example of an interactional property is color. Color is neither mind-independently "in" objects, nor is it world-independently "in the mind," but is rather the result of a synthesis between our visual systems and the world by way of light. And our ability to perceive colors, along with how those colors will appear in our experience, is relative to the physiology of our perceptual apparatus and our past experiences of color, which is where predictive processing comes into play.

Thus, what we experience is *constructed* due to the nature of our perceptual apparatus, but not merely or entirely so, as might be the case under subjective idealism. Rather, it is constructed from predictions based on past experiences as applied to present stimuli and is thus built from an interaction between an organism and the world. Common elements of our experience, such as color,[89] motion,[90] size,[91] shape,[92] presence

[89] See the Adelson checkerboard shadow illusion or the famous dress illusion.

[90] See the Kitaoka rotating snakes illusion or the Cavanaugh double-drift illusion.

[91] See the Ebbinghaus-Titchener circle illusion or the Ames room illusion.

[92] See the cafe wall illusion, particularly its Skye Blue version.

of objects,[93] taste,[94] smell,[95] sound,[96] posture,[97] pain,[98] recognizing faces,[99] the ongoing narrative itself,[100] and identification with body parts[101] are neither directly nor naively "real," and may be interrupted. All of them arise from constructive processes as we engage and interact with what is around us and are shaped as much by individual past experiences as they are by our common human physiology. This continual shaping of our reality in perception has led some to refer to experience as a "controlled hallucination" in which our brains construct reality based on its best predictions relative to past experiences and current stimuli but are continually working to update those predictions through prediction error minimization. Thus, what is "out there" along with our refined predictions of how it ought to seem to us, in a continual dynamic circle of top-down predictions, and bottom-up prediction errors (see illustration 2a) – a process which takes place at all levels of abstraction.

2.3 Pragmatic Metaphysics

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[93] See the Kitaoka disappearing black dots illusion.

[94] See Lisa Feldman-Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made* (New York: Mariner, 2018), 26-28.

[95] See previous footnote.

[96] See the Yanny or Laurel illusion and Andy Clark, *The Experience Machine: How Our Minds Predict and Shape Reality* (New York: Pantheon, 2023), 22-23, where he discusses the "White Christmas" effect.

[97] See various kinesthetic or proprioceptive illusions.

[98] See instances of so-called "phantom limb" pain.

[99] See the fake celebrity illusion.

[100] See the example of musicologist Clive Wearing who suffered the loss of his episodic, autobiographical memory in Anil Seth, *Being You* (New York: Dutton, 2021), 170-171.

[101] See the rubber hand illusion.

Devitt exemplifies a traditional approach to metaphysics, which is realist and objectivist in that it treats metaphysics as a kind of science unto itself. Under an objectivist approach, metaphysics is not merely our categorization and conceptualization of the world, scaling up to a cohesive narrativization of our best understanding of the facts, but supposedly gets at existence itself, which is viewed as the ultimate and abstract reality "behind" or "underlying" what we perceive. Such an objectivist approach is described by Johnson as the belief that,

> "The world is as it is, no matter what any person happens to believe about it, and there is one correct 'God's-Eye-View' about what the world really is like. In other words, there is a rational structure to reality, independent of the beliefs of any particular people, and correct reason mirrors this rational structure."[102]

As such, an objectivist metaphysics posits that,

> "To describe an objective reality of this sort, we need language that expresses concepts that can map onto the objects, properties, and relations in a literal, univocal, context-independent fashion."[103]

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[102] Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), x.

[103] Ibid. See also *The Aesthetics of Meaning and Thought: The Bodily Roots of Philosophy, Science, Morality, and Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 68, where Johnson states that: "According to objectivist metaphysics and theory of knowledge, the world consists of objects, properties, and relations that exist in themselves, independent of human minds, conceptual systems, and agency."

The pragmatic approach to metaphysics, however (which we saw above is a brand of Constructivism), is different from the objectivist approach in nearly every respect. For Schiller, a metaphysical system (should one choose to undertake the construction of one) should help to disambiguate and organize *experience* and not merely language. And for the pragmatist generally, there is no "ultimate reality" lying beneath the world as we experience it, and no rational, mathematical, or logical structure that the metaphysician needs to apprehend. Experience itself, as James writes, is the "materia prima" of everything.[104] Thus, Schiller emphatically describes traditional objectivist and analytic metaphysics as a "pseudo-science"[105] and a mere disquisition on the assumed meanings of words and terms.[106]

Pragmatic metaphysics, and in particular the approach to metaphysics endorsed by Schiller, views metaphysics as: (i) personal (i.e. relative), (ii) concerned with the whole, (iii) continuous, (iv) pluralistic, and (v) practical.

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[104] See William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 138.

[105] *Logic For Use*, 18

[106] Ibid, 200.

(i) *Personal*. The personal aspect of pragmatic metaphysics is perhaps one of its most distinctive features.[107] Both Schiller[108] and James[109] indicate that everyone has some kind of philosophy, and that such individual philosophies are ultimately products of individual personality and experience.[110] Schiller in particular insists that metaphysics are intensely personal, and represent a kind of aesthetic harmony to the belief systems of the individual philosopher,[111] which he compares in one place to a kind of poem.[112] The construction of a metaphysical system is so personal, in fact, that the metaphysician can neither claim their system to be the exclusive interpretation of the facts[113] nor constrain others to adopt it.[114] Thus, metaphysics is a creative activity (more on this in the next section). The true

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[107] See *Our Human Truths*, 181, where Schiller notes that: "The natural starting point for all humanist [i.e. pragmatist] metaphysics will be, of course, the great saying of Protagoras, which is the first statement of Humanism [i.e. Pragmatism], and one of the deepest philosophic dicta: *Man is the measure of all things; of things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not*."

[108] See *Axioms as Postulates*, 50-51 and *Logic For Use*, 101.

[109] *Pragmatism*, Lecture I.

[110] In *Our Human Truths* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 178, Schiller writes that "a metaphysic which is true for one man, because it seems to him to synthesize his experience, may be false for another, because his personality is different." On page 179, Schiller goes on to state: "A genuine metaphysic is the most individual thing in the world."

[111] *Logic For Use*, 453-454. Also, on page 18 Schiller describes metaphysics as "a philosopher's conjectural and intensely personal attempt to put together all his *data* (his own idiosyncrasies included!) into a picture that affords him at least aesthetic satisfaction" (italics and parentheses original).

[112] Ibid. Schiller writes there that: "In the last resort every genuine and heartfelt metaphysic is a *poem*, and derives its unity and aesthetic appeal from the personal vision and imagination of its 'maker' or poet."

[113] See *Logic For Use*, 308ff.

[114] See *Our Human Truths*, 178, where Schiller writes that "no metaphysician has a right… to force his metaphysics frantically down our throats," and that since the choice of a metaphysic is due in part to the idiosyncrasies of the individual, "they cannot, therefore, constrain consent." Again, on page 17 of *Studies in Humanism*, Schiller notes that metaphysics "has no coercive objective validity." Several pages later in *Our Human Truths,* Schiller explains that, not only can metaphysical systems not constrain consent of themselves, but that the concern for metaphysics is so personal and arduous, that it is better to focus on what works best for the metaphysician themselves, rather than attempting to make claims of the ultimate correctness of this or that system. As Schiller says, "I find it is as much as I can do to take the responsibility

testament to the individuality of metaphysical system-building is the presence of broad and persistent differences in their constructions, which Schiller ascribes to the intellectual idiosyncrasies of the metaphysicians formulating them.[115] Being personal, metaphysical systems are also relative – both to purposes and to individual perspectives[116] – and are ultimately expressions of values, not objective facts.[117]

(ii) *Concerned with the whole*. The primary goal of metaphysics from a pragmatic perspective is to attempt to integrate all knowledge into a harmonious whole; to maintain

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for my own metaphysic without taking the responsibility of foisting it on anyone else, and this is a further reason for not undertaking the responsibility for any other metaphysic. Ultimately, everyone should bear the burden of his own convictions; the most that [pragmatists] should be required to do is to drop some hints concerning the ways in which metaphysics may be constructed, so that everyone who chooses may be able to construct his own to suit his case and suit himself" (181).

[115] See *Our Human Truths*, 178-179, where Schiller proposes that "the essential individuality of metaphysical constructions is altered by the endless variations and vicissitudes of philosophic systems become intelligible only when they are understood as expressions of the personalities of their makers," and further that "the whole history of philosophy thus becomes an eloquent paean on the triumph of personality."

This is very similar to the assessment of Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), where he writes: "It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy up till now has consisted of – namely, the confession of its originator, and a species of involuntary and unconscious auto-biography; and moreover that the moral (or immoral) purpose in every philosophy has constituted the true vital germ out of which the entire plant has always grown. Indeed, to understand how the abstrusest metaphysical assertions of a philosopher have been arrived at, it is always well (and wise) to first ask oneself: 'What morality do they (or does he) aim at?'" (Chapter I, §6, "The Prejudices of the Philosophers"). The view that "morals" or "ethics" are at the basis of metaphysics is also expressed by Schiller in his essay "The Ethical Basis of Metaphysics," which was published as the first chapter of *Humanism, Philosophical Essays* (1903). The terms "morals" or "ethics" were used by both Nietzsche and Schiller to indicate *values*.

[116] *Our Human Truths*, 178 and 183. There Schiller explains that metaphysics "must be relative to the experience and the knowledge and needs of their makers."

[117] See "The Ethical Basis of Metaphysics," which was published as the first chapter (pages 1-17) of *Humanism, Philosophical Essays* (1903), and also pages 32 and 198 in that same volume.

a "grand synoptic vision."[118] Schiller emphasized that while metaphysics is *not* itself a science, it is (or ought to be) the mode by which we "combine and harmonize" the results of all the sciences.[119] Thus, as Schiller once wrote (admittedly a bit tongue-in-cheek), metaphysics is "the science of the whole,"[120] and "the final synthesis of the sciences,"[121] though it is not itself a "science" proper. However, it is not merely the data produced by scientific endeavor that metaphysics must attempt to synthesize and take into account, as if a dispassionate exercise in logical considerations, but must also take into account the personal experiences of the metaphysician, which is why it is ultimately personal.[122] Without this essential relativity and identification with the personal experiences of the metaphysician, metaphysics will not hold aesthetic value or grant a sense of harmony, which is the motivation behind constructing such systems in the first place. And there is no way in any case for metaphysics to simply or merely synthesize scientific data, since science cannot provide aims, values, or modes of interpretation.[123] These, once again,

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[118] This is the phrasing of Abel in his *The Pragmatic Humanism of F.C.S. Schiller*, chapter IX, 110. Schiller describes metaphysics as "the philosophic field which promises its votaries the finest views and an all-embracing conspectus of the whole" (*Our Human Truths*, 176).

[119] *Logic For Use*, 356.

[120] Ibid, 84.

[121] *Our Human Truths*, 176-177.

[122] See page 454 of *Logic For Use*, where Schiller states: "Every metaphysic differs from every other because it presupposes different *data*. To the common stock of knowledge, each [system] adds, as if duty bound, the personal *data* derived from its maker's personal experience. It is these which bind together and transfigure the scientific *data* and effect the final synthesis" (italics original). Also, on page 179 of *Our Human Truths*, he says similarly: "A metaphysic, *ex hypothesi*, has to synthesize all the data all the sciences can provide. But it must do more. It must include also in its synthesis all the material guaranteed by each man's direct experience, or in other words, all his idiosyncrasies and his whole personality."

[123] See page 179 of *Our Human Truths*, where Schiller explains that "personal data… supply the modes of interpretation and the points of view, they determine the aims and values, without which no metaphysical synthesis can be effected," and that "whether he knows it or not, a metaphysician's personality is always an

derive from the individual philosopher constructing the system.[124] Since theories are underdetermined by data, multiple differing hypotheses can be built from the same data set. Perhaps the best example of this is the positing of various interpretations of quantum mechanics (e.g. Copenhagen, pilot-waves, many-worlds) on the basis of the same experimental outcomes and mathematical formalisms.

(iii) *Continuous*. Since metaphysics follows science, and science is ongoing, there can be no final metaphysics, just as there can be no final science.[125] Thus, like knowledge itself, metaphysical constructions and explanations should never be considered permanent,[126] but should always remain open to change and improvement as more scientific discoveries are made and data are produced.[127] Schiller notes that the pragmatic approach to metaphysics as personal, continuous, and concerned with the whole, has the optimistic

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essential and ineradicable presupposition of his system… he shapes his system to suit himself."

[124] Two philosophers can both subscribe to the same or similar metaphysical descriptions or syntheses, and this in no way undermines the personal nature of metaphysics. However, Schiller does caution that when two people subscribe to a similar metaphysical system it does not mean that the system of each agent is exactly identical with the other – they will still differ in details and emphasis, as he states: "We should be aware, also, when two philosophers profess the same doctrine, it is always [technically] *two doctrines* that they advocate, because they understand it differently … a genuine metaphysic is the most individual thing in the world" (*Our Human Truths*, 179, italics added). But agreement is always facilitated and made possible by practical purposes, despite individual descriptive differences (see chapter 4).

[125] On page 450 of *Logic For Use*, Schiller explains that since "metaphysics is in vital relation to the sciences," there "cannot be a *final* metaphysic until knowing ends."

[126] On page 178 of *Our Human Truths*, where Schiller warns that metaphysical systems "should never be allowed to harden into dogmas, but should always be kept plastic and improvable."

[127] On page 177 of *Our Human Truths*, where Schiller states: "The sciences are and will always continue to be incomplete and they cannot, therefore, provide sufficient material for a [perfectly] successful synthesis. But, as they are also progressive, the metaphysician lives in hope that they may do so in the future. He must also ever be prepared to adjust and improve his metaphysical synthesis as fresh scientific material accrues. So, with growing sciences, metaphysical syntheses cannot remain unchanging and unaffected by the fortunes of the sciences."

result that metaphysical systems can never truly be considered failures.[128] Rather, each serves a purpose at a given time. And though we may never succeed in formulating an all-encompassing final system with which everyone will implicitly agree, such a metaphysic will nevertheless (and because of this) always remain as an aspiration and a problem to be solved.[129]

(iv) *Pluralistic*. Pragmatic metaphysics adopts a generally pluralist orientation as a reaction and sort of antidote to what may be called "exact number metaphysics,"[130] like those of monism and dualism. The entire question of how many substances or kinds of things exist in the universe is considered unproductive – pragmatism holds that there can be as many or as few substances as are necessary to harmonize our knowledge and make our best theories sensible.[131] Besides, the essential unity of all things is a preconception.[132] This pluralistic orientation is a byproduct of Pragmatism's radical empiricist underpinnings, a fact noted by both James[133] and Schiller.[134] Radical

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[128] *Our Human Truths*, 177.

[129] Ibid.

[130] This is my own moniker.

[131] The pluralism of pragmatists like James and Schiller is not merely a reiteration of the substance pluralism of Leibniz's monads. Pragmatic metaphysics does not maintain "there are many substances [not just one or two]," but rather that "there can be substances, as many or as few as might be necessary, if they serve to explain our verified ideas, but the notion of 'substance' can also be dispensed with entirely."

[132] In *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, xx, where Schiller explains that "it may be safely predicted that its [i.e. Pragmatism's] *'radical empiricism'* will grant to the possibilities of *'pluralism'* a more careful and unbiased inquiry that monistic preconceptions have as yet deigned to bestow upon them."

[133] See William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), specifically Lecture II.

[134] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, xx-xxi.

Empiricism, to state it simply, views traditional empiricism as too narrow in its formulation of reality in that it assumes that "objects" are "real" while consigning any conjunctive relations between objects (particularly those of causation) to being just mental assumptions about objects.[135] However, radical empiricists consider this distinction to be unfounded, since *everything* – whether objects or the conjunctive relations between them – derives from *pure experience*, which James describes as the "*materia prima* of everything."[136] As such, the relations we experience are themselves objects of thought (i.e. an element of our experience) the same as anything else, including the "physical things" singled out by traditional empiricism as being uniquely "real."[137]

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[135] Cf. David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (eds. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), Part IV, §VI ("…the understanding never observes any real connexion among objects, and that even the union of cause and effect, when strictly examined, resolves itself into a customary association of ideas", 169) and the Appendix ("…all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, and that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences", 400). In his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume makes a distinction between *necessary connexion* and *constant conjunction* and relates any notion of the former to the mere workings of the mind and the imagination (see David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Eric Steinberg, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1977, 40-42). Thus, for Hume (and other traditional empiricists), causal relations, or relations at all, are not a part of experience but are merely in the mind.

[136] James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 138.

[137] In the preface to *The Meaning of Truth*, James states the central tenet of his Radical Empiricism: "The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves." James writes similarly in *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), Lecture VII: "Every examiner of the sensible life *in concreto* must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are, and that conjunctive relations are just as true members of the flux as disjunctive relations are. This is what in some recent writings of mine I have called the 'radically empiricist' doctrine." This shift is no simple differentiation between empiricism of the standard and "radical" varieties, but rather it is part of the latter's commitment to holism, or what he refers to in *The Will to Believe* (1896) as the *principle of totality*: "This principle says that you cannot adequately know even a part until you know of what whole it forms a part… until we have taken in all the relations, immediate or remote, into which the thing actually enters or potentially may enter, we do not know all *about* the thing." Thus, to relegate causal relations to mere mental assumptions of connections between objects is to portray objects as complete and possessing identity independent of its relationship to everything in the whole.

The outlook of radical empiricism takes no preconceived stance[138] on how many kinds of things there are in the world, and allows everything to be what it needs to be in order for experience to be organized and made sense of because everything in our experience is on the same basic footing so far as our perspective is concerned – and this is what engenders metaphysical pluralism.[139] Schiller thought that acknowledging the updates of Radical Empiricism to traditional empiricism rendered "possible the metaphysical doctrine that plurality is the ultimate term of all real philosophical explanation."[140] That is, we are unconstrained by preconceived notions (especially those concerning the exact number of

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[138] "Preconceived" here is not meant to deny or detract from the fact that classical metaphysicians like Leibniz or Spinoza framed their notions of substance with argumentation. Rather, it is intended to convey that they, along with most other classical metaphysicians, assumed that there "must be" such a thing (or things) as substance(s) and then proceeded to give a philosophical *account* of them. This is different than Pragmatism, for which metaphysics in ongoing and never primary but rather follows epistemology.

[139] Now, it may be objected that Radical Empiricism is replacing one kind of monism (e.g. physicalism, idealism) for another (i.e. pure experience as the *materia prima* of everything), but this is only apparent. On the one hand, if the singular defining feature of monism is that everything derives from a single thing, then I suppose even Radical Empiricism is monistic that sense, being that everything we can know in the world derives from our experience. However, on the other hand, the claim that everything we can know derives ultimately from our experience is *not* a claim about what everything is made of and entails no particular metaphysics of substances. In the final lecture (VIII) of *A Pluralistic Universe*, James describes pluralism as not particularly concerned with substance of things, but with our ability to explain them and theorize about them: "Pragmatically interpreted, pluralism or the doctrine that it is many means only that the sundry parts of reality *may be externally related*. Everything you can think of, however vast or inclusive, has on the pluralistic view a genuinely 'external' environment of some sort or amount." In other words, our explanations of the world are always *partial* and what we discuss or focus on out of the whole is "externally related" via the *context* of our discussion of them. This is disallowed, as it were, by monism, which requires that the monist maintain as the subtext of every explanation of some part of the world that everything is in actuality united by a *common substance*, which forces them to "answer" the question of substance beforehand, that is, prior to any empirical investigation of their experience. And should the need for distinct substances arise in some area of inquiry, the tenet that even those substances are united by a common substance will have to be added to the theory as a dogma. Pluralism allows the metaphysician to explain things in the ways that best fit the broadest swath(s) of relevant experience without preconceived notions. As James continues, "For pluralism, all that we are required to admit as the constitution of reality is what we ourselves find empirically realized in every minimum of finite life."

[140] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 66.

substances or ultimate kinds) to theorize about the world as we experience it.[141] To serve its essential function, the domain of metaphysics needs to be pluralistic.[142]

(v) *Practical*. Within a pragmatic approach, contrary metaphysical constructions of theories are okay, even in application; the pragmatist can, as Schiller says, "legitimately have it both ways."[143] Schiller was careful to guard against two tendencies within traditional metaphysics, which he called "pseudo-metaphysical" and "abstract metaphysical."[144] The pseudo-metaphysical approach refers to a kind of hyper-reductive naturalism that proposes to relate to everything as "really just" atoms, matter, quantum fields, or something else.[145] Schiller states that this approach "is not so much false as insufficient."[146] By contrast, the abstract metaphysical approach practices a reduction in the opposite direction, maintaining that everything we experience is "really just" illusory,

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[141] See above footnotes.

[142] *Our Human Truths*, 183.

[143] *Logic For Use*, 414.

[144] See *Riddles of the Sphinx: A Study in the Philosophy of Evolution* (1894, second edition), 150. What follows in this section is taken from the second edition of the initial publication of *Riddles of the Sphinx*, which Schiller later heavily revised and republished in 1910 with the new subtitle: *A Study in the Philosophy of Humanism*. The initial version of *Riddles* was Schiller's first text, and being a young scholar's book, he was later regretful and slightly embarrassed by much of its underdeveloped content. However, on the topic of metaphysics he stays relatively consistent between the 1894 and 1910 versions, although he opts for slightly different terminology in his later presentation. But, despite the differences, there is enough similarity to warrant making use of the relevant sections of the earlier version of *Riddles* on the topic of metaphysical approaches, and I have chosen to do so because the terminological distinctions are more straightforward and easier to grasp. The term most notably retained between the two versions is the name for Schiller's metaphysical approach, "concrete metaphysics" (see *Riddles of the Sphinx*, pages 165 and 170 of the 1910 revised edition).

[145] See pages 152-153 of *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1894, second edition).

[146] *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1894), 154.

and that all that exists are transcendent or spiritual verities, like mind or consciousness, or a supreme being. This approach to metaphysics "promises much more" than its opposite, "but accomplishes much less"[147] – and is more or less an effort to pervert science into metaphysics.[148] Each of these attempts to deny in some way, Schiller thought, some important element of human experience for the sake of holding to a monistic metaphysic. A current example of the abstract metaphysical approach might be the various new-age spiritualities offered by various religions or popular gurus.[149] An example of the pseudo-metaphysical approach would be the various systems of so-called "scientific metaphysics," such as the Ontic Structural Realism put forward by Ross and Ladyman.[150] In response to these extremes, Schiller proposes a method which he called "concrete metaphysics,"[151] the aim of which is to make sense of the best available data relative to

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[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid, 155.

[149] An example of contemporary popular abstract metaphysics in print might be *Quantum Healing* (1989) by Deepak Chopra. The Wikipedia entry on Quantum Healing states that: "Quantum healing is a pseudoscientific mixture of ideas which purportedly draws from quantum mechanics, psychology, philosophy, and neurophysiology. Advocates of quantum healing assert that quantum phenomena govern health and wellbeing" (from "Quantum Healing," Wikimedia Foundation, last modified July 1, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_healing).

[150] Ladyman and Ross present their case for what they call a "radically naturalistic metaphysics" in their *Every Thing Must Go* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), and admit that one of their main contentions is that contemporary analytic metaphysics "fails to qualify as part of the enlightened pursuit of objective truth, and should be discontinued" (from the Preface, vii). Schiller, in the initial version of *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1894), states that his concrete metaphysical approach and the pseudo-metaphysical approach of the reductive naturalists agree when set against the method of abstract metaphysics, which a growing segment of contemporary analytic metaphysics seems to embody, that it is fundamentally mistaken (see there, 151). However, Schiller likewise condemns the pseudo-metaphysical approach for "putting forward the method of the sciences as the method of philosophy" and notes that any sort of grand objectivist metaphysical endeavor is "doomed to perpetual failure" since science is necessarily partial and continually subject to change (151). Similar attempts to "naturalize metaphysics" may be reviewed in the volume edited by Don Ross, James Ladyman, and Harold Kincaid, *Scientific Metaphysics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[151] *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1894), 150.

any field of inquiry and the purposes to which it is put with our best theories, thereby "combining the advantages and avoiding the defects of the other two."[152] This way, nothing is needlessly reduced or eliminated, but all parts of experience can be acknowledged and made good sense of. Almost like a Diogenes to a Plato, Schiller refused any reductive reasoning which would warrant the tossing of plucked chickens into the academy, such as the description of humans as "featherless bipeds," but on the same score, Schiller would gladly toss sets of useful abstractions into the barrel of any Diogenes who might insist that the only "real" or "actual" units of experience are atoms and void.

(vi) In addition to the above, pragmatic metaphysics, in the sense of constructing a principled and detailed system, is also *optional*. While Schiller indicates that some thin modicum of metaphysics is unavoidable, he also notes that purposefully delving into metaphysics, while not harmful,[153] is also not mandatory – even for a philosopher.[154] This is primarily due to Pragmatism being a *method* and not a metaphysic, and as such, it may

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[152] Ibid.

[153] In *Our Human Truths*, Schiller says that the pragmatic approach does not view metaphysical speculation as harmful, but still cautions that "it insists that the nature and the risks" of such speculation "should be realized beforehand, and that their results should not be overrated" (178).

[154] See *Studies in Humanism*, 11, where Schiller states that "metaphysics, however, are in a manner luxuries" as "men can live quite well without a conscious metaphysic," and *Our Human Truths*, 177, where he also makes clear that "the humanist [i.e. pragmatist] is not bound to set out on metaphysical adventures if he does not wish if he has not the heart or the head or the stomach for such things." Schiller goes on to say that Pragmatism does not "absolutely forbid and taboo metaphysical adventures" since "it recognizes that it is a legitimate human craving to synthesize all knowledge and to view all existence as a whole" (*Our Human Truths*, 178). However, on the same page, Schiller makes clear that the pragmatist cannot truly condemn the anti-metaphysician who, he says, opts to "cultivate [their] garden in some cozy corner of the scientific field and eschew adventures" (ibid).

be implemented without needing to espouse any particular metaphysical theory.[155] "Methods," as Schiller notes, "are public highways, and their use does not imply allegiance to any shibboleth of metaphysics."[156]

2.3.1 The Pragmatic Sense of "Real"

The sense of "real" generally subscribed to in the Pragmatism of Schiller in the arena of metaphysics is, much like *truth* and *falsity* which will be discussed in the next chapter, one of practical valuation:

> "'Real' and 'unreal' are really distinctions of value *within experience*; the 'unreal' is what may be safely ignored, the 'real' what it is better to recognize."[157]

Thus, "real" is most broadly opposed to "apparent,"[158] or "unreal". But it is important to note that Pragmatism takes no absolute position on the meaning of the term "real," despite its general pragmatic usage, as noted by Schiller. Instead, as he makes clear, "'Real' *means* real for what *purpose?* to what *end?* in what *use?*"[159] In other words, the onus is on the metaphysician to define their particular application of the term and to

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[155] *Studies in Humanism*, 16.

[156] *Logic For Use*, 414.

[157] *Studies in Humanism*, 480.

[158] Ibid, 187.

[159] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 10-11.

unpack the practical "cash value" of any relevant distinctions. This practical explication of terms is what James calls "the pragmatic method," which he describes as "primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes," and especially those "that otherwise might be interminable."[160] As such, aside from the general use, "real" can have various meanings and implications, but it must be determined context-by-context, application-by-application what those are. Generally, however, for the pragmatist, the "real" will be that which in some way has an effect on our actions.[161]

It is important to recognize that understanding "real" as a contextual concept that amounts to a judgment between various parts of experience (or a judgment of one aspect of experience relative to others), is not a denial of an actual, trans-empirical world. Perhaps the strongest postulate of pragmatic metaphysics is that of a real, sensible environment with which an organism is in a dynamic relationship, and from which it enacts its "world" (see section 2.4 below). Independent reality, to the degree that we can conceive of such a thing, is for Schiller (and James) analogous to the *hyle*, the state of

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[160] See *Pragmatism*, Lecture II, where James recounts a time when he was asked to settle a dispute as to whether, in the instance of a man chasing a squirrel around a tree where the squirrel always managed to remain on the opposite side of the tree from him, the man could be said to "go around" the squirrel or not. James famously responded: "It depends on what you *practically mean* by 'going round' the squirrel. If you mean passing from the north of him to the east, then to the south, then to the west, and then to the north of him again, obviously the man does go round him, for he occupies these successive positions. But if on the contrary you mean being first in front of him, then on the right of him, then behind him, then on his left, and finally in front again, it is quite as obvious that the man fails to go round him, for by the compensating movements the squirrel makes, he keeps his belly turned towards the man all the time, and his back turned away. Make the distinction, and there is no occasion for any further dispute. *You are both right and both wrong according as you conceive the verb 'to go round' in one practical fashion or the other*" (italics added).

[161] For instance, on page 199 of *Studies in Humanism*, Schiller says that "human ideals and purposes are real forces, even though they are not yet incorporated into institutions, and made palpable in the rearrangements of bodies" since "they affect our actions, and our actions affect our world."

matter prior to the imposition of form. This is a distinctly Aristotelian notion,[162] though neither Schiller nor James intended by such an analogy to espouse Aristotle's hylomorphic doctrine. Rather, it serves as an apt description of the basic pragmatic approach to cognition within the subjective–objective framework: the stuff of the world is of course on the objective side, while our conceptualization and cognition of it (that is, the form we impose on it) is on the subjective side. Yet, neither is ever found by itself; when we discuss the world, we will inevitably run into our conception of it, and when we discuss our concepts and categories, we will immediately encounter the stuff of the world.

Thus, Pragmatism's sense of "real," tied as it is to more ordinary uses of the term, is not so much concerned with basic existence as it is with the practical concern with those aspects of experience or objects of thought that the knower must "take into account" when reasoning. And of course, not everything that one must "take into account" is a discrete, physical object. There are degrees and types of "reality," which is why its sense (as already stated) needs to be determined context-by-context, application-by-application.

2.3.2 Commonsense Realism

There is a small but significant patch of agreement between Devitt's traditional objectivist metaphysics and the pragmatic metaphysics of Schiller: the validity of *commonsense realism.*

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[162] See Metaphysics *Zeta*, III, where Aristotle writes: λέγω δ᾽ ὕλην ἣ καθ᾽ αὑτὴν μήτε τὶ μήτε ποσὸν μήτε ἄλλο μηδὲν λέγεται οἷς ὥρισται τὸ ὄν. ("By *hyle* I mean that which, in itself, is not any particular thing, nor any particular quantity, nor yet assigned to any of the categories which define being.")

Devitt defines his doctrine of metaphysical realism (alongside the more technical definition above) as:

> "Most common-sense, and scientific, physical existence statements are objectively and mind-independently true."[163]

And he continues to emphasize the objectivity and mind-independence of his account of reality by criticizing anyone who is not an exponent of realism (whom he classes as "idealists," but his definition would include pragmatic metaphysicians as well):

> "According to these idealists, the entities are not in a certain respect 'objective': they depend for their existence and nature on the cognitive activities and capacities of our minds. Realists reject all such mind dependencies."[164]

As we have already mentioned, this kind of stark realism with regard to perception is simply untenable; it is thoroughly disembodied and takes our experience of the world for granted, ascribing objective existence not only to the *x*'s of its ontology, but to all of the many *F*'s of those *x*'s as well. And according to Devitt, metaphysical realism has two "dimensions": *existence* and *independence*, which concern (a) the basic existence of a

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[163] Devitt, "Aberrations of the Realism Debate," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, Vol. 61, No. 1/2, The Twenty-Ninth Oberlin Colloquium in Philosophy (February 1991): 46

[164] Ibid: 44.

reality beyond our perception of it[165] and (b) the complete independence of that reality from any cognitive activity. Of course, pragmatism runs afoul, as it were, of the independence dimension – as does the preponderance of evidence generated by current cognitive science to the contrary – but does affirm the existence dimension to the extent that it maintains that there *is* a trans-empirical world (briefly noted above; more on this below). "Realism about the ordinary observable physical world," maintains Devitt, "is a compelling doctrine" that is "almost universally held outside of intellectual circles" that is "regarded as too obvious to be worth stating."[166] This strong identification of the existence of a physical world at all with the categorization of that world being absolute, objective, and thoroughly mind-independent is, for the pragmatist, a reach too far. Rather, Pragmatism views Devitt's existence and independence dimensions as reflecting distinct claims about the world, embracing the former while rejecting the latter.

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[165] Devitt there uses the standard Quinean language of existential "commitment": "The existence dimension *commits* the realist to the existence of such common-sense entities as stones, trees and cats, and such scientific entities as electrons, muons and curved spacetime" (44). The concept of "ontological commitment," i.e. that whatever is bound by an existential quantifier in a statement of logic on behalf of a theory thus "commits" the theory (and by extension the theorist) to the existence of the entities which those variables are intended to represent, has no relevance within a pragmatic framework. This is mainly because "real" and "exist" are not univocal and their meaning depends on their use, as well as their practical relevance to some aim or purpose in a specific context. As such, "∃" will not always have the same meaning or implications across contexts of use (making pragmatists quantifier variantists). Of course, this is not a complete barrier to formalization for the pragmatist, as there is always the option to restrict any such symbolic translation to specific local contexts *only* and not attempt to connect them to, or attempt to draw any, global generalizations. But the idea of "commitment" in terms of what one "must" accept as existing when making use of theories is contrary to the pragmatic understanding of theories as *methods* which do not require allegiance to any particular metaphysic, even when reasoning with them or about them. See *Formal Logic*, chapter IX, §4 entitled "Universes of Diction," where Schiller discusses these and other topics.

[166] Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, *Language and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999, second edition), 234. Devitt also promotes commonsense realism in *Realism and Truth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil-Blackwell Inc., 1984) and *Putting Metaphysics First* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Although Schiller does not accept it as "objective" or descriptive of an "ultimate reality," he nevertheless holds commonsense realism (which he also calls "ordinary realism"[167] and "natural realism"[168]) in very high regard as a pragmatically valid and sufficient metaphysical system that "works for *almost every* purpose."[169] Schiller describes commonsense realism as the belief that the world is composed of a plurality of independently existing *things* and *persons*, which possess *qualities* or *properties*, being in various *relations* to one another and acting upon one another according to causal laws.[170] And Pragmatism sees nothing wrong with such a general description of the world, since it works so well in most cases of practical reasoning:

> "Humanism [i.e. Pragmatism] has no quarrel with the assumptions of commonsense realism; it does not deny what is popularly described as the 'external world.' It has far too much respect for the pragmatic value of conceptions which *de facto* work far better than those of the metaphysics which despise them. It insists only that the 'external world' of realism is still dependent on human experience…"[171]

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[167] *Studies in Humanism*, 201, 460, and 461.

[168] In *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 119, Schiller says that "the 'plain man,' in the condition of 'natural realism' distinguishes hallucinations, fancies, and dreams from *true reality*."

[169] *Studies in Humanism*, 459.

[170] *Logic For Use*, 383.

[171] *Studies in Humanism*, 13.

According to Schiller, commonsense realism has two great advantages (aside from its general practical success in application):

1. Because of its broad pragmatic authority, being the outcome of human experience and practical dealings with the world, it can (and usually does) act as a kind of initial datum from which more refined scientific theories need to start (though they may regularly depart from its conceptions and frameworks), and to which they must ultimately return (in cashing out the practical implications of a particular theory), since it will also be used to test them.
2. Since it is more deeply rooted than any other metaphysical theory, it provides common ground for the vast majority of people to come together and discuss aspects of reality and experience. This broad rootedness also allows people to appeal to it for practical support of their theories and to resolve disagreements, etc.[172]

Thus, Pragmatism shares a basic realism[173] with objectivists and realists such as Devitt. However, while Devitt and other metaphysical realists accept commonsense realism as a matter of *objective* course, Schiller and like-minded pragmatists accept commonsense realism *pragmatically*, that is, due to its broad efficacy in practice. For the pragmatist,

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[172] See *Logic For Use*, chapter XVII, §14 (382-384).

[173] "Basic realism" is a term used by George Lakoff ("Cognitive Semantics," in *Meaning and Mental Representations*, eds. Umberto Eco, Marco Santambrogio, Patrizia Violi, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988, 123) and is roughly synonymous with Commonsense Realism.

metaphysical systems, in themselves, are not really "true" or "false" but are only ingenious guesses[174] which may aid in the ascertaining of truths. This is because success in practice, though it may point (somewhat definitely) to a particular metaphysic,[175] does not necessitate commitment to one,[176] and success in a given task may be possible under various and differing metaphysical assumptions, which is why practical collaboration and interaction between members of starkly different paradigms or cultures is still possible, though it may present certain difficulties (see sections 4.1 and 4.2 for further discussion of this).

2.3.3 The Pragmatic Nature of "Facts"

As might be expected at this point, Pragmatism takes the nature of facts to be *constructed* and not merely "given."[177] Facts are not waiting to be discovered wholesale by a disembodied mind probing a mind-independent environment. Instead, they are put together, as it were, in the process of attempting to make sense and organize human experience[178] – i.e. through a process of selection out of a larger mass of data.[179] As such,

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[174] *Our Human Truths*, 178.

[175] *Studies in Humanism*, 11.

[176] Ibid, 16.

[177] In *Logic For Use*, Schiller describes facts as not *given* but *chosen* (135) or *taken* (354). In other words, facts arise from a process of selection on our part and are not merely static.

[178] On page 62 of *Axioms as Postulates* Schiller writes that "the growth of experience is continually transfiguring our 'facts' for us."

[179] In *Logic For Use,* 81 (and 392), Schiller explains that "the 'facts' of any scientific inquiry are always a selection, and a very great deal depends on selecting them intelligently."

what is considered to be a "fact" changes over time, as the history of science and human knowledge amply demonstrate.[180] Thus, facts – irrespective of our level of confidence regarding them – are never absolute.[181]

For Schiller, facts begin with *data* (a "mass of *data*"[182]), which are the kind of bare perceptions and observations we make. From these, we select out those which we deem relevant to our inquiry and ignore the rest and interpret them in light of our current theories.[183] We may construct facts from selected data only to eventually set them aside as being irrelevant along with the data we chose to ignore, but when this occurs, both the relevant and irrelevant facts *are facts*.[184] And Schiller makes it fairly clear that most data

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[180] In *Logic For Use*, 135, Schiller states that "our 'facts' may cease to be facts, as has constantly happened to the 'facts' of our predecessors."

[181] One pages 134 and 135 of *Logic For Use,* Schiller writes that "we can never take for granted [i.e. assume] that we are in possession of absolute fact… even though we feel confident that the 'facts' we end with are 'the real facts' at last." Previously, in *Axioms as Postulates*, Schiller wrote: "Facts must be interpreted by intelligence, but intelligence always operates upon the basis of previously established fact. The growth of knowledge is an *active assimilation* of the new by the old. Or in other words, our hypotheses are suggested by, and start from, the facts of already established knowledge and then are tested by experience. We confront them with new and dubious facts and try to work with them; and upon the results of this trial their ultimate fate depends" (107, italics original).

[182] *Logic For Use*, 392.

[183] Ibid. Schiller states there: "In every inquiry the facts actually assembled are argued from are a selection, namely, that part of the visible *data* which is judged *relevant*."

[184] In *Logic For Use*, 80, where Schiller states that "irrelevant facts are *just as much facts* as relevant – though they do not lend themselves to our purposes of knowing." James refers to the accumulation of (presently) irrelevant facts as putting truths into "cold storage" for use when they are relevant, as he says in Lecture VI of *Pragmatism*:

"Since almost any object may someday become temporarily important, the advantage of having a general stock of extra truths, of ideas that shall be true of merely possible situations, is obvious. We store such extra truths away in our memories, and with the overflow we fill our books of reference. Whenever such an extra truth becomes practically relevant to one of our emergencies, it passes from cold storage to do work in the world, and our belief in it grows active."

In other words, James is answering his objectivist interlocutors who, upon hearing that Pragmatism holds usefulness as a criterion of truth, fail to make the distinction between "useful" and "relevant." See chapter 4, section 4.3.

is interpreted into facts of some kind, and it is through the resulting collection of facts that we end up sorting in making our relevancy judgments.[185] And the relevance of facts is, of course, relative to our purposes.[186] Thus, the construction of facts involves valuations all the way down, as Schiller says: "All facts are covertly values."[187] Even the data themselves are never completely and fully depersonalized in the objective fashion that is usually imagined.[188] This general account of facts is similar to that suggested by Feyerabend.[189]

See the following chapter, section 3.9.4, for further discussion of facts.

2.4 Enactivism

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[185] On page 91 of *Logic For Use*, Schiller says that facts "cannot… be merely 'given,' but must be selected from a much larger mass of irrelevant, alleged, and illusory 'facts,' as *facts-for-the-purpose-in-hand*" and that "this process [i.e. of selection] will involve acts of choice, preference, and valuation."

[186] See above footnotes.

[187] *Logic For Use*, 98.

[188] See *Logic For Use*, 374, where Schiller answers his objectivist interlocutors: "So the *data* of knowledge are never really depersonalized. Nor is completely 'objectivity' reached. Impersonal objectivity remains a *fiction*; the objective world remains relative to the subject in the background, however much he strives to efface himself. There is no thought without a thinker, no observation without an observer, not even a dream without a dreamer, and no object without a subject."

[189] Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (New York: Verso, 1993), 11. There Feyerabend states: "On closer analysis we even find that science knows no 'bare facts' at all but that the 'facts' that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way and are, therefore, essentially ideational." Cf. previous footnotes.

Rephrasing Feyerabend here into the terminology of Schiller, I would say that there are "no 'bare data' at all but the 'data' that enter our knowledge are already viewed in a certain way" and that these data-viewed-a-certain-way are "facts." That is, *facts* have two basic elements: the *datum*, and the interpretation of the datum against *background theories and assumptions* (Kuhn's "paradigms" and Popper's "theories"). As such, facts are partially constructed in the sense that they are not properly manufactured wholesale. Like everything else within the economy of pragmatic metaphysics, they are dynamic and interactional.

The term "enactive cognition" was originally coined by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch in their now classic 1991 text *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*. In that volume, Varela, et al, define the enactive approach to cognition as consisting of two points: "(1) perception consists in perceptually guided action and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided."[190] The proposal of the term *enactive* to describe their approach was, as they state elsewhere, "to emphasize the growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the *enactment* of a world and a mind on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs."[191] Since the publication of *The Embodied Mind*, enactive approaches have cropped up and developed as distinct iterations along various lines of agreement and disagreement among cognitive scientists. According to Corris,

> "Enactive approaches to cognition share a commitment to a principle of dynamic coupling between organisms and their environments, with action being fundamentally guided by perception. Though emergent varieties of enactivism may differ… they each view the organism–environment relation as central to understanding the phenomenon of cognition."[192]

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[190] Johnson, *The Embodied Mind*, 173.

[191] Ibid, 9.

[192] Amanda Corris, "Defining the Environment in Organism–Environment Systems." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11:1285 (2020): 2, doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01285.

The metaphysics of enactive cognition begins with the organism–environment system in which each component of the system is viewed as only functionally distinct (i.e. an organism is not identical to its environment, but also cannot be considered separately from it); organism and environment are cognitively a unity. That is, the environment constitutes the "cognitive domain" of the organism,[193] which is enacted by its embodied modes of perception, and in turn affects ongoing cognition, which then further enacts the organism's world, and so on – i.e. there is a continual dynamic interaction between them. This continual process of action and enaction on the part of the organism within a system is referred to as *autopoiesis*, or "self-making." It is the *sine qua non* of "life," since without autopoiesis, the dynamic relationship ceases, and the system breaks down.

The introduction and subsequent development of enactivism is usually held by its exponents to constitute something on the order of a Kuhnian paradigm within cognitive science.[194] There are, however, those who dispute this. Some philosophers of cognitive science, such as Meyer and Brancazio,[195] propose reserving the term "paradigm" for those shifts that meet the original criterion of Kuhn[196] while describing the enactivist approach to cognition as a "philosophy of nature" (a term borrowed from Godfrey-

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[193] Ibid, 7. I should note here that in this dissertation I use the term "cognitive domain" in a slightly broader sense than does Corris, namely, as referring to the purview of cognitive-scientific inquiry, which is of course the various processes of an organism in its environment.

[194] For example, see Tom Froese and Ezequiel A. Di Paolo, "The enactive approach: theoretical sketches from cell to society" in *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 191–36 (January 2011), doi: 10.1075/pc.19.1.01fro.

[195] Russell Meyer and Nick Brancazio, "Putting down the revolt: Enactivism as a philosophy of nature" in *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13:948733 (October 2022), doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.948733.

[196] Meyer and Brancazio, "Putting down the revolt," 08.

Smith[197]), which is a general synthesis of one or more research programs that is constructed "in an effort to integrate their findings into the most accurate picture of the world."[198] Thus, a *philosophy of nature* is essentially a metaphysical system that synthesizes the material provided by the sciences, and Schiller indeed describes just such a metaphysical system.

2.5 Schiller's Philosophy of Nature

Schiller's particular philosophy of nature shares a great deal in common with enactivist approaches, including and especially its focus on the interactions between an organism and its environment as the locus of all cognition. Within the organism–environment system, Schiller makes a basic distinction in cognitive processes between what he calls *biologic* and *psychologic*, and these serve as the broad categories for all other kinds of reasoning and thought. As such, I have decided to refer to them together as the *cognitive metaschema*, and it is within this metaschema that then reality is enacted or "made," which will be the topic of sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 below.

The general goal in what follows is to provide an overview of Schiller's general philosophy of nature, which will include an account of reality, along with his account of judging (the act of making judgments), which will become important in chapter 3, since judgments are the bearers of pragmatic truth.

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[197] Peter Godfrey-Smith, "On the status and explanatory structure of DST," in *Cycles of Contingency: Developmental Systems and Evolution*, eds. S. Oyama, P. Griffiths and R. D. Gray (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001), as well as page 4 of his *Philosophy of Biology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

[198] Meyer and Brancazio, "Putting down the revolt," 08.

2.5.1 The Cognitive Metaschema of Biologic and Psychologic

According to Schiller, the genetic order of those processes that precede judgments is: *living* → *thinking* → *judging*, as he writes, "there is much thinking before there is any judging, and much living before there is any thinking."[199] The emergence of judgment or "judging," in terms of the overall evolutionary development of life, is the culmination of a long process. Schiller also notes that, evolutionarily speaking, there is a reverse order of rarity, such that *thinking* is a rarer occurrence than is *living*, and *judgment* a rarer occurrence than *thinking*, which itself is "a relatively recent [biological] acquisition."[200]

At the point of *thinking*, when it arises among the organisms in which it occurs (speaking diachronically, i.e. in evolutionary terms) is where Schiller divides between *biologic* and *psychologic*. It is important to remember that the distinction between these is merely explanatory and functional, not actual; its purpose is to explain what is apparent, not to suggest the presence of some kind of special module dedicated to either mode of thinking. Schiller conceives of thought as necessarily a mixture of new and old experiences;[201] "biologic" is the old, and "psychologic" the new.

Biologic describes the long series of adaptive responses to stimulation with the goal of life proceeding without the need for thinking at all, with habit arising from adjustments to more or less stable environmental conditions (i.e. within the organism–environment

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[199] *Logic For Use*, 193-194.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid, 198-199.

system). The nature of thought is that it is a relative abnormality which "springs from a disturbance" and "its genesis is connected with a peculiar deficiency in the life of habit."[202] Bouts or episodes of thinking relate to and take place relative to sets of given circumstances, called *cases* or *situations*,[203] and the difference between one case drives the differences between one kind of thinking and another. As Schiller states, "whenever... it becomes biologically important to notice differences in roughly similar situations, and to adjust action more closely to the peculiarities of a particular case, the guidance of life by habit, instinct, and impulses breaks down."[204] Biologic, then, functionally ends when its capabilities are outstripped by circumstances that cannot be navigated by habit and impulse alone.

Psychologic, on the other hand, is a conscious, active form of reasoning that an organism engages in for the purposes of further adaptation in the pursuit of its goals and purposes. Schiller cautions against thinking of psychologic as a substitute or stand-in for the earlier processes of biologic. Rather, psychologic serves as a kind of subsidiary addition to them.[205] Schiller further cautions against the conception of psychologic in terms of the more formal logics of the Western tradition which considers the continual abidance by universal rules or principles of reasoning as the *sine qua non* of properly logical thinking. Instead, Schiller writes that psychologic, and rational action generally, is the converse of more formal logic, in that "it consists rather in perceiving when a general rule must be set

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[202] *Logic For Use*, 195.

[203] Ibid, 52.

[204] *Logic For Use*, 195.

[205] Ibid, 197.

aside in order that conduct may be adapted to a particular case"[206] and not when a set of rules must be followed. As such, Schiller characterizes rationality in terms of practical adjustment on the part of the organism to new circumstances instead of adherence to normative principles that may or may not support the survival or goals of the reasoning agent.

Psychologic is further divided into three stages: *inhibition, analysis*, and *judgment*.

1. *Inhibition*, which is simply pausing in the flow of cognition, is "the first and most difficult step in [psychologic] thinking," explains Schiller, since it requires "stopping to think, i.e. the inhibition or arrest of the natural impulse to react at once."[207] This requires "the power to abstain from instant action in order first to look, watch, and deliberate."[208] Inhibition is the stage where the old and new experiences of thinking become apparent. The "old," of course, is that which is biologically inherited, while the "new" is that occasioned by psychologic, first made possible by the pausing of the organism to deliberate. Schiller takes this mixture of new and old experiences to be, not separate, but mutually reinforcing since, as he says, "if [the difference in case, which sets psychologic in motion] had been wholly new and unprecedented, it would be merely paralysing to both thought and action" and also "if it had seemed familiar it would not have been dealt with in

[206] *Logic For Use*, 198.

[207] *Logic For Use*, 198.

[208] Ibid.

the habitual way."[209] Therefore, a case that evokes any kind of active thinking "will always seem to be partly new and different from anything ever experienced before; and yet not so hopelessly so as to baffle thought,"[210] that is, to render it unproductive.

2. *Analysis* is essentially the breaking up of the flux of immediate experience,[211] first into "events" with "causes" and "effects,"[212] and then into "things" with "attributes"[213] – and the levels of abstraction continue from there. Analysis, at least in humans, also involves linguistic behaviors.[214] To analyze "means inquiring what [a thing] is, in the sense of how it is to be named, or with what words chosen out of the extant resources of language [it is] to be described for our purpose."[215] The implication is that by naming a thing (or, a series of things[216]) is that once it has

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[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid.

[211] See *Formal Logic*, 139, and also *Studies in Humanism*, 35, where Schiller defines "analysis" as the "breaking up of the confused complex of presentations in to 'things' and their 'attributes' which are referred to and 'identified' with former similar experiences and expressed in judgments as to what the situation 'really is'."

[212] See *Logic For Use*, 343, where Schiller writes that "'effects' are nothing without 'events' and 'causes' are nothing without 'effects,' while causal analysis is nothing but a device to break up the flux."

[213] See above footnotes.

[214] It remains an interesting open question whether the ability of dogs to identify objects through use of verbal labels, or the ability of primates to communicate via sign language, constitutes this aspect of "analysis" in Schiller's cognitive metaschema, at least to some attenuated degree.

[215] *Logic For Use*, 199.

[216] Broadly speaking, I usually prefer the expansive and more innocuous metaphysical language of "things" (as opposed to "objects") and agree with Miller (2008) that "while *things* are ontologically innocent, *objects* are not" ("Thing and Object" in *Acta Analytica: Philosophy and Psychology* 23, 1 (March 2008): 69-89, italics mine). This works well within a Pragmatic context where, quite literally, anything can be a

been labeled, this will [a] act as a sort of guarantee that its future behavior will be like its past behavior such that [b] we will thereby be enabled to make predictions.[217] But, as Schiller explains, though we routinely comport ourselves under these working assumptions, [a] and [b] are often, at least partially, illusory. This illusion, that the act of naming provides certain guarantees in the act of reasoning, is undermined by the fact that very often it is "the very case we are considering [which] may force upon us a modification of the terms with which we label it."[218] As such, the labeling aspect of analysis is itself not enough to make an active and deliberate process into an automatic one. Thus, analysis is, at its base, experimental. As Schiller says, "every predication should be conceived as an experiment, which tests at one and the same time the interpretation of the situation inquired into, and the... value of the terms by which it is analyzed."[219] When words and labels between cases are inconsistent such that it does not accurately represent the continuity of a behavior or set of behaviors and undermines successful prediction, this becomes another occasion for the initial stage of *inhibition*. When experience leads to conceptual adjustment, it often also leads to an adjustment of labels, and such processes of analysis will continue until a relative stability of identification takes hold. And in reality, any predication is continually open to

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thing, but the metaphysical implications of any particular thing are contingent on the workings of the hypotheses which postulate their existence—a process which itself is in continual flux.

[217] *Logic For Use*, 199.

[218] *Logic For Use*, 199.

[219] Ibid, 200.

revision.

3. *Judgment*, which often occurs so quickly after the advent of analysis that it can reasonably be associated with it, is the final decision in a process of thinking; it puts an end to doubt and hesitation.[220] That is, until the next significant difference is detected, giving rise to more hesitation (inhibition), which beckons another judgment to settle that, and so on and so forth as the process continues. Judgment is the culmination of deliberation and "is a decision which leads to action mediated and modified by the thought which has preceded."[221] But judgments are never entirely certain. Since they are fundamentally experimental, they are tentative.[222] Nevertheless, to break through hesitation and overcome the pause with which the process began, "a judgment [when made] claims to be the best possible; but it may only be the best available," a fact which may or may not be known to the maker of the judgment.[223] And so, though a judgment "claims truth" says Schiller, "it may

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[220] Ibid, 202.

[221] *Logic For Use*, 201.

[222] On pages 238 and 239 of *Logic For Use*, Schiller explains that: "Fortunately, nothing so fantastic as 'absolute' truth is required of judgments in actual thinking. A judgment is true enough for the purposes of human thinking if it is true in its context and is an adequate response to the situation out of which it arises and with which it is meant to deal. Its adequacy or inadequacy, its success or failure, is never a matter of form, but always a matter of fact. It depends on its consequences, on its working."

[223] *Logic For Use,* 201.

> easily turn out to be false," and this is simply the case-by-case, situational, personal nature of judgment.[224]

Ever concerned with the misperception of human reasoning as either definitionally or ideally devoid of value-driven motivations, Schiller is sure to inform his readers that "no judgment issues from pure reason as a product of non-human thought."[225] In other words, the seemingly obvious sentiment holds true that if we are discussing human actions, decisions, or thought-processes, then it is human thought that is the object of inquiry—fully embodied and embedded in an organism-environment system—and not some kind of "pure thought" or "pure reasoning" occurring *in vacuo*. Every judgment is a human response to a particular situation that the agent is in and is "stained through and through" with the agent's personality *qua* psychological traits.[226] Due to the inherently embodied nature of cognition, this is unavoidable.

The pragmatic metaphysic of Schiller concerning reality (the topic of the next section) is situated within this cognitive metaschema and, like everything else in the cognitive life of an organism (especially humans), everything in the way of the concepts and metaphors that guide our mental processes begins with it. See chapter 3, section 3.9.3 for further discussion of judgments.

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[224] Ibid.

[225] Ibid, 203.

[226] *Logic For Use*, 203.

2.5.2 The Making of Reality

Schiller's approach to the basic nature of the world and human experience is what he calls "the making of reality." As noted above, the metaphysics of reality (its categorization, sorting, and structuring in our experience) takes place within the continual cognitive processes of biologic and psychologic as part of the organism–environment system. The implications of the "making of reality," and the distinctions that go along with it, were considerably difficult for Schiller's interlocutors to understand and invited considerable criticism.[227] There are several key points to keep in mind when considering Schiller's metaphysics, which aid in properly understanding what he means (and what he does not), and provide insight into what he is attempting to accomplish.[228]

(i) The first key point comes from a passage from James, where he explains the difference in approach between himself and Schiller:

> "I start from the object-pole of the idea-reality chain and follow it in the opposite direction from Schiller's. Anticipating the results of the general truth-processes of

[227] Notably, Bertrand Russell interpreted Schiller as purporting that each person constructs the entirety of their world wholesale, which of course is not at all what Schiller intended to imply. See Russell, "Professor Dewey's 'Essays in Experimental Logic'" in *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 16, 1 (1919): 26.

[228] Like any philosopher, Schiller's views regarding his own metaphysical system changed over the course of his career. Mostly, he worried about how best to express his view so as to avoid confusion (e.g. the use of "discover" rather than "make" with regard to the facts of reality). But, on the other hand, the more his views changed, the more they stayed the same; he continued to view reality as plastic and to reject the idea of an absolute reality in which human cognitive activities play no part, despite his doubts about terminology. What follows is my best attempt to present his persistent metaphysical approach to the nature of reality, spanning across his works.

> mankind, I begin with the abstract notion of an objective reality… My account is more of a logical definition; Schiller's is more of a psychological description. Both treat an absolutely identical matter of experience, only they traverse it in opposite ways."[229]

Whereas James begins with the standard metaphysic of an objective reality, Schiller presents a psychological description of what reality appears to be *in the experience of the knower without first positing an objective reality* – if there is to be one (that is, if one recognizes an "objective" reality), it will be the result of an ongoing process of embodied reasoning and not a datum taken for granted and the outset.[230]

(ii) The second key point is that Schiller views the idea of an absolute or static ("ready-made") reality as a doctrine and not a necessary tenet of belief. As he says, the "static view of reality" is "not an ineluctable necessity of thought, but a metaphysical prejudice."[231] In other words, if we can adopt the story of a completely unified and objective reality from the ancients, then we can also adopt a *different story*, and perhaps one that can be of better pragmatic use to us as we go about the business of human

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[229] *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter XII.

[230] In *Our Human Truths*, 185, Schiller writes that "to reject [an absolute reality] is not to reject objectivity; it is to regard objectivity as an achievement, not as a datum."

[231] *Studies in Humanism*, 427. In another place, Schiller refers to the idea of "an objective world completely alien to the knowing subject" as a "superstition" and an "assumption [that] serves no reasonable purpose, either of theory or of practice" (*Our Human Truths*, 185).

activity and scientific inquiry. Schiller believes that his psychological account of reality is superior to the standard objectivist one.

(iii) The third key point has to do with what Schiller is attempting to accomplish in the way of honestly reckoning with the history of science and human knowledge. Not only does our knowledge change, but the very concepts we make use of to express that knowledge changes. In a very real way, we experience or view the world *differently* – and Schiller thinks that it is important to account for such change, rather than explaining it away in an absolutist story that minimizes the role humans play in the construction of their own reality. The history of our epistemological endeavors is littered with examples of ideological entrenchment,[232] which insists that the ways in which we structure and organize reality are objective and permanent – until we fall into crisis and end up changing paradigms,[233] only to then proclaim that the new paradigm we have just adopted was the correct one all along.[234] Schiller's approach is to embrace the ongoing progress

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[232] This term is taken from Popper in his "The Rationality of Scientific Revolutions," published in *Scientific Revolutions*, ed. Ian Hacking (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), especially §XI. There Popper mentions the dangers of an "entrenched ideology," and clarifies that what he is referring to is "social entrenchment."

[233] Kuhn thought that the history of science, with its cycle of "normal science," "crisis," and "paradigm shifts" was enough to warrant the jettisoning of both a foundationalist approach to knowledge and a correspondence theory of truth. See *Road*, 95, and his comments there.

[234] See *Axioms as Postulates*, 62, where Schiller writes that "independent 'facts,' which we have merely to acknowledge, are a mere figure of speech" and that "the growth of experience is continually transfiguring our 'facts' for us, and it is only by an *ex post facto* fiction that we declare them to have been 'all along' what they have *come to mean for us*" (italics original).

and process of change,[235] and to refrain from telling an objectivist story about it being illusory or merely indicative of our insufficiency in the realm of truth.

So, keeping in mind that Schiller is offering (i) a *psychological description*, (ii) seeking to *replace the objectivist metaphysical narrative* with a new, pragmatic one, and (iii) attempting to *make honest sense* of the history of human knowledge, we will be able to better understand his conception of reality.

2.5.3 Reality and reality

Schiller proposes that reality be viewed as having two distinct modes: reality as *not* made sense of by us, and reality as it is experienced and made sense of by us. The first of these, Schiller refers to as "primary reality,"[236] which he describes as an "undiscriminated flow,"[237] a "flux,"[238] and "meaningless chaos."[239] Primary reality consists of "immediate experience,"[240] which is what the world is like prior to the point where any cognitive

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[235] On page 135 of *Logic For Use*, Schiller relates to this ongoing process: "And they had previously been established as 'facts' by processes similar to those which we continue to use. Finally, we have no assurance that they are destined to remain 'facts' in future. Whenever the knowledge which acknowledges them becomes progressive, we may advance beyond them or develop and transform them in the strangest ways. So, our 'facts' may cease to be facts, as has constantly happened to the 'facts' of our predecessors."

[236] E.g. *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 120 and 183; *Studies in Humanism*, 187, 201-202, and 222.

[237] *Studies in Humanism*, 222.

[238] E.g. *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 124; *Logic For Use*, 341; *Formal Logic*, 282-283, 317, and 318.

[239] *Studies in Humanism*, 187.

[240] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 183. Earlier, on page 120, Schiller also refers to "the primary reality of phenomena."

efforts of organization take place, similar to James's "blooming, buzzing confusion."[241] The second mode of reality is what Schiller calls "true reality"[242] or "real reality"[243] and is what we, via our cognitive (and social) processes,[244] construct out of primary reality. Real reality is reality as we regularly experience it; we hew it and all of its ontological furniture, as it were, out of "the immediately given flux of crude experience by postulation."[245] That is, we make sense of primary reality through both conscious and unconscious predictive processing – making hypotheses, testing them, updating them, and so on. Through this process of postulation, we "transform"[246] and "make"[247] the reality which we relate to and experience as meaningful.

Schiller is careful to clarify that what we usually refer to as "the external world" is *not* the same as primary reality and that it is a mistake to conflate them or identify them with one another.[248] Instead, the external world is "a pragmatic construction *within*

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[241] See William James, *Principles of Psychology, Volume 1* (1890), chapter XIII.

[242] See *Studies in Humanism*, pages 187, 433, and 477.

[243] Ibid, 187, 221, 438, and 474.

[244] Social processes, like all cognitive processes, are *active* and not merely passive calculations.

[245] *Logic For Use*, 341.

[246] See *Studies in Humanism*, 222, for a discussion of "transforming." Also, on 425 Schiller states: "It follows that the 'making of truth' is also in a very real sense a 'making of reality.' In validating our claims to 'truth' we really 'discover' realities. And we really *transform* them by our cognitive efforts, thereby proving our desires and ideas to be real forces in the shaping of our world" (italics original).

[247] See above footnotes.

[248] On page 201 of *Studies in Humanism* Schiller states that: "The 'reality of the external world' is not an original datum of experience, and it is a *confusion* to identify it with 'primary reality'" (italics original).

primary reality"[249] and is the product of "processes of selection by which the chaos is ordered."[250] The very basic decision to reject solipsism and to embrace the existence of an external world – even if we do not yet completely understand it or know about everything it might contain – is to make meaning out of flux and thereby to depart from strictly primary reality. And this is especially the case when our sense of an external world is based in the assumptions of commonsense realism,[251] dividing it up as we do into intelligible abstractions such as, things, substances, properties, relations, events, causes, effects, and so forth.[252] We have a tendency to take these general abstractions for granted as already "out there," and Schiller takes this to be a mistake – and one made by Kant in particular.

Kant proposed the existence of noumenal and phenomenal worlds, the latter being the realm of human experience and the former being the habitation of the *ding an sich*, the "thing in itself," which is forever cut off from human knowledge or experience. Schiller made clear that his approach to reality is "the exact converse of the Kantian method."[253] The main error of Kant, according to Schiller, is that he "took for granted the common-sense *analysis*[254] of experience, which had already turned the original chaos into

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[249] See *Studies in Humanism*, 202, where Schiller states that: "For it [i.e. the 'external world'] is a pragmatic construction *within* primary reality, the product, in fact, of one of those processes of selection by which the chaos is ordered."

[250] Ibid.

[251] *Studies in Humanism*, 459.

[252] *Logic For Use*, 341 and 383; *Studies in Humanism*, 233; *Formal Logic*, 23 and 273.

[253] *Logic For Use*, 341.

[254] See the above discussion of "analysis."

an interacting world of things and persons extended in space and enduring in time,"[255] and thus posited a world beyond experience that was more "true" and "real" than it. In fact, the world of "things-in-themselves" for Kant *is* reality – all else is mere appearance. Schiller rejected this on multiple grounds, not the least of which is that the hypothetical idea of the world as it would be if no one perceived it is not the apex of what is real, but is *entirely meaningless*.[256] Such a hypothetical state of the world is irrelevant to any organism living in it, and it is not possible for us (or for any organism) to perceive the world without a particular mode of perception – i.e. to not be embodied in a particular way; to perceive, but without any means of perception. As such, "we know the Real *as it is when we know it*; we know nothing whatever about what it is apart from that process," and so maintains Schiller, "it is meaningless therefore to inquire into its nature as it is in itself."[257]

Thus, whereas Kant begins with the constructions of the commonsense view of the world and then enforces the metaphysical prejudice of an objective reality beyond

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[255] *Logic For Use*, 341.

[256] See *Axioms as Postulates*, 60, where Schiller, speaking of the world, states that "it is fruitless to define it by what it originally was or by what it is apart from us." Also, in *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 9, Schiller states:

"A solution of the ontological question — *What is Reality?*—is not possible until it has been decided how Reality can come within our ken. Before there can be a real for us at all, the Real must be *knowable*, and **the notion of an unknowable reality is useless**, because it abolishes itself. The true formulation therefore of the ultimate question of metaphysics must become — *What can I know as real?*" (bold added)

Then, on 11: "It is *meaningless* therefore to inquire into its nature as it is in itself" (italics added).

In other words, to be "real", something must be amenable to the judgment that it is such. Thus, apart from experience, postulation becomes mere verbalistic stipulation.

[257] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 11.

"mere appearances," Schiller begins with "experience as it would actually present itself to a mind beginning to know, with the chaotic confusion of a 'psychological baby'"[258] and distinguishes not between the world of appearances and actual reality, but between the initial undifferentiated confusion and the subsequent ordering of that confusion by cognitive interpretation and organization. Schiller thereby leaves any consideration of the real-as-it-is-in-itself aside, dismissing it as "void and meaningless"[259] for any human purpose. For Schiller, as opposed to Kant, what we experience is actually *real*, and not mere apparition, and the distinction between "real" and "unreal" is made *within* the breadth of our experience, both being subcategories of primary reality.[260] Reality as we know it, whether in its initial or organized states, *is real*, and not only is it real, but it is as real as it gets for us – the suggestion that there is something "more real" is baseless and does not arise from experience, but from dogma.[261] As Schiller explains, the 'independence' of 'independent reality' is a pragmatic necessity, not a matter of gradations of what is "real" in an ultimate sense:

> ""The 'independent reality' which has been postulated is not after all independent of experience, but relative to the experience which it serves to harmonize. It is

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[258] *Logic For Use*, 341. See also *Studies in Humanism*, 460.

[259] Ibid, 449.

[260] *Studies in Humanism*, 474.

[261] That is, the positing of the "more real" that is not amenable to experience is mere verbalistic stipulation.

nothing absolute; it means 'real' *in* and *for* that experience. It may be, therefore, *as real* as that experience, but can never be *more real*."[262]

Johnson (2017) echoes the position of Schiller:

> "Reality does not 'hide' behind experience… Reality is not a *Ding an sich* lurking, unseen, forever behind an opaque veil of representations that prevents us from gaining any access to the way things 'really are' outside our skins and skulls. There is not and never has been an autonomous reality from which we are inescapably divorced, for we have *always* existed only in and through our relations with our evolving environment, as we experience it."[263]

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[262] *Studies in Humanism*, 474. Schiller there goes on to reiterate that a reality existing apart from or "independent" of us is an analysis of our experience itself:

"The external world and my fellow-creatures therein are real 'independently' of me, because this assumption is essential to my action, and therefore as real as the experience I am thereby trying to control, provided always that the situation which evoked the postulate continues. Thus the 'independence' of the real world is limited by the very postulate which constructed it; it is an independence subject to the one condition that its postulation should not cease. If, therefore, anything should happen in my experience leading me to doubt its ultimateness, the reality of the 'independent' external world would be at once affected."

Thus, for Schiller, our sense of the "ultimate" nature of reality is dependent on our experience and our postulation of it goes a long way in making sense of it. However, should our experience, speaking hypothetically, change in some fundamental way such that the general subject-object interpretation no longer worked to make sense of it, we would then need to postulate something else that did. The main point here is that, though we often do, we should not take for granted our experience of the world to the point of ascribing absoluteness to our explanations of it. This is a mistake, and the history of science and human knowledge generally is riddled with examples.

[263] Johnson, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and* Reason, 175

The move from reality to mere appearances was considered by Schiller to be an unwarranted, and even pernicious, denigration of actual human experience in the service of maintaining a belief in an absolute, objective, transcendent reality[264] – a belief which serves no purpose other than to make humans insufficient and to reduce their significance in the face of a "reality" which they will never meet or experience, but which somehow remains of central importance to them. Instead, Schiller sought to replace the objectivist metaphysical story of a static reality beyond with a new story of reality that would allow the pragmatist to respect the process of their own knowledge, while also being open to improvements and updates, and moving in an ever-forward path of personal and scientific progress. The replacement of the objectivist approach to reality comes in two pieces, one descriptive and the other methodological.

The descriptive piece of the pragmatic approach put forward by Schiller is that the traditional separation between epistemology and metaphysics is untenable – they are, in fact, parts of a single process of knowledge.[265] Epistemology cannot proceed without understanding, which means that it must operate on the basis of some categorization, and categorization is the business of metaphysics. And when knowledge changes, it can affect categorizations, which means that it will likewise effect changes metaphysics. Thus, in a pragmatic framework, there can be no "metaphysics-epistemology split,"[266] and in fact

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[264] *Studies in Humanism*, 217.

[265] In *Studies in Humanism*, 185-186, Schiller states that "Truth and Reality grow for us *together*, in a single process, which is *never* one of bringing the mind into relation with a fundamentally alien reality, but always one of improving and extending an existing system which *we know*" (italics original).

[266] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999), 114. See also George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 207, where he writes that "one of the cornerstones of the objectivist paradigm is the independence of metaphysics from

Pragmatism gives priority to epistemology over any ontological considerations.[267] The split between metaphysics and epistemology is not original to the history of philosophy, but only became necessitated when it was proposed that cognition is the attempt by a world-independent mind to apprehend a mind-independent world,[268] a distinction which

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epistemology," namely that "the world is as it is, independent of any concept, belief, or knowledge that people have," and that "minds, in other words, cannot create reality." Lakoff then says regarding this, "I would like to suggest that this is *false*" (italics added).

[267] *Humanism Philosophical Essays*, 9.

[268] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 94.

both Pragmatism[269] and Enactivism[270] reject. "Epistemologically speaking," Schiller writes, "so far as our knowledge goes or can go, the making of truth and the making of reality seem to be *fundamentally one*."[271]

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[269] In *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, 23 and 24, James writes:

"As 'subjective' we say that the experience represents; as 'objective' it is represented. What represents and what is represented is here *numerically the same*; but we must remember that *no dualism of being represented and representing resides in the experience per se*. **In its pure state** [i.e. in pure experience, what Schiller calls "primary reality"]**, or when isolated, there is no self-splitting of it into consciousness and what the consciousness is 'of.'** Its *subjectivity and objectivity are functional attributes solely*, realized only when the experience is 'taken,' i.e., talked-of… The instant field of the present is at all times what I call the 'pure' experience. It is only virtually or potentially either object or subject as yet. For the time being, it is plain, unqualified actuality, or existence, a simple *that*. In this *naïf* immediacy it is of course valid; it is there, we act upon it; *and the doubling of it in retrospection into a state of mind and a reality intended thereby, is just one of the acts*" (some italics added; bold and bracketed materials also added).

Schiller reflects this same sentiment when he writes in *Logic For Use*, 374, in answer to his objectivist interlocutors:

"So the *data* of knowledge are never really depersonalized. Nor is completely 'objectivity' reached. Impersonal objectivity remains a *fiction*; the objective world remains relative to the subject in the background, however much he strives to efface himself. There is no thought without a thinker, no observation without an observer, not even a dream without a dreamer, and **no object without a subject**" (bold added).

And again, in *Studies in Humanism*, 185 and 186, Schiller states that "Truth and Reality grow for us *together*, in a single process, which is *never* one of bringing the mind into relation with a fundamentally alien reality" (italics original).

In each of these passages, James and Schiller are rejecting the idea that there is a mind-independent world ("object") and a world-independent mind ("subject"), or that we have any basis on which to propose them, except when speaking *functionally* about them – subject and object, mind and reality, are distinctions made *within* one and the same flux of experience. Similar to Wittgenstein in the introduction to the *Tractatus*, where he says that "in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought)," classical Pragmatism holds that to posit a completely mind-independent world, one would need to be able to access it, but experience is the only thing we have access to, and that is mediated by our embodied modes of perception – we cannot experience "both sides of the limit."

[270] Shaun Gallagher, *Embodied and Enactive Approaches to Cognition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press 2023), 33.

[271] *Studies in Humanism*, 426.

The essential unity of metaphysics and epistemology means that, for the pragmatist, any method of knowledge should (and will) involve a particular method of narrative and conceptual orientation as well. Schiller proposes that the objectivist story of a mind-independent, absolute, static world – which is only an inherited "superstition"[272] and "metaphysical prejudice"[273] in the first place – be set aside in favor of a different story, namely, one in which the world is *plastic* in response to human action and cognition. The alternative story begins with conceiving of primary reality as *hyleatic*,[274] i.e. as analogous to ὕλη (*hylē*), the primordial matter of Aristotle that exists prior to the imputation of form.[275] Thus, primary reality should be viewed as fundamentally plastic and flexible, as the "raw material… out of which real fact is made,"[276] which is growing, incomplete, and indeterminate[277] – that is, indeterminate until we act on it.[278] But the degree to which reality can be determined in accordance with our will depends upon our experimentation and methods, it cannot be known *a priori*.[279]

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[272] *Studies in Humanism*, 217.

[273] Ibid, 427.

[274] I have decided to coin this term for ease of adjectival use.

[275] Schiller compares primary reality to ὕλη in *Axioms as Postulates* (60 and 70) and in *Studies in Humanism* (433).

[276] *Studies in Humanism*, 187.

[277] See *Studies in Humanism*, 420 and 427; also, on page 142, Schiller explains that what he means by "plasticity" is the "determinable indetermination of reality."

[278] In *Humanism, Philosophical Essays,* 12, Schiller states that "the nature of things is not determinate but determinable" and that "previous to trial, it is indeterminate" but "it grows determinate by our experiments."

[279] *Axioms as Postulates*, 61.

The methodological piece involves the practical application of the idea of reality as hyleatic as a component of our method of knowledge. Schiller emphasizes that while we certainly pursue knowledge and engage in experimentation on the basis of prior knowledge (i.e. the prior outcomes of experiment), we nevertheless should, as a matter of methodology, approach reality as though it were *wholly plastic*,[280] and not partially so, since if we assume some rigidity at the outset, such determinateness can always be attributed to the situation in which we find ourselves.[281] And if the elements of our circumstances are already determined and cannot be moved, then there is no sense in making an effort to alter them. The creativity, imagination, and impetus to progress and innovation shuts down, or is at the very least stunted. Recognizing the world as principally hyleatic, however, allows us to continue working toward our goals and purposes, making every effort to attain the objects of our values, not deterred by them but informed by them.[282] The hyleatic conception of reality is a kind of metaphysical

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[280] See *Studies in Humanism*, 445 ("our methodological principle of complete plasticity"), and *Axioms as Postulates*, 60 ("it is a *methodological necessity* to assume that the world is *wholly plastic*, i.e. to *act as though* we believed this" – italics original).

[281] On page 445 of *Studies in Humanism*, Schiller states that "[maintaining only] a *partial* plasticity would be nugatory and unworkable. If we had assumed it, it might always be declared to be inapplicable to the case to which it was applied." Further, on page 61 of *Axioms as Postulates*, Schiller states:

"In point of fact we can never go far in any direction without coming upon rigid limits and insuperable obstacles… [nonetheless] the extent of the world's plasticity is not known *a priori*, but must be found out by trying. Now in trying we can never start with a recognition of rigid limits and insuperable obstacles. For if we believed them such, it would be *no use* trying. Hence we must assume that we can obtain what we want, if only we try skillfully and perseveringly enough. A failure only proves that the obstacles would not yield to the method employed: it cannot extinguish the hope that by *trying again* by other methods they could finally be overcome."

[282] See above footnotes.

fallibilism that removes the ruts of the objectivist approach through an application of the pragmatic method of truth, which the next chapter will comprehensively discuss.

According to Schiller, the conception of a hyleatic reality not only solves the age-old problem of change in metaphysics[283] in that it embraces and accommodates change instead of trying to explain it away, but it also does some explanatory work as well in that it provides an avenue for allowing for the existence of subjective experiences of the world[284] – including, and perhaps especially, those which are involved in the adoption of scientific paradigms. These, according to Kuhn, may only be changed via a "conversion" akin to a *gestalt* switch[285] since those in disparate paradigms quite literally perceive different worlds.[286] The hyleatic conception of reality also provides a cogent answer to why anyone should pursue their values vis-a-vis reality: it is *plastic* and only by experiment may we ultimately discover how much this is so.

As an important aside, it should be noted that the idea of "making reality" is *methodological*, that is, it is metaphorical and not meant to be taken in any literalistic sense.[287] It is first and foremost an alternative story or account that is intended to disrupt

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[283] *Studies in Humanism*, 411.

[284] In *Studies in Humanism*, 427, Schiller notes that "the plasticity of the real world would explain how it was that our subjective choices could realize alternative developments of reality."

[285] See Kuhn, *Structure* (1970), 85, 112, 120, 122, 150, and 204.

[286] Ibid, 150.

[287] See *Studies in Humanism*, 17, where Schiller states that, "Epistemologically… *the conception of a determinable plastic 'matter' seems useful enough as descriptive of our knowing*, and as innocent and at least as valid as the Aristotelian notion that knowledge always arises out of pre-existent knowledge." In other words, it is a picturesque description of the process of our "knowing," i.e. our progressive experience of the world, from infancy throughout our conscious lives.

our usual assumptions when it comes to reality, i.e. that it is completely independent of cognition, permanent, static, and absolute – or possibly transcendent, if you take a traditional Kantian approach. The pragmatic approach to metaphysics, in a principled and consciously thought-out sense, considers the adoption of a system as optional, as noted above. Nevertheless, when we draw on the systems and narratives which are culturally and philosophically available to us, it can affect our actions in various ways, as Schiller's offering of a replacement for the objectivist metaphysic implies, as well as his other efforts to pragmatically dispel the philosophies of Skepticism, Solipsism, and Pessimism.[288]

For the pragmatist, the constructions of metaphysics directly serve epistemological (if not psychological[289]) ends – and it is knowledge (i.e. *active* knowledge; knowing in and through action and experimentation) that is of primary importance to an organism in its environment. "Pragmatism," Schiller writes, "is not a metaphysic, though it may, somewhat definitely, point to one."[290] It is, rather, "something

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[288] The bulk of his *Riddles of the Sphinx: A Study in the Philosophy of Humanism* (1910, revised edition) is dedicated to dispelling Skepticism and Pessimism as anti-human philosophies, and arguments against Skepticism and Solipsism are a consistent theme throughout *Studies in Humanism* (1907) as well.

It is also important to clarify that "pessimism" here refers to the general variety arising from Schopenhauer, and not any particular contemporary version, such as Afro-pessimism, though Schiller's pragmatic metaphysics would likely answer many contemporary varieties of Pessimism in much the same way.

[289] See the above discussion regarding the personal nature of pragmatic metaphysics. Also, see *Our Human Truths* where Schiller states that Pragmatism "recognizes that it is a legitimate human craving to synthesize all knowledge and to view existence as a whole" (178). This general desire to place all knowledge into a system is part of the aim toward what Schiller refers to as a psychological "demand for harmony," as he says in *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*: "The demand for 'system' is but part of a larger demand for a 'harmony' (actual or at least ideal) in our experience; it is not merely a matter of formal logical consistency, but also of emotional satisfaction" (50).

[290] *Studies in Humanism*, 11.

far more precious, viz. an epistemological method which really describes the facts of knowing."[291] This emphasis, along with the provisional and practical nature of pragmatist metaphysics, is what allowed Schiller to accommodate those who expressed concern over the "making of reality" as implying some kind of mystical creation[292] on the part of the knower. Within the subjective-objective schema, which both Schiller and James make use of (though with reservations), it does not make sense to place the "making" on the objective side of the divide – at least according to Schiller's more traditional interlocutors on this point. As such, in true pragmatist form, he admits that it is tenable to fit the new alternate account of hyleatic reality into the subjective-objective schema as a phenomenon which occurs squarely on the *subjective* side:

> "Now it is clear, in the first place, that acceptance of the Pragmatic Method in no wise compels us to ignore this distinction. Nor does it as such compel us to assert the 'making of reality' in the *objective* sense. It seems quite feasible to conceive the making as *merely subjective*, as referring only to our *knowledge of reality*, without affecting its actual existence. Nay, the existence of the distinction may itself legitimately be appealed to show that common sense draws a clear line at

[291] Ibid.

[292] Such as was the case with the subjective idealists, whose position Schiller rejects as "practically absurd" (*Studies in Humanism*, 465).

> this point. And so, it may be denied that we 'make' reality metaphysically, though not that we 'make' it epistemologically."[293]

The "distinction" referred to in the first part of this passage is that between "*discovering* reality" in a subjective sense and "*making* reality" in the objective, essentially idealist, sense.[294] This distinction becomes important against the backdrop of the subjective-objective schema since it places significantly more separation between metaphysics and epistemology, and thus Schiller uses the terms "metaphysically" and "epistemologically" here relative to that schema. And Schiller is correct that when it comes to commonsense, a line is drawn which prohibits us from being seen as mystical creators of an "objective" reality, like wizards conjuring objects into existence, and this is certainly not what is intended by the introduction of an alternative metaphor of reality as essentially plastic. As has been emphasized, Pragmatism (with its attendant metaphysical approach) is first and foremost a method for approaching the world and our actions in it. Nevertheless, in the final assessment, from the standpoint of our experience, reality is in a very substantial way what we make it, and the story of a mind-independent, objective, static, absolute, transcendent reality is just as much of a *story* as that of a hyleatic primary reality – each is a postulate, an operant hypothesis, the consequences of which ought to be examined in any case.

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[293] *Studies in Humanism*, 429. In a footnote there, Schiller makes it clear that Pragmatism allows for someone to be a pragmatist epistemologically and a realist metaphysically, giving Prof. Santayana as an example of such a hybrid view.

[294] *Studies in Humanism*, 429.

2.6 Reframing the Gap

Under the assumptions of traditional objectivist metaphysics, there is a fundamental gap between humanity and the world.[295] We, in our imperfect human capacities, strive to bridge that gap the best we can, but we are, after all, "only human." This characterization of the gap is the cultural inheritance of the West,[296] which is willing to accord perfection and permanence to a thoroughly objective reality that lay beyond us, while ascribing imperfection and transience to human bodies and human knowledge. When the external world shifts and changes, it is assumed to be perfectly consistent with the physical laws that govern it, but when humans shift and change, not only physiologically but in their knowledge and predication of the world, it is assumed that something is wrong and that their changes are due to essential imperfections in the face of that transcendent and perfect reality. This is a deeply anti-human bias, one that cuts off humanity from being part of nature, and, if it must admit that part of us is contiguous with the rest of the natural order, then it will consign our bodies to the world, but leave our minds floating abstractly above it (disembodied as they are), somehow permanently separated from the rest of existence. Such a punctuated separation is necessary for the maintenance of a strict subjective-objective distinction, and this distinction is what effectively places the problematic gap between the mind-independent world and the world-independent mind.

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[295] It is interesting that Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pages 94, 99-100), as well as Schiller, discuss objectivist metaphysics as artificially introducing a "gap between mind and the world" (ibid). In *Studies in Humanism*, Schiller states that "absolutist philosophy [recognizes] that there exists at its core a serious gap" (282).

[296] In *Studies in Humanism*, Schiller refers to the gap as "Plato's chasm" (290), indicating that the Platonic tradition in Western philosophy is largely responsible for the derision and rejection of humanity in the face of the ideals which it, by definition, falls short of.

So, what to do about this gap? How are we to traverse it to get at the objective reality that stands continually opposite us? Skeptics affirm the narrative of a static and independent reality but maintain that any knowledge of it is impossible. In other words, the gap cannot be bridged. For the skeptic, not only is reality wholly independent of us, but truth is absolute and perfect, and we imperfect beings fall short of that, so we are stuck on our own side of the divide. Objectivists are bolder than skeptics in that they believe that knowledge of the independent world is possible, though only in partial amounts. They see the gap as traversable, at least in some cases, and perhaps many. And in those cases where they feel the swell of their own epistemological confidence, they will proclaim that "this, *this*, is objective reality, *this* is absolutely true." Though they will then face the subsequent and inevitable difficulty of needing to retract such statements in the course of time. Nonetheless, once the next "Truth" is adopted about reality, they make similar proclamations about it, with the additional clarification that this is how it has really been all along. But this is eventually upset too, and so the cycle continues. The objectivist gap, framing things as it does, is derisive of human experience, knowledge, and achievements. It elevates an alien reality and denigrates anything which is conceived as falling short of it. Pragmatism, especially as formulated by Schiller, seeks to reframe that gap in a way that is philo-human, and embraces humans along with their process of gaining knowledge, not as somehow imperfect or unfortunate, but necessary – and even laudable.

The basic gap is not between humans and distant reality. Viewed from the perspective of embodied cognitive science, the proposal of such a gap makes little sense, as if the human organism is subsumed, as it were, in a vast ocean of briny seawater that

surrounds them and reaches to their very lips but nevertheless cannot be imbibed. Rather, the organism and its environs, as we have already noted, constitute an essential unity, each imposing on the other in a continual dynamic exchange. As Johnson (2017) aptly points out:

> "We could not continue to exist if we were not more or less in touch with our surroundings in the most intimate fashion. We are what we are at this instant, and our world is what it is at this instant, only because of our embodied interactions with our surroundings."[297]

So, what, then, is this gap *really*? It is the gap between us and the future, between what is potential now and what of that potentiality might be realized in the course of time. As Schiller states:

> "It is, of course, enormously important that [humanity] should learn how to *anticipate* the course of events in order that [they] may be prepared for what is coming. The power of prediction is eagerly desired, and human ingenuity exhausts itself in devising the most various and fantastic modes of divination."[298]

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[297] Johnson, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason*, 175.

[298] *Logic For Use*, 95.

Prediction is central to human endeavor and is the ultimate practical purpose of all methods of reasoning. It is the reason for all of our logical formulas[299] and our consistent uses of language,[300] and is the impetus behind our search for "laws of nature."[301] And the aim of prediction is control;[302] we want control to the degree that we will be mostly unsurprised by what happens within our experience – indeed, prediction and control may be said to be the essence of science.[303] In all of our attempts to explain, interpret, and organize the elements of our experience, "we never," notes Schiller, "sacrifice the demand that all events must be subject to [natural] law, because we will not give up on the hope of prediction."[304] And this is because "the biological value of successful prediction is beyond dispute."[305] The great value of prediction is why we invest so much of our time and resources into improving our methods of accomplishing it – it is humanity's greatest and best tool.

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[299] See *Logic For Use*, 272, where Schiller notes that the "prediction of the future was precisely the purpose for which such [logical] formulas were needed."

[300] See *Logic For Use*, 199, where Schiller notes that our practice of naming with words and constructing conventional definitions is with the hope that it will "guarantee that its [i.e. the thing named] future behavior will conform to our expectations and enable us to make predictions."

[301] In *Logic For Use*, 409, Schiller calls the proposal that there are natural laws "a postulate of prediction." See also the discussion in that volume on page 243.

[302] Schiller makes this point in several places in *Logic For Use*. On page 96, he states that prediction "is to a large extent control," and on page 409 he says that "we wish to be able to control it [i.e. reality] and prediction is a condition of control." He also associates prediction and control on page 52.

[303] In *Logic For Use*, 52, Schiller states that "prediction and control are rightly deemed the very essence of Science."

[304] *Logic For Use*, 344.

[305] Ibid, 52.

Now the objectivist, placing the gap as she does, maintains that the important difference is between prediction and omniscience, construing the former as an imperfect approximation of the latter. But this is not unlike denigrating horses for not being pegasuses. Pegasuses, like perfection and omniscience, *do not exist*. Or at least, if they do, we have never seen them. Thus, it does not make sense to posit the existence of fictional things and then, in dedication to them, denigrate the concrete instances of actual things with which we are readily familiar.[306] We have never met or encountered omniscience, and it is not clear that such a concept is even plausible in principle. Of course, the traditional objectivist metaphysic is an operant story, and replacing it with an alternative doesn't make it less of a story. But if we are going to tell a story in any case (embedded, cultural creatures as we are), then why not adopt a story that best engages with experience and refrains from debasing humanity in the face of what has never been encountered? Enter the pragmatic story of primary reality.

Instead of viewing the gap as residing between prediction and omniscience, Pragmatism places the gap between *potentiality* and *actuality* as they occur in reality. This makes, not humans, but the stuff of reality (or, if one wants to cast it in terms of the subjective-objective schema, our *experience* of reality) the bearer of the gap – and the stuff of reality is difficult to moralize as somehow defective or insufficient. Thus, the pragmatic approach fully embraces the gap in a spirit of optimism and views the human enterprise of prediction to be the best option available given what exists, dismissing the intellectualist and objectivist chimeras of absolute perfection and omniscience as useless

[306] This is a form of James's "vicious abstractionism." See the next chapter, sections 3.11 and 3.9.1.

and unhelpful. The story of a hyleatic primary reality, which is indeterminate yet determinable via our activity is philo-human and elicits progress and growth, not only personally, but socially and collectively as well. It short-circuits the skepticism and pessimism implied by the objectivist metaphysic and allows us to tell an honest story of continual change and development over time, rather than having to continually make and retract proclamations of "objectivity" out of service to a story about a transcendent reality that is divorced from us and out of any cognitive reach. The new story of reality is so optimistic that it actually makes failure into a datum, a kind of positive knowledge that can spur us forward toward the attainment of our goals and purposes. Postulation, the creation and revision of hypotheses, becomes the path to traversing the gap, and all experimentation and investigation of the world – successes as well as failures – take on positive meaning relative to the purposes of our inquiries. As Schiller explains,

> "By conceiving [objectivist, or absolutist] axioms as essentially postulates, made with an ultimately practical end [in mind], we bridge the gap that has been artificially constructed between the functions of our nature [i.e. nature *for us*, as in the totality of our experience], and overcome the errors of intellectualism."[307]

As we live in the space between reality's potentiality and actuality, we can learn without denigrating ourselves for being, not gods, but "only human." To the pragmatist, we are

[307] *Axioms as Postulates*, 86.

not “just” or “only” human, we are Human – and there is nothing diminished, imperfect, or unfortunate about that.

Chapter 3 – Pragmatic Truth

Chapter overview:

Similar to the previous chapter, the main purpose of this chapter is to present the pragmatic theory of truth as formulated by Schiller, as well as offer various contrasts and criticisms with the correspondence theory of truth. The main sources used to occasion

this discussion are the comments of Stich (1990) regarding the analytic approach to cognitive evaluation (most notably the evaluation of beliefs) and the formulations of Englebretsen (2006) regarding the correspondence theory of truth. As will be explained below, the work of Stich brings the discussion within the pale of Philosophy of Cognitive Science and brings into question the purpose and value of truth and true beliefs. That of Englebretsen was selected due to its comprehensive presentation of a correspondence theory of truth along with the provision of a framework for parsing any theory of truth, which I use to organize the various elements of the pragmatic theory of truth that I present.

Introduction

In *The Fragmentation of Reason* (1990), Stich takes a decidedly, though somewhat complex, correspondence view of truth. That is, he takes truth to consist in some kind of correlation between the world and beliefs, and though he cites the common metaphors for correspondence (maps, mirrors), he also notes how these metaphors are inadequate and quickly fail upon closer examination. And this is where the complexity of his own view of truth is introduced; Stich rejects the common metaphors for correspondence while retaining the notion that there needs to be some correlation between our beliefs and the world for them to be counted as true. But this conviction about the nature of truth is moot, since for Stich truth *doesn't matter*, cannot be ascertained even if it did, and any attempt to examine beliefs in terms of it is a lost cause. An intricate view of truth, indeed.

Throughout his rather circuitous path of reasoning, Stich argues that the theory of truth he puts forward (aside from the basic correspondence intuition) is inadequate and

criticizes each component piece of the function which he adopts as the mediator between beliefs and reality, highlighting specifically where the various theories on which he draws require a recourse to intuitions and ultimately terminate in arbitrary considerations. On this score, I take no issue with Stich. Rather, I take issue with many of the basic assumptions that compose the backdrop of his overall argument, as well as with the conclusions he draws on the basis of them. As such, I will provide a very brief overview of the scaffolding of Stich's position, letting most of what he offers stand, summarizing it for essential context, and affirming his objections where I think it relevant to do so. But, I will not be examining Stich's criticisms of standard analytic epistemology since, on the whole, I agree with them — the notable exception being his construal of beliefs as mental sentences, a notion that I will dispute below. The goal at present is to dispute with his conclusion regarding the value of truth. In addition to taking issue with Stich's conclusion, I will be offering a critique of correspondence theory in general, namely the formulation put forward by Englebretsen.

As already mentioned, Stich rejects the usual metaphors for the notion of truth as correspondence, namely those of a map (i.e. that truth consists in the accurate "mapping" of belief statements onto the world) and of a mirror (i.e. that truth means that statements somehow "reflect" the world). Although such language, notes Stich, has long ago become part and parcel of commonsense ways of speaking,[308] it is nevertheless obscure and "profoundly misleading" to the extent that the conviction that the truth is valuable cannot be sustained by use of it.[309] Such examples as the number of prime numbers in a given

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[308] Stich, *Fragmentation of Reason*, 102.

[309] Ibid, 103.

range, the content of hypothetical conditionals, and conclusions drawn from scientific theories generally are taken as instances where such metaphors break down.[310] Nevertheless, concludes Stich, truth *is* a kind of correspondence, so despite the glaring inadequacy of the usually attendant metaphors, it is necessary to determine how beliefs map onto the world. But again, for Stich, all of this amounts to a hopelessly arbitrary fool's errand.

3.1 Stich and the Skeptical Conclusion

At the outset, Stich challenges the skeptical conclusion that the attainment of truth and knowledge are impossible by challenging the conviction that truth is important in the first place.[311] When it comes to true beliefs, Stich takes an objectivist tack and allows the skeptic to frame the issue: (a) the truth is absolute, (b) inaccessible to human ken, and (c) yet entirely necessary for the evaluation of beliefs. In response, Stich accepts (a) and (b) while rejecting (c), shrugging his shoulders about the "obvious" value of truth or true beliefs.[312] In making this move, he surrenders truth entirely, and pivots to a deconstruction of various theoretical efforts within logic, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind to try and ascertain the kind of truth which the skeptic views as necessarily real and hopelessly out of human reach. Stich's reason for affirming (b) is due to a fourth element: (d) semantic or analytic theories of truth bottom out in arbitrary

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[310] Stich, *Fragmentation of Reason*, 102-103.

[311] Ibid, 101.

[312] Ibid, 102.

considerations, making them an impossible method of obtaining truth. And then, finally, there is his conclusion on the basis of (a), (b), and (d): he rejects (c) and deems truth to be of no value whatsoever.

In considering skepticism, Stich assents to the following points:

1. Truth is objective and absolute.
2. Truth lies beyond human reach.
3. Semantic or analytic theories of truth bottom out in arbitrary considerations, making them inadequate as criteria of truth.
4. Truth itself does not matter anyhow.

Of course, based on Pragmatism, I reject 1, 2, and 4 while affirming 3. So far as the skepticism is concerned, the pragmatist goes further and accuses the skeptic of being a dogmatist about the nature of truth as objective (1), and by extension, everything epistemically upstream from it (e.g. justification, rationality, and knowledge). In the view of the pragmatist, the skeptic (arguing as they are from objectivist and absolutist premises regarding truth) has to provide an explanation for *why* their conception of truth is sound, beyond assertions of the way it "must be," alongside the citation of the cultural traditions and myths inherited by Western philosophy.

Pragmatism camps on the aggregate of concrete instances of truth (i.e. their being "made" or "discovered") and asks the skeptic (or any objectivist/absolutist) what they add up to. If truth is forever outside human apprehension, then on what basis do they claim it to be objective, let alone to exist? And if it is within human reach to obtain, then how

exactly *is* it obtained and what separates it from error and falsity? And if an objective and permanent truth is obtainable, then how do we account for the history of knowledge, where propositions once held to be "true" have subsequently been rejected as "false"? Taking the history of science and human knowledge seriously, it truly cannot be both ways. Thus 1–4, in the context of answering the skeptic are recapitulated by the pragmatist as:

I. Truth is *pragmatic*, being neither objective nor absolute.
II. The skeptic is incorrect: truth *is* within the reach of human understanding.
III. Semantic or analytic theories of truth do indeed bottom out in arbitrary considerations.[313]
IV. Truth *is* valuable, pragmatically valuable.

In the sections that immediately follow, the focus will be on explicating Stich's position with regard to truth and true beliefs, while addressing point III. Points I, II, and IV will be covered later in section 3.9 where the pragmatic theory of truth is presented and explained.

There is one more important point to add to 1–4, which is also claimed by Stich:

[313] As will become clearer as this chapter progresses, the ultimately subjective nature of the application of semantic theories of truth is not what invalidates them in the view of the pragmatist. Rather, it is that they do not accomplish what is claimed about them by objectivists, and so invalidate themselves. Further, the conception of truth as a property of certain sentences is far too narrow of a conception of truth for the pragmatist. For the pragmatist, truth arises from the texting and verification of hypotheses in judgment, and thus goes beyond mere linguistic analysis. Truth is about action and experiment, not definitions (or, not *only* about definitions).

5. Pragmatism is a kind of crass expediency under which truth has no value.

"Crass expediency" refers to a devil-may-care attitude toward the facts of relevant situations, focused on merely the attainment of what one desires in whatever way seems best — a straightforward consequentialism under which truth is worthless. Of course, Stich doesn't state it in quite this way (i.e. describing it as "crass"), but it is nonetheless important to distinguish between what he calls "pragmatism" (which is really a kind of *pseudo-pragmatism*, as was noted in the Introduction, section 1.5.1) and the actual Pragmatism of thinkers like James and Schiller, under which truth is of ultimate value. Thus, I will answer 5 with:

V. Pragmatism is a philosophy rooted in practice and experience for which truth is not only valuable, but its central and fundamental concept; and truth for Pragmatism is *not* a kind of crass expedience.

First, however, we will go over how Stich understands *beliefs*, the world (very briefly), and the interpretation function which he proposes as somehow mediating between them on behalf of the truth of our beliefs. Stich's particular notion of correspondence will be taken as an aggregate of his account of beliefs and an interpretation function, since from these we can see his view of what it means for beliefs to be true.[314] Though "what it means for beliefs to be true" is highly debatable, notes Stich, he indicates that his

[314] Stich, *Fragmentation of Reason*, 103.

explanation is the one he takes to be among the most plausible. Second, we will address some of the general issues with the correspondence theory of truth, as formulated in a more recent version by Englebretsen in his *Bare Facts and Naked Truths: A New Correspondence Theory of Truth* (2006).

Finally, as mentioned briefly in the Introduction, Stich's exact path of reasoning is circuitous: it meanders quite a bit, being somewhat repetitious in the process, and this is intentional, being part of the largely autobiographical style that Stich warns his readers will be the case in his essay.[315] As such, he touches (and retouches) on many details which, though interesting and important, are outside the intended scope of the current project. So, there will be considerable efforts to distill and simplify Stich's general presentation, and in the process many of the details which I have deemed tangential and extraneous will not be mentioned or discussed here.

3.2 Stich on Beliefs

Stich begins his account of beliefs by stating that he considers them to be "real psychological states," that is, as opposed to explanatory fictions,[316] which are best

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[315] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 1, where he states that "the autobiographical approach will predominate."

[316] Ibid, 103.

Side Note: Although beyond the scope of the current chapter, I have to say that I do not find the concept of a "state," as applied to the brain, to be explanatorily meaningful–not anywhere that it is used in the philosophy of mind. To say that beliefs are a "psychological" or "mental state" is really no different than referring to running as "limb states." I imagine isolating "limb states" by presenting a series of stop-motion photos of pairs of legs in the process of running, each photo representing a single "state." Is one picture "running"? Two? How many of such "limb states" constitute "running"? And if we were to turn a stack of such photos into a kind of flipbook, we would see a depiction of running when flipping through them, but does *this* really explain *what* running is? Perhaps it would in some nominal sense it would. But beyond this, I don't see how construing it as a series of "states" provides anything useful in the way of explanation.

It has been stated (e.g. Roger J. Rigterink, "What Are Beliefs (If They Are Anything at All)?" in

understood in terms of the *token-identity hypothesis*. The token-identity hypothesis says that each belief is identical with some or other neurological state:

> "We can view belief tokens as neurally-encoded inscriptions of the relevant well-formed formulas [of a given language]."[317]

And again,

> "To have a belief, then, is to have a token of a well-formed formula stored appropriately in one's brain."[318]

From here, having made it clear that his understanding of the believing mind is thoroughly physicalistic, Stich begins to make his case for understanding beliefs as semantic objects,

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Metaphilosophy 22, 1 of 2, January/April, 1991: 112) that while "mental state" is vague, the alternative expression "neurological state" is somehow empirically grounded. But this is also specious. To return to our running example, exchanging "limb states" for "leg states" or "kinesiological states" offers little to nothing in the way of explanation of *what running actually is* (i.e. how it works) the same way that "neurological state" is explanatorily vague and vacuous. If it were within my power, I would ban the term "state" from all discussions of philosophy of mind since they do nothing but exchange one unexplained abstraction for another while giving the illusion of explanatory depth. The entire concept of "mental states" allows talk of what supposedly goes on in the brain and CNS apart from cognitive and neuroscientific data, which is misleading at best. Just as it would be vacuous and misleading to discuss the activity of running in terms of "limb states" without any recourse to kinesiology.

[317] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 109.

[318] Ibid.

> "Unlike most brain states… and unlike most everything else in the universe, beliefs have semantic properties."[319]

By this, Stich means that beliefs are the kinds of things that can be "true" or "false".[320] However, he is careful to note that his concern is "with the semantics of mental states, not the semantics of natural language sentences."[321] Despite this declaration, however, Stich states that to bridge the gap between formal semantics and the psychological states which are supposedly identical with beliefs, he will adopt what he refers to as "the simple expedient of putting language inside the head."[322] This maneuver, then, allows Stich to have his physicalistic mind-cake and eat it too; he can claim to be a physicalist about mind and belief-tokens, while at the same time relating to beliefs as "sentences in the head" to which he can conveniently apply the rigors of formal semantics, as one would to natural language sentences. Once this move is made, Stich confidently proclaims,

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[319] Ibid, 103.

[320] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 104. It appears from here and the balance of his treatment of beliefs that what Stich has in mind here is a kind of formal truth-value, as applied in systems of logic. Though it may not occur to many, there is a sense in which something like a psychological state like a belief may not be susceptible to formal regimentation and analysis, at least not without considerable assumptions in the background, to which something like beliefs may also not be strictly susceptible. This is too broad to go into here, but there those (e.g. Mario Bunge, "The correspondence theory of truth" in *Semiotica* 188, 2012: 65) who make a distinction between formal truth and other kinds of truth.

[321] Ibid, 109.

[322] Ibid.

> "The question of how beliefs get their semantic properties can now be rephrased as a question about how we can assign truth conditions to these cerebral inscriptions."[323]

Thus, all considerations of belief are placed (in some verbal sense, anyhow) into a strictly logico-linguistic realm, where mental sentences – somehow identical with mental states – are analyzed by formal means. Beliefs for Stich are just a kind of sentence, inscribed on the tabula of the mind, which are fully amenable to formal semantic analysis.

3.3 Stich on the World

Very briefly, there is no indication that Stich's philosophy of reality is any different from that standard rationalist and cognitivist conceptions of a "static" reality which, to use James's well-known phrase, "stands complete and ready-made from all eternity."[324] That is, reality remains what it is, in itself, regardless of any observer: sets of objects, properties, and relations, which are entirely mind-independent.

3.4 Stich and the Interpretation Function

The abstract object intended to mediate between the world and beliefs, and facilitate their hopeful correspondence, is what Stich calls the *interpretation function*, which, in the simplest terms according to his formulation "is just a mapping"[325] that accounts for "how

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[323] Ibid.

[324] *Pragmatism*, Lectures VI and VII.

[325] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 114.

mental states get paired up with their truth conditions."[326] Each interpretation function is comprised of three basic parts: (i) a semantic theory of truth, (ii) a theory of reference, and (iii) a theory of mind. For Stich, these three component theories combine to essentially operationalize his overall correspondence notion of truth with the intention that an interpretation function, properly deployed in the space between any belief and any relevant part of the world, will yield a truth-value for the former.

In Stich's case, he opts to construct his interpretation function using Tarski's equivalence schema (*S is true iff p*), the Putnam-Kripke causal theory of reference, and a functionalist theory of mind.[327] This combination is dubbed "the causal/functional theory"[328] or "the causal/functional account,"[329] and Stich correctly attributes its initial suggestion to Field (1978),[330] and its subsequent development to scholars like Devitt and Sterelny (1987)[331] and others. At present, I am more interested in the actual deployment

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[326] Ibid, 110.

[327] Stich does not discuss anywhere in *Fragmentation* why he opts for a functionalist theory of mind, but it makes sense given the rest of his treatment of beliefs and mental states that he would do so, given that he is notably uninterested in any sort of metaphysical discourse about the exact nature of cognitive processes (which he alludes to on page 104), but only with the identity between belief tokens and psychological states such that he can focus on assessing them as mental sentences (i.e. without having to explain how his view fits with any sort of metaphysical thesis).

[328] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 106.

[329] Ibid, 109.

[330] Hartry Field, "Mental Representation" in *Erkenntnis* 13, 1 (1978): 9-61. There, on pages 37 and 38, Field writes: "On this way of talking, the objects of belief are sentences or sentence-analogs, and these sentences or sentence have content or meaning… [but] this way of talking does not really remove… the problem of giving a materialistic account of *having content.* Unless such an account of content can be given, much of what we say about belief… makes no sense at all… [T]he problem of giving a materialistic account of content seems manageable: one way to manage it is to give a Tarski-like account of truth, supplemented by a [causal] theory of reference." (italics original)

[331] Devitt and Sterelny, *Language and Reality*. There, on page xv, Devitt and Sterelny write: "…our philosophy of mind is functionalist… [and] we embrace causal theories of reference of the sort introduced

of the causal/functional interpretation function than I am in the many critical details of each component theory that Stich discusses in *Fragmentation*. However, I will briefly explain each component theory, as well as Stich's criticisms to the effect that semantic theories of truth and reference ultimately bottom out in arbitrary considerations with no other basis than a recourse to commonsense intuitions – a point with which I agree, and which is bolstered by the pragmatic theory of truth espoused by Schiller. These explanations are related to 3/III above.

3.5 Stich on Tarski's Theory of Truth

The Tarskian theory of truth begins with his equivalence schema (or, "T-schema"):

S is true if and only if p

'S' is the name of a sentence in a given language, called the "object language," and 'p' is the name of a sentence in a "metalanguage," that is, a language which specifies the conditions under which statements in the object language, like 'S', can be true.

Stich remarks that there are two "conspicuous limitations" to Tarski's theory.[332] The first limitation mentioned is that it is not altogether clear from the theory what constitutes adequate truth conditions. The second limitation is that to get a truth-theory off the ground requires a substantial list of axioms, and there is no way (based on Tarski)

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by Saul Kripke, Keith Donnellan, and Hilary Putnam. We are guided by Hartry Field in placing reference within the theory of language: reference is needed to explain truth" (italics original).

[332] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 107.

to know if any given list is right (or what must obtain in any case between names and persons or predicates and satisfaction conditions), if the former is supposed to denote or be satisfied by things that fit the latter, respectively.[333] Of course, as Stich duly notes, there have been many attempts to answer these questions and to create rules and objects to fill the explanatory space left by Tarski's theory, all "products of the philosophical imagination,"[334] but there has been no definitive resolution as of yet.

3.5.1 Stich on Causal Theories of Reference

Causal theories of reference, as explained by Stich, propose that

> "...a token of a name denotes an individual if and only if the appropriate sort of causal chain extends from an original use or dubbing to the current production of the name token in question."[335]

In other words, causal theorists suppose that there is an initial event where a name is conferred to an individual – Kripke (1972)[336] suggests some public event like a baptism – and it is via such initial events that terms gain a definite referent. And by the maintenance of a causal chain through history since the initial event, reference is accounted for and

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[333] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 108.

[334] Stich, *Fragmentation of Reason*, 107.

[335] Ibid.

[336] E.g. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), 96.

maintained. In this way, explains Stich, predicates (at least proper names and natural kind terms) "are themselves tied onto the world with causal ropes."[337]

Similar to the criticisms he levels against Tarski's theory of truth, Stich notes that

> "Intuitions on who a person's utterance is about play a similarly central role in the working out of the positive details of causal theories. There are, after all, endless varieties of causal chains in the world linking all sorts of events in all sorts of ways."[338]

And,

> "...there will be all sorts of ways in which a mental word can end up as part of a speaker's mental lexicon."[339]

There is simply no way from the content of the causal theories themselves to determine what constitutes an adequate causal chain, or which causal chain is the correct one, that is, the causal chain that is the appropriate kind for establishing the necessary reference (i.e. word–world) relation. Not only this, but as Stich further highlights, the theory becomes less clear when the terms in question are not natural kind predicates.[340] Like the

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[337] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 108.

[338] Ibid, 109.

[339] Ibid, 110.

[340] Ibid, 108.

satisfaction conditions for a Tarskian object language, the consideration of causal chains bottoms out in the arbitrary intuitions of the theorist as to which chains are adequate or correct, without any other means to resolve these questions.

3.5.2 Stich on the Causal-Functional Account Overall

After criticizing both the truth-theory and the reference-theory elements of the causal/functional account, Stich turns a critical eye toward the account overall, that is, toward what results when it is practically employed. In the final analysis, Stich deems the causal/functional interpretation function to be deficient in getting at the truth (i.e. as objective and absolute, per the skeptic – see 1 above) on the grounds that it is (a) limited, and (b) idiosyncratic.

> *Limited* – Stich points to the limitation of the overall theory to suss out adequate causal chains, which in turn limits the specification of truth conditions. For instance, a word may end up as part of a speaker's mental lexicon though it is not tied to any particular event by the specific kind of causal chain required by the causal theory of reference.[341] Thus, the strict causal theorists will because of this need to deem such words as having no referents. "And since these mental words have no referents," concludes Stich, "the mental sentences in which they occur will have no truth conditions assigned by the causal/functional interpretation

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[341] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 111.

function."[342] In other words, an absence of reference leads to an absence of truth since in the absence of reference it will be impossible to formulate truth conditions, and truth conditions rely implicitly on reference. That is one reason. Another, less clear, reason Stich cites as to why the interpretation function is limited is that "The belieflike mental states for which it provides a specification of truth conditions constitute a small subset of possible belieflike mental states that a human or other organism might have."[343] This statement is fairly vague, and seems to relate to the problem of getting the Tarski schema to work for any language, or even all possible sentences of a given language, as noted above. However, it seems plausible that Stich here is gesturing, albeit unclearly, to the distinction between "knowledge-that" and "knowledge-how," in that the latter is not propositional.[344] If this is the case, then Stich is saying in passing that since the causal/functional interpretation function only pertains to beliefs which are propositional (knowledge-that), it could not be applied to those beliefs (or, "belieflike states") which are not, as is the case with knowledge-how, thereby limiting its scope. Again, if this is what Stich intends to imply, then aside from the issue of whether thought is linguiform at all (which I will not address here), then a correspondence notion of truth operationalized by way of a formal semantic

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[342] Ibid.

[343] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 111.

[344] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 28, and Carlotta Pavese, "Knowledge How", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition, Zalta and Nodelman, eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/knowledge-how/>.

theory of truth will be necessarily limited.

Idiosyncratic – Stich's criticism of the causal/functional theory as "idiosyncratic" is directly related to his overall criticism that the working out of formal theories of truth and reference eventually requires recourse to arbitrary considerations which can only be answered by the commonsense intuitions of the philosopher – and common sense is definitely not ubiquitous among thinkers. When considering the various possible "causal chains" of reference reckoned across the commonsense intuitions of any given group of individuals, Stich notes that "...if it is indeed the case that common sense groups together a heterogeneous cluster of causal chains, then… they will characterize alternative notions of 'reference' – alternative word-world links – which we might call REFERENCE*, REFERENCE**, REFERENCE***, and so on. And the only obvious complaint to lodge against many of these alternative schemes for nailing words on to [sic] the world is that they do not happen to the scheme sanctioned by our commonsense intuitions."[345]

This phenomenon is not restricted to reference, but also to truth-conditions, and therefore to truth itself. In a similar process, attempting to fix the "correct" truth conditions, results in TRUTH* CONDITIONS, TRUTH** CONDITIONS, TRUTH*** CONDITIONS, etc., resulting in TRUE*, TRUE**, TRUE***, and so forth.[346]

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[345] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 115.

[346] Ibid, 119, 124-125.

So, for Stich, the more that we attempt to nail down exactly the correct commonsense chain, the more we inevitably confront that the basis of our judgments (especially regarding formal theories) is a series of conflicts between heterogeneous commonsense intuitions that can only be settled by way of *further commonsense intuitions*.

This concern is not unique to versions of *causal* reference and *Tarskian* schemas of truth, but also to other possible interpretation functions. What dictates the necessity of the Tarski-Causal-Functional combination? Why not others? As Stich notes, "There are endlessly many functions mapping mental states to truth conditions (or propositions or possible states of the world)."[347] Why not, for example, a combination of Horwich's minimalism, some form of Millian descriptivism, and a Brain-Mind Identity theory of mind? Or what about those, like Quine, who are skeptical of the plausibility of any kind of direct reference theory at all? Each combination and component theory will have its strengths and weaknesses, and the only available method of resolving them – for formalists – is to appeal to one or another cluster of commonsense intuitions.

3.6 Stich's Predicament

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[347] Stich, *Fragmentation of Reason*, 119.

The limited and idiosyncratic nature of formal interpretation functions, which amount to an insurmountable difficulty in operationalizing analytic theories of truth, is what I will refer to as "Stich's predicament", as mentioned in Chapter 1. Stich responds to the above predicament by concluding that truth, or having true beliefs, has no value whatsoever, neither intrinsic nor instrumental.[348]

On the hypothetical claim by someone that truth has *intrinsic value*, Stich prudently notes that not much argument is possible because if a person indicates that they accord truth (or true beliefs[349]) specifically *intrinsic* value, since then they are saying that they value it "for [its] own sake and not because [it is] conducive to something else."[350] Stich makes the remark that declarations such as this are usually, when pressed, revealed to be merely verbal; those making them will usually defend their declaration by giving the reason that they "appreciate what having true beliefs comes to,"[351] in which case the value expressed is really *instrumental value*. This recognition can be difficult for those who value truth as a kind of objective absolute such that many who accord value, especially intrinsic value, will want to avoid it altogether.

In addition to the idea that the question of *what* to value is not answerable in terms of truth (except perhaps in relation to another value or set of values), Stich argues that if someone is able to act in such a way that they can attain to the goals they are

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[348] Ibid, 101.

[349] As noted in the Introduction, for the purposes of this essay I am using "truth" and "true beliefs" interchangeably, and this is the case for Pragmatic epistemology in any case.

[350] Stich, *Fragmentation*, 118; To posit "intrinsic value" is conceptually confused, as will be discussed below in section 3.9.2.3.

[351] Ibid.

pursuing at present, then what motive do they have for caring whether their particular beliefs are TRUE*, TRUE**, TRUE*** or what have you?[352] What could possibly motivate them to care which particular and exact semantic and analytic formula for truth is the one that their particular belief set matches? If it is truth-as-intrinsically-valuable, then it quickly collapses into truth-as-instrumentally-valuable, which then is only important in relation to a particular goal. So, it would seem that all roads lead to a kind of pragmatism where truth (whether TRUTH*, TRUTH**, TRUTH***, TRUTH^{n}) simply does not matter. What matters is obtaining the objects of our purposes – full stop. This is the conclusion of Stich: there is an essential bifurcation between truth and practical success, and if we care about the latter then we need not care about the former.

3.7 Stich's Dilemma

The perception that there is an essential and unavoidable bifurcation between truth and practical success is what I will call "Stich's Dilemma," as mentioned in Chapter 1. For Stich, either we care about truth, or we can care about our goals. If truth, then we are admitting that even if TRUTH** (which we deem insufficient or incorrect) allows us to obtain our goals, and TRUTH**** (which we subscribe to) does not, we will adopt TRUE**** beliefs and reject TRUE** beliefs, despite their practical efficacy relative to our goals. But if we decide that we value practical success, then according to Stich truth doesn't matter at all, whether TRUTH**, TRUTH****, or any other output of a given interpretation function. So, either we choose the outputs of a specific interpretation

[352] This is what Stich refers to as the "'who cares' complaint" (see chapter 1, section 1.5.1).

function, and abide by them no matter what, or we ignore truth altogether and pursue our goals.

In the sections below on the pragmatic theory of truth, I plan to affirm Stich's Predicament while taking issue with, and ultimately dissolving, Stich's Dilemma. In the process, I will qualify that the *predicament* only endures for those who take a semantic or analytic approach to truth, while also critiquing Stich's notion of pragmatism (which stems directly from his framing of the *dilemma*) as fundamentally mistaken.[353] And each of these will be part of a larger presentation of Schiller's pragmatic theory of truth. But before getting into this, I will first go over some further difficulties with the correspondence theory of truth, not only on linguistic grounds, but on cognitive grounds as well. Afterward, I will get a bit broader and touch on a problem that all analytic theories of truth face, namely, the inability to distinguish between truths and truth-claims – and this will lead into the sections on the pragmatic conception of truth.

3.8 The Correspondence Theory of Truth

[353] Of course, words do not possess objective or fixed meanings, so it is well within bounds for Stich to call his own approach "pragmatism," but since he associates his own ideas with those of William James, there is definitely basis for criticizing his notion of Pragmatism as *mistaken* – that is, relative to James's own philosophical positions (and those of Schiller, Dewey, et al). As already discussed in chapter 1, Stich's "pragmatism" is actually a pseudo-pragmatism.

The correspondence theory[354] of truth is the oldest principled conception of truth and usually begins with what is sometimes called the "correspondence intuition,"[355] what Tarski referred to as the "classical Aristotelian conception of truth,"[356] which is fairly well encapsulated in a well-known passage from *Metaphysics*, Book Δ (1011b25):

> "If we define what the true and the false are, we will say the following: To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, this is false, while to say of what is that it is, and what is not that it is not, this is true."

From this initial intuition, it proceeds to a more formal definition of truth, that what is true are those statements which "correspond to" or "agree" with reality (usually expressed as either "facts" or "states of affairs"), or simply "with the way things are in the world." This formulation is also found in *De Interpretatione* (19a33) where Aristotle writes that "the truth of sentences consists in corresponding with facts."

Thus, for correspondence theorists, *a belief is true iff it corresponds to reality*.[357] Or, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have stated it:

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[354] Correspondence theories come in two forms, semantic and metaphysical. In what follows, I will focus on the semantic version since (a) it is far more common, and (b) it contains enough metaphysical content to meaningfully address them both. In all honesty, the metaphysical component seems to be inescapable in any case, so I do not see much of a difference in either of them, except perhaps that of emphasis.

[355] Marian David, *Correspondence and Disquotation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18; Paul Horwich, *truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 104.

[356] Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and The Foundations of Semantics" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4/3 (1944): 342.

[357] See Alexis G. Burgess and John P. Burgess, *Truth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), page 3, for this particular formulation.

> "In its simplest form, the correspondence theory can be stated as follows: A statement is true when it fits the way things are in the world. It is false when it fails to fit the way things are in the world."[358]

This is the basic sense of correspondence theory with which I will be engaging.

3.8.1 Pragmatic Criticisms of Metaphysical Theories of Truth

As noted above, the pragmatist considers any theory of truth which does not offer a criterion of distinguishing between true and false statements (i.e. between "truths" and mere "truth-claims") to be inadequate.[359] However, traditional analytic philosophy considers there to be a sharp distinction between *metaphysical* theories and *epistemic* theories of truth,[360] such that, as Kirkham (1992) notes, "the metaphysical project [with

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[358] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh,* 98.

[359] *Logic For Use*, 111.

[360] As is often the case when pragmatists find themselves engaging with the standard terminology and concomitant conceptual distinctions of traditional analytic philosophy, the distinctions themselves arise from fundamental background tenets to which the pragmatist does not describe. The division between "metaphysical" and "epistemic" theories of truth is an example of this. According to Englebretsen (2006, 49 and 147), "truth theories are ontologico-semantical; justification theories are epistemological" and justification theories "are intended to account for the grounds required for anybody to know that what is said to be true is true," *not* truth theories proper. Schmitt (1995, 103) refers to epistemic theories of truth as belonging to "a broader class of theories… that define truth in terms of epistemic justification or knowledge." However, the concepts of *justification* and *knowledge* within traditional analytic epistemology are objectivist and absolutist, that is, they are relative to a conception of truth as "fruth" (see next chapter) and "justification" is what bridges the gap between absolute, immutable truth and our beliefs, envisioning rationality as a kind of judge who gives the individual permission to adopt certain beliefs so long as they can offer a cogent legal argument in their favor. The pragmatist conception of truth is non-objectivist and non-absolutist, so there is no stark separation between metaphysics and epistemology or knowledge and belief. And thus justification (traditionally construed) is set aside by the pragmatist in favor of a discussion

respect to accounting for truth] is not interested in providing a criterion we could *actually use* to determine if a proposition is true."[361] This distinction is usually referred to as the difference between a "definition" of truth and its "criterion" — though, perhaps ironically, this distinction seems to have been formulated in response to the proposal of a pragmatic theory of truth, rather than preexisting it.[362] Nevertheless, according to traditional analytic theorizing about truth, metaphysical (i.e. definitional or descriptive) theories of truth are simply not intended to serve as or provide criteria, and so cannot be criticized for lacking any such criteria.

But, for the pragmatist, the distinction between "definition" and "criterion" is precisely what is at issue, not only from a practical standpoint, but from a conceptual one as well. According to both James and Schiller, the idea of a strictly metaphysical account of truth, divorced from all epistemological content, is practically untenable — not in the sense that the metaphysics and epistemology of truth are related to each other, like spoons are related to forks in that they are both utensils, but in the sense that a general

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of methods of verification. Thus, ironically, though pragmatic theories of truth are considered to be the epitome of the epistemic classification, defined as "justification theories" in traditional analytic philosophy, would actually not apply to pragmatic theories of truth by pragmatic lights, since the concept of justification doesn't technically apply to them. Of course, methods of verification can be discussed under the term "justification," but in a pragmatic context it simply doesn't have the conceptual content that it does in traditional contexts or usage.

[361] Kirkham, *Theories of Truth*, 25 (italics original, brackets mine).

[362] Cf. Bertrand Russell, "Transatlantic 'Truth'" in *Albany Review* 2 (January 1908): 393-410. Russell there refers to the distinction as the difference between a *meaning* and a *criterion*, though when Haack (1978, 88-91) discusses the distinction, she refers to Russell's "meaning" as "definition." The distinction is apparently present in section A58 of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1996, 112), though Russell nowhere mentions in his essay that he is drawing on the *Critique* for his arguments. So, in the broad scheme of truth theorizing, it seems that the distinction preexisted pragmatism (being that it is referred to in Kant), though in the narrow sense of those arguing against the theorizing of James and Schiller regarding truth, the distinction seems to have formulated, once again (i.e. by Russell), in response to Pragmatism.

distinction between metaphysics and epistemology does not make sense on pragmatistic grounds, or rather, such a distinction only makes sense in terms of standard empiricism. Rather, metaphysics and epistemology are, for the pragmatist, two aspects of a single process. Speaking practically, James makes it clear in an essay entitled "The Pragmatic Theory of Truth and its Misunderstanders" (published as the eighth chapter of *The Meaning of Truth*), in response to the accusation that "pragmatism explains not what truth is, but only how it is arrived at," writes that:

> "In point of fact it tells us both, tells us what it is incidentally to telling us how it is arrived at, for what *is* arrived at except just what the truth is? If I tell you how to get to the railroad station, don't I implicitly introduce you to the *what*, to the being and nature of that edifice? It is quite true that the abstract *word* 'how' hasn't the same meaning as the abstract *word* 'what,' but in this universe of concrete facts you cannot keep hows and whats asunder. The reasons why I find it satisfactory to believe that any idea is true, the *how* of my arriving at that belief, may be among the very reasons why the idea *is* true in reality. If not, I summon the anti-pragmatist to explain the impossibility articulately."

In a similar vein, though speaking conceptually, Schiller iterates the same point as James, though in a much more holistic fashion:

> "…[T]he pragmatic theory of knowledge does not start with any antithesis of 'truth' and 'fact,' but conceives 'reality' as something which, for our knowledge

> at least, grows up in the making of truth, and consequently recognizes continuous and fluid transitions from hypothesis to fact and truth to truth… It follows that the 'making' of truth' is also in a very real sense a 'making of reality.' In validating our claims to 'truth,' we really 'discover' realities. And we really *transform* them [i.e. the realities we 'discover'] by our cognitive efforts, thereby proving our desires and ideas to be real forces in the shaping of our world… [T]his is a result of immense philosophical importance. For it systematically bars the way to the persistent but delusive notion that 'truth' and 'reality' somehow exist apart, and apart from us, and have to be coaxed and coerced into a union, in the fruits of which we can somehow participate. The making of truth, it is plain, is anything but a passive mirroring of ready-made fact."[363]

For the pragmatist, metaphysics (the "making of reality") and epistemology (the "making of truth") do not need to be, as Schiller says, "coaxed and coerced into a union" since each represents embodied conclusions reached in a single cognitive process of postulation and testing or adjusting postulates. In pragmatic estimation, "truth" is primarily an epistemological concern, and though there are certainly metaphysical questions attached to any account of truth, to posit that the latter can be put forward without a direct and robust appeal to the former is untenable.

This non-separability between metaphysics and epistemology, between "definition" and "criterion," is expressed in the pragmatic account of meaning, which is

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[363] *Studies in Humanism*, 425.

version of the meaning-as-use.[364] Thus, for the pragmatist, to propose the meaning or definition of a word or term is to supply the criterion, or at least it must be based on the criterion, of its application. So, if a theory or account of *truth* is to be proposed, then knowing how to distinguish between true and false statements, between truths and mere truth-claims, must be a part of the theory or it will be deficient as an account of truth, at least so far as the pragmatist is concerned.[365] To be clear, on this point the pragmatist is not criticizing the metaphysical truth theorist for being half-hearted or incomplete, but for supposing that their metaphysics is, or might be, separable from any epistemic concerns, or that it is possible to construct a metaphysic of truth without first adopting an account of how truth works epistemologically.[366]

An alternate avenue to establishing a basis on which to offer criticisms of the correspondence theory of truth, which is an avowed "ontologico-semantical" theory,[367] is

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[364] Though the "meaning-as-use" idea is usually associated with later Wittgenstein, it should be noted that the pragmatic version of it (especially that version formulated by Schiller) *preceded* Wittgenstein, who, as noted by Misak (2016, 82) arrived at his conclusion via influence from Ramsey.

[365] Haack, *Philosophy of Logics*, 88-91 (esp. 90, footnote 1).

[366] Some correspondence theorists are engaged in what seems to be a bit of a motte-and-bailey move when they stipulate that their theories cannot be criticized for not offering any actual criterion of truth. They move from the "bailey" (the claim that correspondence theory is a full *theory* of truth) to the "motte" of claiming that the correspondence theory is intended as only a *definition* of "truth," and not as any kind of epistemic criterion of truth. But correspondence theory is regularly appealed to as a criterion for the truth of beliefs, and correspondence theorists themselves speak of it in terms of a criterion of truth (cf. Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen, "Kuhn, the correspondence theory of truth and coherentist epistemology" in *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* 38, 2007, 556, for an example of this kind of maneuver). Even Englebretsen (2006), while stipulating that his version of the correspondence theory is non-epistemic (49, 147), he nevertheless speaks about his project being "partly epistemological" (3-4) and at times implies that his theory is sufficient as at least a broad criterion of truth, since "what any used term expresses can be viewed either semantically or cognitively (epistemically). From the semantic view point what a statement expresses is a proposition; from an epistemic point of view it expresses a belief" (6). Thus, if asked, "How can we know that a statement is true?" (an epistemological question), Englebretsen and other correspondence theorists would respond no doubt with "We can know a statement is true if it corresponds with a fact." This kind of response is offered from the bailey, as it were.

[367] Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 49.

to place the correspondence and pragmatic theories of truth into a kind of cost-benefit analysis and compare them in terms of what they offer and what work they can do for us.[368] While metaphysical theories of truth offer [A] a metaphysical account of what truth is, the pragmatic theory of truth offers both [A] a metaphysical account of what truth is and [B] an epistemological account of how the truth of claims or statements is to be determined. Thus, the pragmatic theory of truth answers more questions, does more work theoretically, and is thereby far more useful overall. James makes the case that the pragmatic account of truth includes the metaphysical account of his intellectualist interlocutors while offering much more:

> "Pragmatist truth contains the whole of intellectualist truth and a hundred other things in addition. Intellectualist truth is then only pragmatist truth in posse. That on innumerable occasions men do substitute truth in posse or verifiability, for verification or truth in act, is a fact to which no one attributes more importance than the pragmatist: he emphasizes the practical utility of such a habit. But he does not on that account consider truth in posse, truth not alive enough ever to have been asserted or questioned or contradicted, to be the metaphysically prior thing, to which truths in act are tributary and subsidiary. When intellectualists do this, pragmatism charges them with inverting the real relation. Truth in posse

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[368] This alternate avenue, of course, is pragmatic indeed.

means only truths in act; and he insists that these latter take precedence in the order of logic as well as in that of being."[369]

3.8.2 Cognitive Science and Correspondence Theory

"The classical correspondence theory of truth is disembodied."[370]

– Lakoff and Johnson, 1999

Within second-generation cognitive science, Lakoff and Johnson have broached the topic of truth numerous times,[371] and the relevant passages from their work represent an important overview of the topic in light of issues related to embodied understanding. In the course of their treatment of the subject of truth, Lakoff and Johnson offer some important criticisms of the correspondence theory of truth – the main one being that the

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[369] *Meaning of Truth*, chapter VIII.

[370] Ibid, 102.

[371] The following are instances where Lakoff and Johnson discuss issues of *truth* from an embodied cognitive-scientific perspective:

1. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, 1980) – Chapters 23 and 24 are dedicated to the discussion of truth in light of conceptual metaphors.
2. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (Chicago, 1987) – Truth is discussed in various passages throughout.
3. Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (Basic, 1999) – Part I, chapters 7 and 8, are dedicated to the relationship between embodied realism, conceptual metaphor, and truth.
4. Johnson, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding* (Chicago, 2018) – Chapter 8 is a critique of Rorty's dismissal of truth and a positive outline of what an embodied theory of truth should address.

classical correspondence theory is disembodied, that is, it is predicated on an objectivist metaphysic.

Correspondence theorists often insist that "there is a world that is the way it is independently of what anyone says or thinks."[372] Given the untenability of objectivist metaphysics in light of current cognitive science, especially the cognitive science of perception (see previous chapter), statements like this should be enough to disqualify the correspondence theory of truth, since it imagines relations between a world of static objects and ideas[373] (or worse, between symbols and the world), and acts, in the phrasing of Lakoff and Johnson (1999), "as if there were no being with a brain and a body interposed."[374] They go on to state that,

> "The classical correspondence theory of truth is disembodied. The sensorimotor system plays no role in it. Bodily functioning in the world plays no role in it. The

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[372] George Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths: A New Correspondence Theory of Truth* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 116.

[373] On pages 45 and 46 of *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, Schiller notes the essential intertwinedness of *thought* and *reality* from the standpoint of human experience, such that any positing of "agreement" or "correspondence" between them doesn't suggest anything beyond the relation of one part of experience to another – and our experience does not include access to things which are mind-independent, as he writes:

"...[there is a] well-known dictum that truth consists in an 'agreement' or 'correspondence' of thought with its object, viz. reality. This however speedily leads to a hopeless *impasse* once the question is raised—How are we to know whether or not our 'truth' 'corresponds' or 'agrees' with its real object? For to decide this question must we not be able to compare 'thought' and 'reality,' and to contemplate each apart from the other? *This however seems impossible.* 'Thought' and 'Reality' *cannot be got apart*, and consequently the doctrine of their 'correspondence' has in the end no meaning. We are not aware of any reality except by its representation in our 'thought,' and per contra, the whole meaning of 'thought' resides ultimately in its reference to 'reality.'" (italics added)

[374] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 102.

> brain plays no role in it. There is no body at all in the correspondence theory of truth."[375]

From the perspective of second-generation, embodied cognitive science, these observations alone are enough to look elsewhere for a theory of truth. But the cognitive problems with correspondence theory do not end here.

The above illustrates a compound difficulty with the idea of truth being a correspondence between propositions and the world: that of representational levels.[376] There are at least three basic levels of representation: the *neural* level (i.e. concepts and cognitive processes as represented at the level of neural "circuitry," as it were), the *phenomenological* level (i.e. everything that appears to us, and how it appears to us, at the level of experience), and the level of the *cognitive unconscious* (i.e. the matrix of conceptual metaphors, basic-level categories, spatial relations, and so on, which make phenomenal experience possible), and these levels are not discretely separate or independent of one another, but only functionally so. Nonetheless, the levels of embodiment pose serious issues for the correspondence theory of truth. Now, while the cognitive unconscious is, as Lakoff and Johnson call it, "the massive portion of the iceberg that lies below the surface, below the visible tip that is consciousness… [which] consists of all those mental operations that structure and make possible all conscious

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[375] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 102.

[376] Each of these levels, and their basic descriptions, are taken from and based on Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 102-103.

experience,"[377] the neural and phenomenological levels require differing descriptions of the world, and this very readily leads to situations where "truth claims at one level may be inconsistent with those at another level."[378]

Take the common example of a statement, "Grass is green." The traditional objectivist, correspondence treatment of its truth is something like as follows:

(1) Statement "p" = "Grass is green"

(2) Proposition [p] = GRASS (a particular; object) + GREEN (a universal; property)

(3) Fact <p> = *grass is green*

(4) [p] and <p> correspond

(5) Therefore, [p] is true[379]

This, as Lakoff and Johnson point out, is a phenomenology-first account of truth,[380] according to traditional understandings of metaphysics (which misunderstands the nature and role of perception). In traditional philosophy, "green" denotes a property, greenness, that is in the world and is somehow affixed to objects. This arises from the commonsense realism of the first-person perspective (discussed in the previous chapter, section 2.3.2). There is nothing wrong with making such claims or affirming them as being

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[377] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 103.

[378] Ibid, 104.

[379] The use of p, [p], and <p> to represent a statement of p, a proposition that p, and a fact that p, respectively, is the notation of Englebretsen (2006).

[380] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 105.

phenomenologically the case. However, confining truth to this level privileges it over truth claims at the neural level, which is the level at which scientific truth claims are made. At the neural level, "green" is not a property. In fact, to describe it that way, as though it were an objective property *of* objects, does not even make cognitive-scientific sense. Rather, greenness is a multiplace interactional property,[381] in that what we generally experience phenomenologically as "green" is *neither* in the object itself (in this case, grass) *nor* merely in the mind. Rather, color is a property produced by the interaction of our bodies with our environment, not only light but the stuff of the world as well. So, for all intents and purposes, at the neural level, grass is *not* green. And this constitutes a contradiction between descriptive levels of cognition, namely between the neural and phenomenological levels. Thus, the traditional correspondence theory not only misconstrues the world itself in terms of a metaphysical schema,[382] but also faces many potential conflicts between propositions made at disparate cognitive levels or representation. We say "potential conflicts" because, as Lakoff and Johnson again point out, irreconcilable truth claims at different levels do not strictly contradict each other – each can be correct *relative to its level*. But there also is not a single truth that is neutral with regard to cognitive levels which captures the objectivist notion of correspondence.[383]

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[381] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 105.

[382] The mistake here is not the appeal to metaphysics of commonsense realism, but that it is accepted as objective or absolute, despite the progression of Cognitive Science. As mentioned in chapter 2, Pragmatism views metaphysical systems as mutable and relative to practical contexts, never as complete or non-negotiable.

[383] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 107.

3.8.3 Other Problems with Correspondence Theory

(i) Explanatory Vagueness – Language Never Meets Reality

The most common criticism of correspondence theories of truth is that they are vague or vacuous. And this is indeed the case. Davidson (2000)[384] has remarked that the formulation of truth as correspondence is not so much wrong as it is empty of any substantial explanatory power.[385] Quine has echoed this sentiment, calling it "vague or vacuous"[386] and "a hollow mockery" of a theory.[387] For Quine, the question is really about how to get from here to there, as it were, i.e. how to get from the formulation itself to a workable method of application without perfunctorily appealing to a series of "intangible intervening elements,"[388] a concern which relates more to the issue of triviality that will be addressed in the next section. Davidson objects on similar grounds and remarks that the theory provides no instructive method of figuring out "which fact or slice of reality it is that makes a particular sentence true"[389] (2000) but simply repeats the

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[384] See Donald Davidson, "Truth Rehabilitated" in *Rorty and His Critics*, ed. Robert B. Brandom (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2000), 65-73.

[385] Ibid, 66.

[386] W.V. Quine, *Quiddities: An Intermittently Philosophical Dictionary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap-Harvard University Press, 1987), 213.

[387] W.V. Quine, *Philosophy of Logic*, second edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1.

[388] Ibid, 2.

[389] Davidson, "Truth Rehabilitated," 66.

truth claim as an assertion and provides no way of telling which sentences are true and which are not, other than to reassert the initial proposition and stipulate that it is a "fact." More on this in the next section.

Both James and Schiller object to the correspondence formulation on similar grounds, with James noting that analytic theories of truth generally fail to explain "the particular go" of how truth works,[390] referring to correspondence as an "absolutely empty notion"[391] by itself that, once examined, inevitably and immediately leads to a discussion of pragmatic concerns.[392] Schiller notes that after "correspondence" or "agreement" are posited – citing the traditional Latin idiom of *adaequatio mentis et rei*, the *correspondence of thought with object* – the meaning of these terms, vis-a-vis the content of the theory itself, is left indeterminate.[393] The main reason for this is that correspondence theory, aside from its initial intuition, which is entirely reasonable (and which the theory in its full form is meant to unpack and explain), is based entirely on verbal stipulation. That is, it derives a series of abstract semantic entities from an initial statement, then posits relations between them, and aside from these semantic entities it points to nothing. The theory may say generally that statements point to the world in some fashion, and that when they do so correctly, they can be said to "correspond" to it, but this is not much more than a restatement of the initial intuition that motivates the working out of an entire theory with multiple semantic entities in the first place.

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[390] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.

[391] Ibid, Lecture II.

[392] Ibid, Lecture VI.

[393] *Logic For Use*, 129.

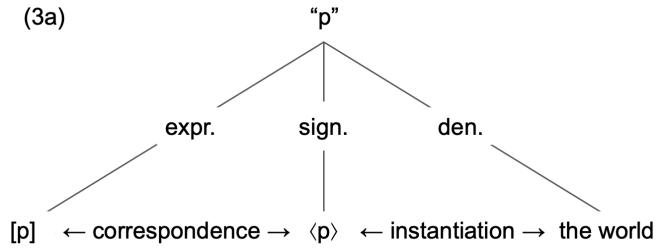
It is nearly unanimous that the objectors to the correspondence theory are not objecting to the general correspondence intuition, that somehow what we communicate, or assert must accord with how things are, but rather with the thinness of the wording itself, which is offered as a wholesale *theory*, but provides little beyond the word "correspondence." As Bunge has remarked:

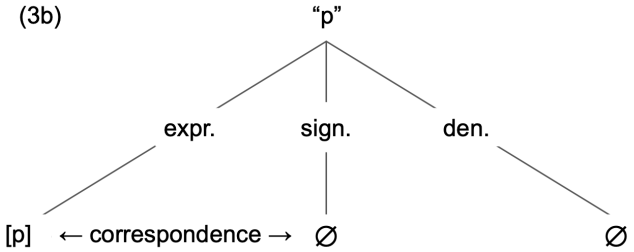
> "Everyone uses the correspondence concept of truth, but nobody seems to know exactly what it is."[394]

"Correspondence" does not supply a sufficient explanation of what the nature of truth is or what is going on when sentences are marked True or False. It constitutes a fine intuition to start from but leaves many more unanswered than answered questions.

Englebretsen, in his *Bare Facts and Naked Truths: A New Correspondence Theory of Truth* (2006), explains that, according to his well-stated formulation, a sentence or term "p" will, if it is true, *express* a proposition [p], *signify* a fact <p>, and *denote* some relevant part of the world. And further, if a sentence or term is true, then the proposition [p] that it expresses will *correspond* to the fact <p> which it signifies, which in turn will *instantiate* some relevant part of the world – see illustration 3a.

[394] Bunge, "The correspondence theory of truth," 74.





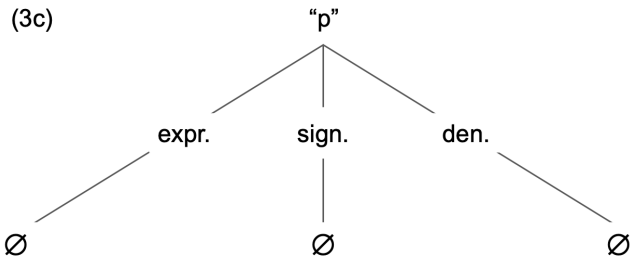
However, if a sentence or term, say "q" is false, then according to Englebretsen, "q" may well express a meaningful proposition [q], but will exhibit "significative and denotative vacuosity"[395] – see illustration 3b. Thus, in the case of false sentences, "there is no instantiation so no correspondence – no truth-maker, no fact."[396] And all meaningful sentences are *used* relative to a domain of discourse, D.[397] Finally, in the case of sentences which are grammatically well-formed but nonetheless nonsensical (the examples provided

[395] Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 127.

[396] Ibid, 128.

[397] See Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 111-112. Positing the necessity of a "domain of discourse" (D) for any sentence or term is quite ingenious. By this maneuver, Englebretsen at once explains the existence predicate and deflates the concept of "facts". Englebretsen agrees with Kant that "existence" is not a substantive predicate. Rather, to attribute existence or non-existence to something is merely to say whether or not it is a constituent of a given domain of discourse (see 97). Likewise, "facts" are not an additional class of objects with which propositions correspond but are described by Englebretsen as *constitutive properties* of the world – i.e. not additional objects within it (see 122-123). Nevertheless, practically speaking, the cash value of this maneuver is more verbal stipulation, which may have a proposed ontological significance for Englebretsen within his system, but still results semantically in a fact <p> being not much more, substantively speaking, than a restatement of a proposition [p].

by Englebretsen are "Socrates is prime," "2 is wise," and various Liar statements[398]), they fail on all counts in that they express nothing, signify nothing, and denote nothing. As such, there is nothing to accommodate either the correspondence or instantiation relations – see illustration 3c.



Englebretsen's revamp of the traditional correspondence theory of truth disambiguates each formal object and relation into a consistent terminological account all around. But despite this, one is still left wondering what exactly the point is, beyond assuring that one is equipped with a meaningful and consistent set of terms to discuss and organize various aspects of how one might reason about the world using a particular set of commonsense realist terms. How does such an elaboration improve on the problem of the correspondence theory's vagueness? The entire motivation for constructing a system of statements, propositions, facts, domains, and properties, along with the relations of

[398] See pages 128 and 158. For Englebretsen (echoing Sommers), to assign sentences which refer to other sentences (termed *comments*, a kind of *meta-statement*) a truth-value of any kind, they must have a "determinate propositional depth." Propositional depth is a formal property of all meaningful statements in Englebretsen's version of the correspondence theory but is particularly relevant to comments. All meaningful statements (i.e. those which express a proposition), but which do not refer to other statements or propositions, have a determinate propositional depth of 0. However, comments express propositions about propositions, so they contain *embedded propositions*, and each level of embedding is counted as 1. So, the formula for determining propositional depth is n (= whatever the propositional depth of the statement being commented upon, usually 0) plus 1 for each embedding. Under this requirement, Liar sentences (self-referential comments) have no determinate propositional depth because they result in regresses which can proceed *ad infinitum*, making them expressively vacuous (see pages 159 and 161).

expression, signification, denotation, instantiation, and correspondence, is *all for the sake of correspondence itself.* It does not actually tell us anything instructive about how truth-as-correspondence might work, and it is still as vague as it ever was, since it stops short of giving us a sense of "the particular go of it." Quine levels this same criticism at correspondence theories which are similar to the formulation put forward by Englebretsen:

> "[Regarding] the correspondence theory… What on the part of true sentences is meant to correspond to what on the part of reality? If we seek a correspondence word by word, we find ourselves eking reality out with a complement of abstract objects fabricated for the sake of correspondence. Or perhaps we settle for a correspondence of whole sentences with *facts*: a sentence is true if it reports a fact. But here again we have fabricated substance for an empty doctrine. The world is full of things, variously related, but what, in addition to all that, are facts? They are projected from true sentences for the sake of correspondence."[399]

Such apt criticisms take aim, not at the need for abstractions in giving an account of truth and reality, but at the motivation for this specific set of abstractions, which do not seem to do anything other than turn the traditional statement of correspondence into a much longer and more complex one. There is little if any explanatory value to the systems of

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[399] Quine, *Quiddities*, 213. Quine again reiterates these sentiments again in *Pursuit of Truth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), 79 and 80: "[Sentences] qualify as true, one is told, by corresponding to reality. But correspondence word by word will not do; it invites the idle cluttering of reality with a bizarre host of fancied objects, just for the sake of correspondence. A neater plan is to posit *facts*, as correspondents of true sentences as wholes; but this is still a put-up job. Objects in abundance, concrete and abstract, are indeed needed for an account of the world; but facts contribute nothing beyond their specious support of a correspondence theory."

Englebretsen and other correspondence theorists; one is still left wondering how it is that the truth of sentences *is ascertained* beyond schematically aligning different kinds of sentences.

The initial move on the part of the correspondence theorist is to derive from a given statement "p" a proposition [p], and from the world, on behalf of the statement,[400] a fact <p>. For example, from the statement "The chair is in the corner" is derived the proposition [The chair is in the corner] and from the world, the fact <The chair is in the corner>.[401] And each of these new entities, propositions and facts, are stipulated to be new, extra-sentential entities which the original statement "expresses" and "signifies," respectively. So far, we have the basic elements of the correspondence schema (see illustration 3a*). Now we are supposedly in the presence of multiple semantic entities (statement, proposition, fact), but are they really *that* different? It appears that they differ in name only, being only sentences that are derived *from* an initial sentence (propositions) and then *on behalf of* that initial sentence (facts), which are then both subsequently set in relation to that initial sentence.

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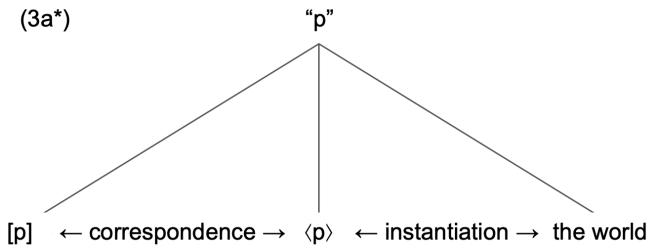
[400] Although technically the fact <p> is not said to be derived directly from the statement p, but from the world itself, in most toy examples of correspondence a "fact" will be worded roughly the same as, if not identical to, the initial statement p. And if p is false, then the fact <q> (i.e. to which p does *not* correspond) will be worded still similarly to p, but with a simple negation. Thus, facts – as represented in correspondence theories – can in some sense be said to be derived from the statements under consideration. Correspondence theorists either construct or isolate a particular statement, and then construct another statement (a "fact") to either affirm the statement as true or deny it as false. As such, the idea that "facts" (as represented by Englebretsen and others) exist in the world and are merely cited as such skips over, as it were, the process by which relative knowledge is semantically arranged in correspondence theories. It glosses over the practical reality that "facts" (for analytic correspondence theorists) are sentences which are formulated on behalf of the initial statement, for the sake of effecting correspondence, and are classed distinctly as "facts" by verbal stipulation.

[401] Using Englebretsen's bracketing here (see Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 2006).



The first question is why this move is made, and it seems to be expressly for the purposes of making some sense of the *word* "correspondence," as Quine has said. In fact, both propositions and facts can be eliminated as unnecessary,[402] since there is nothing that they can tell us that the statement and the world, from which they are derived, cannot. In this way they are redundant. In fact, their basic structure is the same: *subject-copula-predicate* (S is P). And this is the form for everything from statements to "propositions" to "facts," and even to "states of affairs." And it is not possible to isolate any of these supposed entities apart from a statement of them. Thus, propositions and facts are really just, in concrete terms, *more sentences* – or more precisely, restatements (or statements formulated on behalf) of an initial sentence.[403] So why derive them or posit their existence as abstract objects at all?

Englebretsen has notably insisted that "facts" are neither non-linguistic entities that exist in the world nor linguistic entities simply derived from statements and propositions.[404] Indeed, he himself anticipates this argument (especially regarding "facts"):

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[402] See Quine, *Philosophy of Logic*, chapter 1, and §8 in particular.

[403] See footnotes 398 and 399 above.

[404] This can be found in Englebretsen 2006 (e.g. 105, 120, 123), as well as in 2012 (e.g. 7, Appendix alef). Englebretsen's standard formulation regarding facts is "Facts are not constituents of the world, they are not *in* the world; facts are constitutive properties *of* the world" (2006, 105). Elsewhere, he states that, according

> "…[I]t might be argued that facts are not nonlinguistic and objective. The argument would go like this. The relation between truths and facts must be an *internal* one since our reference to a fact is always via an expression that repeats the proposition to which it corresponds. Consequently, facts cannot be independently identified, but are identified only in terms of the requisite true propositions (making the relation between them internal). Therefore, facts are themselves linguistic or semi-linguistic entities and, in that sense, not fully objective correlates for truths. The argument is invalid. What it ignores is the crucial distinction between a fact and an expression used to *denote* that fact."[405]

Englebretsen then reiterates that, "The term '<p>' (for example, 'the fact that p') is *not* the fact that p any more than the name 'Socrates' is Socrates."[406] But this merely evades the question of how we supposedly know what a "fact" is and why it so conveniently appears to repeat the proposition to which it corresponds by accusing (baselessly) the interlocutor of confusing sentences with the real world. The question is in regard to the contents of "< >" (i.e. why is has the form that it does) not whether a stated fact about the world *is* the same thing as the world itself. I, for one, have never confused the name

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to the correspondence theory he formulates, facts are "objective characteristics of the world" (2006, 147) and that the world is "completely independent of us" (ibid), except for what Englebretsen refers to as "obvious special cases" (ibid), by which he means to refer to *propositions*, the "quasi-linguistic" entities which somehow come into being whenever a meaningful sentence is written or uttered (2006, 110). x

[405] *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 123.

[406] Ibid.

Socrates with the avatar of Plato's dialogues, and I have never ignored the crucial distinction between linguistic constructions and the aspects of the world that they are meant to describe. What I would like to know is how one fact is distinguished from another and why, despite "<p>" looking like "p" in special brackets. Why, according to Englebretsen, is it a mistake to view a fact as a linguistic, or even semi-linguistic ("quasi-linguistic") entity, whatever that might mean? What I consistently observe in the application of the correspondence theory and its schema is an initial statement *p* being used to formulate a "proposition" [*p*] and a "fact" <*p*>, while at the same time denying that any such formulation is taking place. Englebretsen admits that the proposition and the fact, at least so far as they appear within the correspondence schema, *are* internally related as linguistic entities, but also makes clear that "the fact themselves are not involved in that internal relation"[407] (i.e. between [p] and '<p>'), but rather are in *external* relation to the propositions which correspond to them.[408] Why posit anything except the external relation for facts; again, as the contents of "< >", why is there any "internal" relation at all? I do not think that Englebretsen's answer to the anticipated argument on this point does much more than answer a question about how the terms *expression*, *signification*, *denotation*, and *instantiation*, operate in concurrent usage without contradiction — all of which are all in the service of *correspondence*, as Quine aptly suggested.

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[407] *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 123.

[408] Ibid.

The difficulty of answering the actual question about facts (i.e. how facts might be isolated and individuated in such a way that does not make them essentially linguistic entities) is, according to Haack (1978) is a cause for "discomfort" in the correspondence theorist, since in speaking "as if the truth of *p* consists *in its correspondence to the fact that p*… the relation between '*p*' and the fact that *p* is just *too* close; that '*p*' couldn't fail to correspond to *that* fact."[409] Simply positing internal and external relations and a distinction between <p> and "<p>" is not enough to answer for what appears to be straightforwardly the case with regard to facts in the correspondence theory of truth: "facts" are derived from the initial sentence, either restating it (*p*) or its simple negation (~*p*), making them linguistic entities asserted or projected (along with propositions) for the sake of the correspondence schema itself.

Nothing new takes place in the positing of propositions and facts, except by assertion. And to explain these abstractions would just require more abstractions (much like the "internal" and "external" relations posited by Englebretsen), all of which begin with the sentence "p" and ultimately terminate there – because they are restatements of it. This is what Schiller refers to as "mere verbality,"[410] and could easily lead to a potential regress, both in the number of abstract entities and in the number of correspondence relations, by continuing along the lines of the initial logic. Take what Englebretsen calls simply "the world," some part of which he maintains is "instantiated" by facts. How is "instantiation" not an additional correspondence relation? What would stop one from

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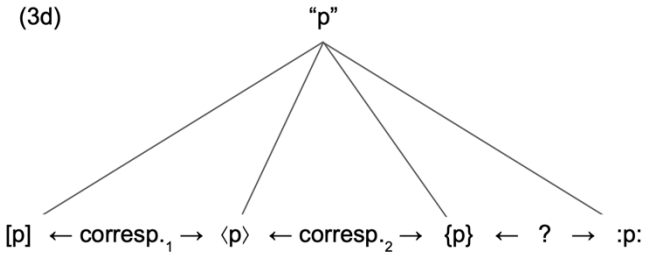
[409] *Philosophy of Logics*, 94.

[410] *Formal Logic*, 10.

saying that facts correspond to some state of affairs {p}, other than perhaps the objection that using the word "corresponds" for two distinct relations might lead to confusion? Barring this objection, though (and really, the proposed problem could be solved through further stipulating that correspondence between propositions and facts is "correspondence$_1$" while correspondence between facts and states of affairs is "correspondence$_2$"), couldn't further distinctions be made, between our state of affairs {p} and something purported to be more basic, call it :p:? And would this not then call for yet another kind of correspondence relation between {p} and :p:, which we could call "correspondence$_3$" (see illustration 3d)? This process of subdivision could continue on without any real objections other than an appeal to the preference or purpose of the particular logician leveling the objection who might, for whatever reason, deem {p} as "far enough." It seems to me that in terms of both the number of entities projected from true sentences and the number of correspondence relations, the stopping point is arbitrary (or at least idiosyncratic, as Stich might object). And while the correspondence schema runs toward reality, as it were, because it always needs some semantic entity to fit the schema, it never reaches it, leaving Zeno's Achilles stuck behind the tortoise. In the correspondence schema, language never actually reaches reality in any meaningful way – it only encounters more language.

(3d)



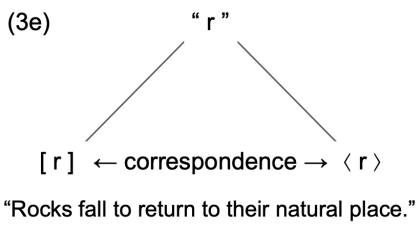
(ii) Analytic Triviality

Perhaps the strongest argument of its triviality is that the correspondence theory of truth could have been employed (and most certainly was, in some form or another) under previous scientific paradigms perfectly well, without any defect whatsoever. For example, someone in the second century BCE who was acquainted with the Physics of Aristotle (or even Aristotle himself), would likely have made the statement "r" = "Rocks fall to return to their natural place." A correspondence theorist of the time could extract the proposition [r] [Rocks fall to return to their natural place] and also formulate a fact <r> <Rocks fall to return to their natural place>, and would have even been able say that <r> instantiates the world in that, when we drop rocks, they fall toward the earth, appealing to the common knowledge that "everyone knows" this is because rocks are from the earth and are trying to return to their natural state. A similar account of "h" = "Combustible substances contain phlogiston" could have taken place in the seventeenth century, or of "s" = "Some species spontaneously generate" in the eighteenth century, or of "d" = "Diseases are caused by a miasma" in the nineteenth century, or of "t" = "Time intervals are the same for all observers" in the twentieth. Each of these propositions – [r], [h], [s], [d], and [t] – if placed into the correspondence schema in their respective eras, would have been considered true, and "facts" would have been formulated to accommodate them. Fitting them into the schema would have been viewed as a decisive illustration of their truthfulness. After all, the basic formulation of correspondence theory is that *p is true* ***iff*** *it corresponds to reality*. This makes the correspondence schema trivial, but also worse than trivial in that it allows

its user to place a formal seal of "truth" on whatever is already considered to be true, which may in time turn out to be false as [r], [h], [s], [d], and [t] now are.

What this also points to is that for the correspondence schema to be intelligible, *we must already know which propositions are true and which are not*. Additionally, we need to already know whether what they refer to exists or not, as well as the relevant domain of discourse for any proposition and fact. To apply the correspondence theory, a theorist must already know whether a given statement constitutes a meaningful proposition *and* whether or not it is true. This means that: (a) In cases where the truth of a proposition is *not* yet known, the correspondence schema is useless, and possibly less-than-useless since it can easily mislead us into affirming propositions which may later turn out to be false. And (b), in cases where the truth or falsity of a proposition *is* already known, the correspondence schema is entirely trivial. So, in actuality, the basic correspondence formulation is incorrect, or at least, what it claims to represent or accomplish outstrips its actual ability to do so. The "*iff*" of the correspondence formulation needs to be out front, making it hypothetical: ***iff*** *it is known that* p *is true,* ***then*** *we can represent* p *as corresponding to reality.*

(3e)



All of this highlights that the correspondence theory has no way of distinguishing between truths and mere truth-claims; its schema only works correctly when this distinction is known or assumed at the outset, i.e. prior to its deployment. If everything relevant must be known from the outset, then it's not clear what work (if any at all) the correspondence theory of truth is doing – and if we are not ascertaining our truths by means of the

correspondence theory, then we ought to examine by what means our truths actually come to us, as well as how we distinguish between truths and falsehoods in practice.

3.9 Pragmatic Truth

"Though both rationality and relativism are somehow implicated, what is fundamentally at stake is rather the correspondence theory of truth, the notion that the goal, when evaluating scientific laws or theories, is to determine whether or not they correspond to an external mind-independent world. It is that notion, whether in absolute or probabilistic form, that I'm persuaded must vanish together with foundationalism. What replaces it will still require a strong conception of truth, but not, except in the most trivial sense, correspondence truth."
— Thomas Kuhn, The Road Since Structure (2000), p. 95

Along with Haack (1978)[411] and Mackie (1973),[412] I assume that the purpose of a theory of truth is to provide a *criterion of truth*, that is, to answer the question "What does it mean for something to be true?"[413] As Popper writes in his *Objective Knowledge* (1979), it is "the traditional view" of epistemology that "any serious theory of truth should

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[411] Susan Haack, *Philosophy of Logics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 88-91.

[412] J. L. Mackie, *Truth, Probability, and Paradox: Studies in Philosophical Logic* (Great Britain: Clarendon-Oxford University Press, 1973), chapter 1.

[413] Richard Kirkham, *Theories of Truth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 2.

present us with *a method of deciding* whether or not a given statement is true."[414] This is also the position expressed by Schiller:

> "Now, no theory of truth will be adequate unless it succeeds in distinguishing truth from error (in conception at least) and can suggest a way of testing truth claims."[415]

Merely showing how propositions correspond with other kinds of formal objects along variously posited formal relations is not adequate for a theory of truth. As such, I will offer a general criterion of truth, that is, a waying of knowing[416] whether a given proposition is true or false.

In addition to presenting a pragmatic criterion of truth, I will be following Englebretsen's lead in his 2006 treatise, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths: A New Correspondence Theory of Truth*,[417] where he lists not only what he thinks a good *correspondence* theory of truth should address or include, but what any "good theory of

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[414] Karl Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (Hong Kong: Clarendon-Oxford University Press, 1979, revised edition), 317 (italics original). However, it should be noted that Popper himself, being a falsificationist, denied that any criterion of truth was available or possible – see, for example, *The Myth of the Framework*, 175.

[415] *Logic For Use*, 111.

[416] That is, "know," in a probabilistic and fallibilistic sense, not in a traditional objectivist sense of "justified true belief."

[417] There have been many statements of correspondence theory (e.g. Armstrong, 1973; Devitt, 1991), but I consider that of Englebretsen to be the best and most reasonable. It is also fairly recent, which stands in its favor since he comprehensively considers previous formulations.

truth"[418] should look like. According to Englebretsen, a "good theory of truth" should at least:

a. Say what truth amounts to and say what the proper bearers of truth are. And in this regard, he says, "Consonance with sound common sense might be an added blessing," though it is by no means required.
b. Address how truth is possible given that facts are "wholly independent of us."
c. Say how its conception of truth handles Liar sentences.[419]

These elements amount to a *practical* concern, a *metaphysical* concern, and a *formal* concern, each of which will be addressed with relation to the pragmatic theory of truth that I will promote. In the following sections I will attempt to say *what pragmatic truth amounts to* (even granting the "added blessing" of consonance with common sense), *what pragmatic truth-bearers are*, *how truth is possible vis-a-vis the nature of facts*, and then finally *how pragmatic truth handles Liar sentences*. In addition, I will also show how the pragmatic theory of truth answers the skeptic (I–IV above), but I will leave the discussion of how Schiller's pragmatic theory of truth specifically solves Stich's predicament and dilemma for the Conclusion (chapter 5).

Before all of this, a few important notes on fallibilism and relevant concepts, e.g. truth, knowledge, facts.

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[418] Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 5

[419] Ibid, 4.

3.9.1 Fallibilism

As Kuhn pointed out, anyone who looks seriously at the history of science and knowledge cannot help but arrive at the conclusion that the notion of absolute truth is a hopelessly absent one.[420] Changing paradigms for the objectivist is much like moving camp from one site to another, each time announcing "This is the perfect spot." That is, so it seems until the weather changes, or the wildlife makes it uninhabitable, or there isn't enough food and water. So, we tear down camp and move down the path to another site, set up camp again, and once again the objectivist announces, "Okay, *here* is the perfect spot." And so, on the process goes, always moving from site to site, always making the same announcement each time, but never taking the lesson that perhaps there is no such thing as *the* perfect campsite that can be inhabited forever. In the same way, every time that a new paradigm is reached, we become comfortable with its ideas, and then objectivists inevitably deploy the cultural myth that "*this*, this is the objective and absolute truth." That is, until we face a model crisis and need to switch paradigms again. And again. And on it goes.

Despite our best efforts, and all of our searching, absolute or objective truth is never found. Rather, we only *think* we have found it, or perhaps we attempt to convince ourselves that we have reached what our inherited cultural ideals tell us that we ought to have found. This is how the objectivist or absolutist about truth approaches the nature of

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[420] Kuhn in *Road,* 95, where he says that "for the historian, in short, no Archimedean platform is available for the pursuit of science other than the historically situated one already in place. If you approach science as a historian must, little observation of its actual practice is required to reach conclusions of this sort."

truth. The pragmatist, on the other hand, simply accepts that each site is merely (and hopefully) the best we can do at any given moment and that, eventually, we will move down the path to the next one. While the objectivist is convinced that the perfect campsite is out there to be found, the pragmatist accepts that there is no such thing as "*the* perfect campsite" and that what we instead search for and inhabit are campsites that best and most broadly serve our purposes at any one time.

The objectivist or absolutist really has nothing on which to base their assertions regarding the immutable nature of perfect truth, other than perhaps something along the lines of Anselm's ontological argument for the existence of a god (i.e. that, since a perfect being can be conceived of, it must necessarily exist). The concrete instances of what we would call "truth" or "knowing" do not add up to an objective truth. To abstract away from available concrete instances to form a concept is just fine, but to abstract away from them *and then on the basis of them* construct an ideal, which is then used to eschew the concrete instances from which it was constructed, is what James calls "vicious abstractionism."[421] None other than Popper engages in this sort of reasoning about truth, holding that it is a necessary component of our conception of falsehood or error.[422] But there is no such necessity, and no basis in the concrete instances from which we derive our concept of "truth" to maintain that it never changes (or "must never" change). In fact, the opposite is the case: what we consider as true (and by extension, knowledge) is

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[421] *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), chapter XIII.

[422] Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2008, reprint), 21.

continually updated, and people conducting everything from paper routes to particle physics engage with truth in just this way, without issue.

The assumption of an absolute truth has been, to use James's term, "viciously abstracted" from any concrete instances of sure knowledge; the myth of such a truth has thus been constructed in defiance of the facts rather than based on them. Schiller agrees with the assessment of James:

> "It is assumed, without examination of the facts, that there could be only one single universal truth, alike for all knowers and independent of all knowers – a thoroughly non-human truth, therefore, which we were bidden to adore as superhuman. But neither Plato nor anyone since has ever been able to explain how such truth, if it existed, could be recognized and grasped by us."[423]

Reckoning honestly with the history of human knowledge, and particularly with the history of science, elicits a kind of fallibilism. And if not, then it elicits a blind eye to all the instances of human epistemic confidence (on which the theories of truth traditionally put forward have been based) which have been altered, changed, or rejected as false in the course of time.

Pragmatism is a form of *fallibilism*[424] about knowledge. Fallibilism (a term coined by C.S. Pierce), as construed by Schiller, is the epistemological position that all

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[423] *Our Human Truths*, 182.

[424] Schiller's epistemic fallibilism does not merely entail that it is unnecessary for beliefs to be grounded in certainty to be accepted, but rather that *it is not possible for them to be so.*

knowledge is probabilistic and that absolute certainty is impossible, nothing more than a cultural myth or a psychological ideal. In a 1902 essay entitled *Axioms as Postulates*, Schiller unpacks his basic theory of reasoning and knowledge. The main idea, per the essay's title, is that what are normally thought of as "axioms" by foundationalists and formalists are actually not more than postulates, or hypotheses, which have become stable enough to be treated as basic to knowledge through their broad pragmatic import. Schiller describes a postulate as a "previous fact suggesting the hypothesis [of the postulate]"[425] and facts as we have seen are constructed from relevant parts of experience and are not simply "given." As such, what are often adopted as axiomatic, self-evident rules are really constructions that make sense to rely upon *because of their continual success in practice.*

The refusal to accord any proposition the status of complete certainty, but only a greater or lesser degree of likelihood (again, reckoned pragmatically), has been viewed in the history of philosophy as entailing a kind of irrationality about beliefs. But as Ayer in his 1946 classic, *Language, Truth and Logic* notes:

> "For the fact that the validity of a proposition cannot be logically guaranteed in no way entails that it is irrational for us to believe it. On the contrary, what is irrational is to look for a guarantee where none can be forthcoming: to demand certainty where probability is all that is obtainable."[426]

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[425] *Axioms as Postulates*, 107.

[426] Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, 38.

Indeed, the demand for certainty with regard to truth colors all related concepts with the same dye; knowledge, justification, rationality – all of these, along with truth, become idealized. And through a form of vicious abstractionism, the concrete instances from which these concepts were initially formed are demoted to something "merely human," as if the fact that truth, knowledge, justification, and rationality are human cognitive operations makes them less than whatever artificial, idealized versions of them we should desire in their stead. What those other versions would be, practically speaking, is not clear. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have aptly noted,

> "Any truth must be in a humanly conceptualized and understandable form, if it is to be a truth for us. If it's not a truth for us, how can we make sense of it being a truth at all?"[427]

The move to fallibilism, and to Schiller's pragmatic theory of truth, requires a realization similar to Nietzsche's "death of god": *the death of certainty*. The reason that nihilism results from a "death of god" within a theistic system of beliefs is that when the existence of a god is undermined, the other premises within the system are likewise undermined, causing a sort of existential collapse of meaning and purpose. In fact, the two systems, nihilism and theism, share basic postulates.[428] Something similar is the case

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[427] Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 106.

[428] Ironically, both existential nihilism and theism propose that ***if*** *there is no god,* ***then*** *meaning and purpose are impossible*. Thus, nihilism is really just a "broken theism."

with regard to certainty: both objectivists and skeptics share the concept of an absolute or perfect truth, and thus radical epistemic skepticism is just a "broken" form of objectivism.[429] The solution to the collapse into nihilism proposed by Nietzsche is to realize that "the death of god" *never happened* i.e. it is not as if a god once existed and then the ambassadors of the European enlightenment killed him. Rather, if we conclude that there is no god, then we are concluding that *a god never existed*, and that therefore all the meaning and purpose we once found under some form of Western religion *was of our own making all along.* This realization, of course, led Nietzsche to suggest the concept of the "übermensch" – the person who embraces that they are (and always have been) the creator of their own values, and thus that human valuation is the source of all possible value.

The solution to either radical skepticism or the continual deployment of the absolutist myth about truth is to internalize the "death of certainty" in much the same way as Nietzsche suggests we overcome the "death of god." The realization that absolute certainty is not possible, which derives from not only an examination of the history of scientific revolutions but the work of cognitive science, should not cause us to collapse into skepticism, but to realize that if we conclude that certainty is not possible, then we are concluding that *it was never possible*. And further, that all of our feelings of assurance and certainty – which are not absolute, objective, or perfect – which we have used to make good and effective judgments relative to our goals, have been pragmatic and fallibilistic all along. It is not as if once we were certain and then cognitive science

[429] See previous footnote.

slayed that certainty, leaving us to waft chaotically on a sea of open-ended subjectivity as a captive to radical skepticism. We have always operated on a pragmatic, fallibilistic kind of certainty because this is all that has ever been possible. The concrete instances from which the very concept of "certainty" is derived tell a decidedly non-ideal story that should be embraced and not mourned over.

If we embrace "the death of certainty"[430] in this way, then our epistemic concepts can shift, as it were, from the objectivist side of the slate to the pragmatic, fallibilist side, without any collapse into skepticism:

Objectivist		*Fallibilist*
TRUTH	→	truths
KNOWLEDGE	→	hypotheses; theories; models[431]
JUSTIFICATION	→	verification

Of course, it is important to recognize that the above illustration doesn't represent a mere terminological shift, but a conceptual one. Pragmatic truth is still called "truth," and

[430] Such a "death of _____" framework of processing the failure of cultural myths in light of cognitive science (and the progression of knowledge generally) may just as well be applied to concepts like "objectivity" and "rationality."

[431] One of the outcomes of a pragmatic and fallibilist approach to truth is that there is no qualitatively meaningful distinction between *knowledge* and *belief*; the former ends up being a case of the latter but is distinguished by its being infused with a high degree of certainty. This view is also expressed by Nils J. Nilsson, *Understanding Beliefs* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014), xii-xiii and 70-73.

knowledge may be called "knowledge" and justification "justification," and so on, but the common objectivist distinctions between them on *absolutist* grounds are precluded. Such absolutist grounds are considered by the pragmatist to be the fanciful elements of a popular mythos inherited by Western thought, rather than the elements of the concrete instances of knowing and truth with which humans regularly reason – and reason quite effectively. Thus, the traditional formal notions of TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, and JUSTIFICATION are upset and precluded by the equally traditional notion of (absolute; full; perfect) certainty being recognized as impossible.

3.9.2 Schiller on "What [Pragmatic] Truth Amounts To"

Schiller begins his particular account of truth with two points: (1) with the recognition that *true* and *false* are a species of intellectual valuations and (2) with a theory of error.[432]

3.9.2.1 Truth as an Intellectual Valuation – A Valuation of Cognitive Processes of Inquiry

Schiller takes *true* and *false* (i.e. *truth* and *falsity*) to be a species of valuations, which are most properly applied to our "cognitive enterprises,"[433] that is, to our cognitive processes of inquiry as we navigate the world in various ways relative to our purposes. It is "the

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[432] Not to be confused with Error Theory, a metaethical position attributed to J.L. Mackie (1917-1981).

[433] *Logic For Use*, 102-103.

aim of our intellectual functions."[434] Similar to James's example of an infant experiencing the world as a "blooming, buzzing confusion," Schiller notes that, as a matter of course in psychological development, at first truth and falsity will be pretty much bestowed by an individual more or less at random, but will become more keen with the course of time and practical experience.[435] And this principle of truth-as-valuation is, according to Schiller, the necessary starting-point for his pragmatic account of truth, and that without this valuation [process] "there would be no truth at all."[436] For Schiller, much like the enactivists of current (second-generation) cognitive science, all considerations must begin with the organism (or individual) in their environment, and with the actual processes of perception and cognition occurring within that system. Thus, truth is reckoned within the embodied space of actual human experience and not in an idealized vacuum, as he writes emphatically,

> "It must be frankly admitted that *truth is human truth*, and incapable of coming into being without human effort and agency; that human action is psychologically conditioned; that, therefore, the concrete fulness of human interests, desires, emotions, satisfactions, purposes, hopes, and fears is relevant to the theory of knowledge and must *not* be abstracted from."[437]

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[434] *Problems of Belief* (1924), 74.

[435] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 55.

[436] Ibid.

[437] *Logic For Use*, 182.

Truth, then, is a psychological valuation of a cognitive process of human inquiry in a given instance or set of instances. It is thus ultimately *perspectival*, that is, relative to the perspectives of individual organisms as they seek to navigate their environments. Perspectives, the relativity of truths to perspectives, and the relationship of perspectives to values will be explained in depth in chapter 4, especially section 4.1.3.

It is important to recognize that Schiller defines "value" as both the results of human cognitive processes and a property of "things" in the world. Which is it? Both. As an embodied ascription of value, it applies neither to merely the cognitive processes involved in inquiry nor to the things in the environment, but to instances of exploring the environment – i.e. viewed as instances within the cognitive metaschema of the organism–environment system (see chapter 2). The purpose of ascribing truth to some instances of inquiry while ascribing falsity to others is what we will turn to presently.

Before moving forward, it is important to briefly note that, in a pragmatic approach, "false" does not represent a privation, in the sense that one might think, i.e. that "true" is a value, while "false" is merely the absence of that value. Rather, *falsity* (or *error*) is, as Schiller explains, a valuation all its own – albeit a negative one:

> "...error should be conceived, like truth, as a cognitive value. Only it is a *negative* value."[438]

[438] *Logic For Use*, 188.

The idea here is that errors, though they are to be avoided, do nevertheless inform us in some way, even if only to provide some guidance as to what *not* to do in a given situation. In this way, falsity and error do hold some useful value relative to our purposes and grant important insight and experience on the way to a determination of the truth.

3.9.2.2 The "True" and the "Good"

Based on his reading of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*[439] and *De Anima*,[440] Schiller places all values as "species" belonging to the same "genus."[441] More specifically, he understands *true* and *false* as the "good" and "bad" of the intellectual or cognitive realm. Thus, "true" and "false" share a basic taxonomy with "right" and "wrong," "beautiful" and "ugly," and "good" and "bad."[442] However, so far as the entire scope of values is concerned, in Schiller's view it is "good" which is the most basic category of valuation,

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[439] See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI.2, § 3. Schiller's translation of the relevant section is: "as for the intellect which is theoretic and not practical nor productive, it's 'well' and 'ill' are truth and falsity (truth being the work of everything intellectual); while of that [intellect] which is practical and intellectual it is truth in agreement with right desire."

[440] See Aristotle's *De Anima*, Book III.7. Schiller's translation of the relevant line is: "the true and the false are in the same class with the good and the bad." Then he adds: "i.e. are valuations." Of course, the next line of the *De Anima* passage clarifies that "they differ in this, that the one set [i.e. good and bad] implies and the other [i.e. true and false] does not imply a reference to a particular person," which is a reflection of Aristotle's objectivist and absolutist conception of truth, which Schiller as a pragmatist does not share.

[441] *Logic For Use,* 102; *Studies in Humanism*, 152.

[442] Ibid.; *Formal Logic*, 2. On page 132 of *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1910, revised edition), one of Schiller's earliest works, he writes: "Every 'truth'... is launched upon the world as 'good' in the eyes of its maker. Truths, in virtue of the manner of their birth, are essentially *values*, and akin to other values *per se*, beauty, duty, and pleasure. Like the other values also the career of a truth is profoundly influenced by a man's social nature; it has not merely to commend itself to its maker for the once, but to continue to give him satisfaction and to continue to seem the right remark for the occasion."

even more basic than "true" or "real."[443] As such, *good* is a sort of maximal kind of the class of all values.

The conception of goodness that is explicitly adopted by Schiller is that of teleological good, that is, goodness which relative to a particular purpose:

> "The 'good' is *good for* and end; the 'bad' is what defeats or thwarts a purpose."[444]

And again,

> "'Good' is what conduces to, 'bad' is what thwarts, a purpose."[445]

And it is this teleological sense of "good" which is considered to be the genus under which all other possible values are classed as species.[446]

Thus, for Schiller, when truth is recognized as the "good" of cognitive processes, it means that, in the broadest sense possible, truth is when reasoning in a given circumstance is successful; when we act on an idea in the course of experience and reality does not defy our expectations. If it does, then we will count the failed idea as false and

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[443] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 9.

[444] *Formal Logic*, 2.

[445] *Studies in Humanism*, 152.

[446] *Logic For Use*, 103.

try something else, whether a modified version of the same judgment or a completely new idea, and then continue to assign valuations of truth and falsity to their consequences. As Schiller writes,

> "Once the teleological 'good' is recognized it is easy to see that the 'true' is the 'good' of knowing, and the 'false' its 'bad': the one means 'success,' the other 'failure' in a cognitive undertaking."[447]

But while teleological goodness and prudential goodness ("good for") are usually distinguished, or at least viewed as distinct, due to the relativistic nature of truth and metaphysics for Schiller, these collapse into a single notion of goodness where *the good* is relative to, not an objective purpose, but to a subjective one – that is, to a purpose as determined by the agent themselves. This can either be viewed as a special kind of teleological goodness or a special kind of prudential goodness – either way, the pragmatic conception of "good" combines teleology and prudentiality. As such, "good," in the pragmatic sense adopted by Schiller, will always be understood as *good for* some purpose as determined by some person – and in this order.

3.9.2.3 Subjective Values

[447] *Logic For Use*, 103.

There are no objective values. This is how Mackie begins his chapter on the nature of values in his book, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*,[448] and clarifies that by "no objective values," he means to include any kind of value whatsoever, moral or otherwise, and to deny that values are "part of the fabric of the world."[449] Rather, "values" refer to *valuation*, which is an activity that people carry out,[450] and not an intrinsic property in objects. Schiller holds almost exactly this view:

> "As a result of an act of valuation value is attributed to the situation or object valued."[451]

The move from *valuations* (or, instances of valuing), which are actions on the part of individual organisms, to *values* as things or properties which are an objective and intrinsic aspect of parts of the world arises due to colloquial responses to repeated similar valuations across similar contexts:

> "[Valuation] becomes '*a value*,' positive or negative, at least for the time being and the purpose in hand. If it, or its like, is sufficiently permanent to be valued frequently in similar situations, and if its valuers agree in a general way about the

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[448] See J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 15-49.

[449] Mackie, *Inventing Right and Wrong*, 15.

[450] Ibid, 22-23.

[451] *Logic For Use*, 39.

> value they attribute to it, its value will come to seem *intrinsic* and independent of the valuers. They will be thought to recognise an objective value inherent in the object. Thus, gold is judged to be intrinsically a 'precious' metal; because (under normal conditions) there exists an unlimited demand for it, and it is always accepted in payment of a debt. That, however, the value of an object is intrinsic only in appearance, and really remains relative to the uses to which the object is put [that is, subjective], is revealed by the conflicts, variations, and fluctuations of values."[452]

Thus, any objectivity or intrinsicness of value is mere appearance,[453] and is never actual. In actuality, values are always subjective.

The activity of valuation arises from what Schiller calls a "valuation attitude." According to Schiller, he chooses the term "attitude" to describe the act of valuing because it is the best available among the psychological terms of his time or, as he says, "the least inadequate."[454] But he strives to make very clear that valuation despite being described as an attitude, is not a passive mental state:

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[452] *Logic For Use*, 39-40.

[453] Ironically, the colloquial response of referring to the subjective activity of valuation as "objective" or "intrinsic" arises from the similar embodiment of humans such that they tend to value the same general types of things for the same general reasons, especially when embedded within similar cultures and epochs.

[454] *Logic For Use*, 38-39.

> "Valuation is an activity, an act, and a choice, not merely a passive or 'simple' mental process. Yet, the valuation process cannot be described in terms of behaviorism which sets itself to ignore the conscious side of intelligent action."[455]

In other words, though valuation is an activity, it is an *embodied activity*, meaning that the descriptions of behaviorism that focus on observable actions are inadequate as descriptive of valuations, dividing as they do between "mind" and "body," with the existence of the former sometimes held in suspicion. Valuing is not the mere posing of the body or an inert state of mind, but a process that happens within the cognitive metaschema of the organism–environment system (see previous chapter, section 2.5.1). And this process, being a human activity predicated on human choices, is *subjective*,[456] one which never converges on the objective, except in a very general sense:

> "Values can nowhere be conceived of as wholly 'objective.' They are nothing which we can ascribe to objects *per se* and in the absence of a valuing intelligence. Valuation is a human activity; an attitude we assume towards objects we esteem; their 'value' is a reaction which they provoke and a relation to use which we confer on them."[457]

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[455] Ibid, 102-103.

[456] See *Problems of Belief*, 184, where Schiller says of the necessary choice between alternatives in the making of truth that "it must be subjective–that is, a human *act*" (italics original).

[457] *Logic For Use*, 102-103.

In this passage, Schiller uses the term "objective" in a general sense of "having to do with things in the world," and not in the intrinsic sense, which he rejects. And his willingness to grant some modicum of objectivity to values is a function of Schiller's pragmatic metaphysics. In other words, it is as if Schiller is saying to his interlocutors: "Sure, I guess if you decide to adopt the subject-object distinction metaphysically, it could be said that values were in some sense 'objective,' though not entirely so, since value is conferred on objects and circumstances by a valuing intelligence and not otherwise." Attempting to adopt the view of values as objective is going to run very quickly into the problem of needing to account for how objects in the world come to have such supposedly intrinsic value, as well as for explaining what it is exactly that people are doing when they value things. This in turn could lead to further questions about how humans supposedly "sense" objective value, and so forth. So, the reference to "objective" here should be viewed as more or less hypothetical and dialectic on the part of Schiller, especially since he clearly affirms the thoroughgoing subjectivity of values, both in the same work as the above passage, as well as in numerous other places.[458]

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[458] This very general use of "objective" on the part of Schiller can be seen in a single passage regarding the possibility of meaning-ascriptions. On page 67 of *Logic For Use*, Schiller opens §14 of chapter IV with the statement: "Speaking objectively, Meaning is a universal fact." However, in the next paragraph, he states that "though the meaning we ascribe claims to be 'objective,' its source remains 'subjective.'" The first statement, Schiller explains, is the statement of a pragmatic postulate of the potentially discoverable significance of everything in the world; the second, however, clarifies that this "discovery" of meaning is really a psychological ascription of a kind of value that is relative to the purposes of the "discoverer." Thus, even what is "objective" terminates in what is "subjective" (cf. *Studies in Humanism*, 153, and *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 58).

In the Pragmatism of Schiller, *meaning* (or, the ascription of significance) is also viewed as an "attitude"[459] and the result of a kind of "value-judgment."[460] And he explains that the assumption that things "*have* meaning" is not literal in the sense that a substantive property of meaning resides in physical objects, but rather is "an animistic and anthropomorphic postulate" which is "the beginning of all teleology"[461] and "stirs us up to 'understand' the world."[462] That is, the operative assumption that the world is filled with meaning (or, possible opportunities for ascribing meaning or significance), is the first very first step in development of the concept of teleological or purpose-relative goodness, which in turn lies at the base of all other values – truth being the purpose-relative goodness of our cognitive operations.

3.9.2.4 Setting the Truth-Valuation Process in Motion

What sets the truth process in motion, that is, what serves as the impetus to ascribing significance and ultimately to the ascription of truth or falsity, is some interest or problem to solve. As Schiller states,

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[459] In *Logic For Use*, pages 50, 51, and 67, Schiller refers to the "meaning-attitude."

[460] *Logic For Use*, chapter IV, § 13.

[461] *Logic For Use*, 67.

[462] Ibid, 50.

> "The natural stimulus to cognitive endeavors, and, so too, the discovery alike of what is 'true' and what is 'false,' comes from our consciousness of some *problem* which demands solution."[463]

And,

> "We always begin with a *problem* which we desire to solve. This arouses our interest and defines our purpose, and so provides the motive force for our truth-seeking."[464]

Since, as Schiller continues, "...human thinking does not occur *in vacuo* without provocation."[465]

This focus on action is at the epicenter of Pragmatism, as well as embodied and enactive models of cognition within current cognitive science. The old, rationalistic Cartesian view of cognition as the disinterested interpretation (*qua* a calculus or operation on symbols) of passively received "sense data" is what is being criticized in these passages. Instead, as Schiller somewhat presciently puts it, the pragmatic (embodied, enactive) view of cognition is "activist,"[466] that is, focused on the actions of an organism,

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[463] *Logic For Use*, 110.

[464] Ibid, 185.

[465] Ibid, 111.

[466] *Problems of Belief*, 13.

since "all thinking arises out of living and for the sake of action."[467] In nature, action is primary while hypothetical reflection is secondary and fairly rare.[468] Thus, explains Schiller, "genuine thinking must issue from and guide action"[469] and though cognition is subsidiary to action, being tested and completed by it, they are part of the same overall and continual process[470] – continual, that is, so long as the organism is alive. What mediates and leads to action is the act of judging, and it is to this we now turn.

3.9.3 Schiller on "What Proper [Pragmatic] Truth-bearers Are"

3.9.3.1 Judgments and Propositions

(i) *Judgments*

The proper truth-bearers of the pragmatic theory of truth are *judgments*, not propositions, which are merely the verbal forms of potential, or possible, judgments.

Schiller describes judgments as the primary action of thinking;[471] the basic unit of thought ("the simplest product of thought that can claim to be true, the minimum vehicle

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[467] *Logic For Use*, 204.

[468] See *Logic For Use*, 198, where Schiller writes that "we are constructed for action, and reflection is rare in nature," and *Problems of Belief*, 127, where he states: "Throughout nature action is the primary fact, and reflection appears as a secondary, subsequent, and special development."

[469] *Axioms as Postulates*, 128.

[470] *Studies in Humanism*, 447.

[471] *Formal Logic*, 92.

of truth or falsity"[472]), though not necessarily its most elementary operation.[473] And the aim of all judgments is action; they are decisions that lead to action which are mediated and modified by the thought that precedes them.[474] In this way, they are the culmination of the reasoning process just prior to the taking of some action. Thus, human thought can be characterized as a continual series of judgments.[475]

The purpose of judgments is to answer some question (whether it be explicit or implicit), prompted by some interest or need,[476] which can be as banal as mere curiosity or as crucial as survival. Judgments refer to and are about reality in that they select certain relevant parts of reality for the ultimate purpose of handling "things" (in the basic metaphysical sense).[477] Thus, judgments vis-a-vis reality are necessarily partial, since the distinction between "truth" and "falsity" (that is, between true and false judgments) would be meaningless should we know absolutely everything there is to know, as there

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[472] Ibid, 12. Note that this is a common definition of "proposition" in analytic philosophy of language, logic, and linguistics. Schiller maintains that the idea of judgments being what is actual true or false hails from none other than Aristotle in *De Interpretatione*, chapter 1, where he says that "thoughts in our minds" may be "accompanied by truth or falsity" and then goes on to say that "so it is also in our speech," intimating that verbal forms are only true and false because the *thoughts* (for Schiller *judgments*) they can be said to represent or express are true or false (see *Formal Logic*, 95).

[473] On page 93 of *Formal Logic*, Schiller explains that the mere adoption of the "meaning attitude" (the attitude by which we ascribe significance to things in the world) is "the simplest act of thought" and that "nothing more elementary can be found out of which judgments may be composed." Thus, while judgments are a kind of basic unit of thought with respect to action, each judgment arises out of a matrix of meaning ascriptions on the part of the individual. Nevertheless, Schiller emphasizes that, in reality, judgments cannot be formally "analyzed" or decomposed into smaller *things*, and that although this is done linguistically within formal logic, it is nevertheless "a fictitious procedure" (92).

[474] *Logic For Use*, 201.

[475] Ibid, 242.

[476] *Formal Logic*, 96.

[477] *Formal Logic*, 97.

would be no process of sorting or distinction between various parts of the entire flux of experience.[478] As Schiller states:

> "The function of judging, therefore, essentially requires the selection of *parts* of reality as subject-matters for judgments which are *partial*, in the sense of treating the *rest* of reality as irrelevant, and can be true [or false], *because* they are thus partial."[479]

Judging arises from a selection process, making sense of the flux of experience, which arises from the adoption of the meaning attitude toward things in the world relative to some purpose, problem, interest, need, desire. And, ultimately, by selecting salient features of reality, we transform the flux for the sake of (hopefully) successfully navigating and controlling it in some way.[480] This fits well with the action-oriented conception of truth expressed by Johnson:

> "Truth is not merely about words fitting experiences. Truth is, more importantly, about which understandings allow us to function successfully."[481]

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[478] In *Logic For Use*, 100, and also *Formal Logic*, 101, Schiller states that "[a being with] omniscience would not make [a judgment], because it could have no motive to make it; for it would add nothing to its knowledge. [If it did, any such judgment] would also have to be formally a tautology, because it would only affirm the whole of reality of the whole of reality. Omniscience [or an omniscient being], therefore, would not *judge*, but would have all knowledge ever-present to it, and would presumably be bored ineffably."

[479] *Logic For Use*, 101.

[480] *Logic For Use*, 133.

[481] Johnson, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason*, 218.

(ii) *Propositions*

Whereas judgments are *concrete* in that they always originate in some or another actual mind,[482] propositions are *potential* in that they are the verbal forms or expressions of judgments.[483] The basic form of propositions is *S is P*, and in this way Schiller is like Mill in his construal of propositions as verbal forms which are regimented (if necessary) for the sake of logical analysis.[484] For Schiller, there are *actual judgments*, which are those which occur in actuality (i.e. adopted by a particular agent within a particular context) and *possible judgments*, which do not or have not occurred in actuality – and it is latter which he refers to as *propositions*. Propositions are not extra-sentential entities which sentences may be said to express but are themselves sentences[485] which express

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[482] Ibid, 95.

[483] *Formal Logic*, 93, 103, and 173.

[484] See J.S. Mill, *A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive* (1882, eighth edition), Book I, chapters IV to VI. In the beginning of chapter IV, Mill states that a proposition "is *a portion of discourse* in which a predicate is affirmed or denied of a subject. A predicate and a subject are all that is necessarily required to make up a proposition: but as we cannot conclude from merely seeing two names put together, that they are a predicate and a subject, that is, that one of them is intended to be affirmed or denied of the other, it is necessary that there should be some mode or form indicating that such is the intention; some sign to distinguish a predication from any other kind of discourse… The word which thus serves the purpose of a sign of predication… is called the copula" (italics added). Mill here affirms that propositions are not any kind of extra-sentential object but are merely "portions of discourse" with the basic form of subject-copula-predicate (*S is P*), and nothing more. In this, he and Schiller agree. However, Schiller goes further than Mill in maintaining that propositions are all "merely verbal" (Mill reserves this classification for what he calls "essential propositions," i.e. associations of one name with another that is already contained in it, like "man is a living being," which he says do not add to knowledge, making the propositions *merely verbal* – see chapter VI), however the goal on the part of Schiller is not to reduce propositions to "mere words" in the sense that they are of no import. On the contrary, they *are* important, but cannot be taken as having meaning in themselves, that is, apart from an actual context of use; apart from expressing a judgment. The centrality of context for meaning is non-negotiable for Schiller (and James as well).

[485] In this way, Schiller's view is similar to that of Quine expressed in the initial chapter of his *Philosophy of Logic*.

potential acts of judgment (to be committed in the future) and actual acts of judgment (which have been committed in the past or are being committed in the present). Thus, as Schiller says, we may speak of the "judgment" of *S is P*, but since this is purely hypothetical, it isn't really a judgment but a proposition,[486] and to use the terms interchangeably (which Schiller does at times do), is acceptable so long as the distinction between the actual and the potential, the concrete and the verbal, is maintained.[487] Though technically speaking, as soon as a proposition is adopted by an actual mind in an actual context of use, it ceases to be a proposition and becomes a judgment proper.[488]

The potential nature of propositions is the reason why they can be, pragmatically speaking, neither true nor false. Even their meanings are potential and non-actual outside of a context of use. A Schiller explains:

> "Propositions, moreover, ought not, as such, to be deemed either true or false. They are only verbal formulas used to convey meaning; if used appropriately to

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[486] *Formal Logic*, 144. There, on the same page, Schiller remarks that if the psychological phenomena or act of judging is deemed "extra-logical" such that considerations of judgments do not (or "cannot") enter into logical analysis, then "what can 'the judgment' be but an inexplicable form of words?" In other words, without a context of use, the reader is left with a verbal construction which they then must make sense of in their own way since it has been severed from any actual judgment which it must express to have any *actual meaning*.

[487] See *Logic For Use*, chapter VII, § 2 for a discussion on the necessity of this distinction. Schiller says there that "it may [always] be objected that [a formal theory of truth] fails to distinguish the *real* meaning and truth of judgments from the *potential* meaning and truth of propositions" (118). See also the essay "The Two Logics," published as the fourth chapter in *Must Philosophers Disagree?* (1934), 45, where Schiller explains that a pragmatic theory of truth "is not concerned with propositions as such," but instead "treats them as mere verbal formulas and as *instruments* for operating upon particular situations, which have real meaning only in their contexts."

[488] In *Must Philosophers Disagree?*, 45, Schiller says that once propositions are applied or adopted in an actual context of use, they "cease to be propositions and become *judgments*."

> the occasion they fill their place, become judgments, and are true in their *contexts*; if otherwise, they suffer rejection, as no longer 'true' but false."[489]

Thus, it is the implementation of a given proposition in a judgment that allows then the *judgment* to be true or false. This rigid distinction between potential and actual meanings, between concrete circumstances and potential ones, between contextual judgments and context-less verbal forms is fundamental to the pragmatic theory of truth formulated by Schiller. One of the implications of this theory is that the verbal contents of propositions cannot be taken at face value, that is interpreted according to some literal[490] or lexical meaning that lies beyond actual meaning in actual usage:

> "...the dictionary-meaning of the words …cannot be trusted to give us the actual *meaning-in-use* of any proposition. We ought always to go behind it to what its assertor is actually trying to express. This actual meaning should never be ignored and sacrificed to the meaning of the term in abstraction. For the latter is not actual meaning at all. It is only potential meaning — at best a rough guide to the real meaning, to detect which we must always use our intelligence."[491]

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[489] *Logic For Use*, 17.

[490] Ironically, for Schiller, the so-called "literal meaning" of a given sentence is actually not literal at all but is fundamentally *abstract.*

[491] *Formal Logic*, 17. The thrust of Schiller here is that in deciphering meaning, "we must always use our intelligence" – i.e., not merely a lexical analysis of terminology.

Similar to Quine's statement that, when it comes to truth, "language is not the point,"[492] Schiller takes the verbal form of propositions as not the point of actual reasoning, and unreliable due to their essential ambiguity.[493] The principal reason why propositions cannot be properly given a truth-value is that they are unconnected with experience, and it is only in the course of experimentation and experience that truths can be discovered, determined, or made. And to attempt to focus on propositions rather than actual judgments is to, as Schiller says, replace real judgments with indicative sentences.[494]

Perhaps a useful way to think about Schiller's semantics is that it is *superpositional*. That is, the meanings of words and terms are ambiguous (analogous to being in multiple possible "states" at once) until they are actually used in context (analogous to being "measured"). Though he does not make explicit reference to the analogy of a quantum superposition, Schiller nonetheless gives a kind of superpositional account of the meanings of propositions:

> "...propositions must always be ambiguous. They *may* mean whatever they can be used to mean. They are blank forms to be filled up with concrete meanings according to requirements. They afford, therefore, no security that the meaning which they are *taken* as conveying is identical with that which they were *intended* to convey."[495]

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[492] Quine, *Philosophy of Logic*, 10-11.

[493] *Logic For Use*, 105.

[494] *Formal Logic*, 19; *Studies in Humanism*, 90.

[495] *Studies in Humanism*, 86.

To illustrate this superpositional conception of semantics, let us take the albeit limited example of chess pieces. Each piece, outside the context of the game of chess, is entirely meaningless, more or less like a nonsense word like "blorp" would be. Relative to the chess board and the rules of chess, however, the pieces do have *potential* meaning, which might be viewed as the respective sets of all their possible moves, representing the "superposition" of each piece. For instance, a pawn could be said to be in the meaning superposition of

$|P\rangle = a|$1 sp. forward$\rangle + b|$2 sp. forward, if first move$\rangle + c|$1 sp. forward diagonally, right or left, if taking a piece$\rangle$[496]

$|P\rangle = [a, b, c]$

The significance of a pawn in a game of chess remains in this superposition until it is actually moved as part of a game, in which case, the superposition collapses into an actual position – and this continues throughout the game, much like the different and successive uses of language (words, terms) may change over time. This analogy, outside of the superpositional aspect, breaks down, though, in the sense that while the pieces in a game of chess have discrete sets of potential moves which must be rigidly adhered to, words and terms are not like this, but rather may be used in ways which undermine their

[496] This quantum superposition notation is meant to be approximate, and to imitate actual notation for the sake of illustration.

average meaning,[497] which is Schiller's term for what we might call standard dictionary definitions, and may also be used in new ways which depart from previous usage. This happens routinely in the evolution of language. Whereas "cleave" began with the average meaning of "sever," it now can also mean "to join." Similar cases are "oversight" ("error due to lack of attention" versus "careful attention to avoid errors") and sanction ("approval" versus "disapproval"). And until the 1930s and 40s, the average meanings of "cool" were about temperature and a lack of passionate feeling, rather than the sense of fashionable goodness that it has since taken on. In this way (and many others), language in terms of meaning is incredibly fluid – fluid, that is, until used in a definite context. Perhaps, then the analogy of each word or term representing an open-ended set of potential meanings is more apt. In any case, the verbal forms of propositions are, completely and always, *potential*. And in the case of pragmatic truth, only actual judgments can be given a definite truth value, and truth-values are attributed to judgments via a process of verification.

3.9.3.2 Verification

3.9.3.2.1 Verification and Error

As noted above, analytic theories of truth run into the problem of distinguishing between true and false truth-claims. That is, for the analytic schema to work (or the interpretation function, in the case of Stich), one has to already have knowledge of which sentences or

[497] For discussions of "average meaning," see *Formal Logic*, 10 and 11.

claims are true and which are false. This is why Schiller made the point that without a proper theory of what constitutes error, one cannot possibly distinguish between truths and mere truth-claims. As he says,

> "No theory of truth will be adequate unless it succeeds in distinguishing truth from error (in conception at least) and can suggest a way of testing truth claims."[498]

The way of testing truth claims is what Pragmatism calls *verification*.[499]

Error, as we have already seen, is when the outcome of a cognitive process (a judgment) is negative or fails or some purpose we are aiming at in our actions is thwarted. It is the cognate of success in the truth-seeking process. Errors indicate the falsity of a proposition-in-application, that is, of a judgment, and successes in practice indicate a judgment's truth. Thus, errors and successes, truths and falsehoods, can only be represented in formalisms once they have occurred in actuality such that they become common enough regularities to warrant assertion. Propositions such as, "Fire burns," "Dropped items fall toward the ground," or even "If I go to the grocery store during regular business hours on a weekday, it will be open and I will be able to shop" have all

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[498] *Logic For Use*, 111.

[499] It is important to note that the pragmatic conception of verification should not be confused with verification*ism*, which differs in two important respects: (1) verificationism is a theory or criterion of meaning, not truth, and (2) it is focused on statements (or verbal constructions of some kind – perhaps propositions), not judgments. Thus "verification" should be taken in a general sense. It is likely, however, that Schiller would have agreed with some form of the criterion of verifiability of meaning expressed by Ayer in *Language, Truth and Logic*, i.e. that for sentences to be meaningful their truth or falsehood needs to be determinable from some course of experience.

been found reliable with such regularity that we have a tendency to take them as almost contextlessly true, or true as propositions without needing to be actual judgments. However, if these propositions are tested (respectively) on rocks in a campfire, objects aboard the International Space Station, or when Christmas falls on a weekday and someone who doesn't observe forgets to check their calendar before heading out to buy food, it becomes clear that truth and falsity arise from practical applications of propositions in the context of judgments, and not from their verbal forms of expression. In this way, explains Schiller, "the theory of error becomes the touchstone of all theories of truth."[500] And the recognition or determination of error is facilitated by verification.

Verification[501] begins with judgments as experiments. As Schiller notes,

> "Every judgment is an experiment and involves a risk of error."[502]

This process of experimentation is part of the broader process of verification, which is comprised of three basic parts: (1) postulation (or hypothesis), (2) experimentation, and (3) action. Postulation involves the adoption of various propositions relevant to the situation to form a complex hypothesis out of them.[503] Experimentation and action are

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[500] *Logic For Use,* 175.

[501] On page 105 of *Logic For Use*, Schiller equates the terms "verification," "validation," and "confirmation" (see also pages 246 and 319 of *Formal Logic*).

[502] *Formal Logic*, 338.

[503] Or, perhaps a *system of hypotheses*; in any case, hypotheses are never found in isolation, but are always related to other hypotheses – though not *every* other hypothesis, as in Quine's "web" analogy, but in sequestered or lightly associated stores of hypotheses or postulates called "fragments".

two aspects of judgment. Previous experiments inform current experiments, and our courses of action are (hopefully) updated accordingly – ascribing truth to those postulates which survive testing, and falsity to those which do not. And with each instance and iteration, our expectations for the next instance change as well, which shapes (in part) our conception of reality. Through this process, the contents of our conceptual category of *truth* is continually updated, with individual truths being improved and clarified, and often in the course of time, set aside as false in light of newer truths. The "risk of error" mentioned by Schiller can be minimized through subsequent experiments and subsequent verifications, but it can never be nullified completely. And at any one time, all our knowledge is a collection of hypotheses (or, as Schiller usually refers to them, *postulates*), which are continually updating as we conduct ourselves in the world.[504]

This process of verification is similar in form to the basic framework of the *predictive processing* which operates at the neural and cognitive unconscious levels and enables not only our successful navigation of our environment but is also at the heart of the process of "making reality" involved in cognitive metaphysics (see chapter 2, section 2.5.2). Predictive Processing (also sometimes called "active inference" and "hierarchical predictive coding") relies on a constant interactive or dynamic processing where sensorimotor information flows from the bottom upward (so to speak) and hypotheses

[504] Peirce stated similarly that: "The truth is that the whole fabric of our knowledge is one matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction. Not the smallest advance can be made in knowledge beyond the stage of vacant staring, without making an abduction at every step" (*The Proper Treatment of Hypotheses: a Preliminary Chapter, toward an Examination of Hume's Argument against Miracles, in its Logic and in its History*, 1901). Elsewhere, Peirce defines "abduction": "This step of adopting a hypothesis as being suggested by the facts, is what I call *abduction*" (*On the Logic of Drawing History from Ancient Documents Especially from Testimonies (Logic of History)*, 1901).

flow from the top downward (again, as a matter of speaking). Previous experience dictates future hypotheses, or expectations, and whenever some action (however small) defies those expectations, it results in a "predictive error" which is then noted by the relevant systems in the body and is used to update future predictions – and on our system goes. The process of verification, as Schiller describes it, is essentially a conscious process along the same lines: "Pragmatism as a logical method is merely the *conscious* application of a *natural* procedure of our minds in actual knowing."[505] And in the same way that the predictive processing of our perceptual and cognitive mechanisms run continually until the event of our death, so also does the process of verification (postulate, experiment, action, update) continue so long as we live, in some form, to a greater or lesser degree.

As to the question of how much verification is enough for a truth to be determined or recognized, Schiller explains that "the amount of verification a 'truth' requires and receives is indeterminate and may vary enormously"[506] and that if there is a dispute between parties to some endeavor as to whether a given amount or process of verification is adequate, it may only be resolved through argument until all are satisfied.[507] There is no absolute standard of verification, and no amount of verification yields absolute certainty or absolute truths[508] – all is relative to agents, their purposes, and what they are

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[505] *Studies in Humanism*, 186 (italics original).

[506] *Logic For Use*, 106.

[507] *Logic For Use*, 170.

[508] See *Formal Logic*, p. 347, and *Logic For Use*, p. 279.

willing to accept. As Schiller says, "There is no definite point, to be determined in advance, at which a truth-claim passes into verified truth."[509] In this way, verification itself is a hypothesis which is tested with experience. But there is also no such thing as a "truth" which is not susceptible to verification[510] or is true without verification.[511]

What someone may accept as adequate justification, or the amount of what they may accept in these regards, will according to Schiller depend in part on three factors[512]:

1. What he calls its *intrinsic character*, which is a consideration of its antecedent improbability.
    a. Example: One person may need more evidence regarding the supposed efficacy of folk remedies than another person – based on the general methods of verification they adopt or subscribe to.

2. The purpose for which it is needed, which is a consideration of how important accuracy is and what kinds of accuracy to the judgment.

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[509] *Logic For Use*, p. 106. Schiller goes onto say that, in some sense, the "truth-claim character" of all judgments continues even as it is accepted as verified truth, since they "remain open to question should the occasion arise."

[510] See *Studies in Humanism*, p. 8, where Schiller writes: "A 'truth' which will not (or cannot) submit to verification is not yet a truth at all. Its truth is at best potential, its meaning is null or unintelligible, or at most conjectural and dependent on an unfulfilled condition."

[511] For Schiller, this includes so-called *a priori* "truths" such as simple tautologies like *A is A* or arithmetical statements like 2 + 2 = 4. Each is a hypothesis with only potential meaning, which must be applied correctly. And, at base, represent our commitments to identity and category as we view them.

[512] See *Logic For Use*, p. 107.

a. Example: In most construction contexts, the competent use of a tape measure is enough to verify that a length of lumber is 36 inches, but in other, more exacting contexts this may be considered inaccurate because it matters whether it is 35.889 inches or 36.054 inches.

3. Lastly, it will depend on their character (i.e. of the person making the relevant judgment or hypothesis), which is a consideration of how critical or credulous they are.

   a. This is essentially the psychological component of (1). Some agents are hasty and have generally lower thresholds of accepting postulates than others. Some are simply reckless. Some are not scientific at all and simply do what certain people will direct them to do, without much or any questioning. And these factors of personal preference and attitude usually give rise to disparate methods of acceptable verification, attended by disparate judgments of the intrinsic character of postulates, between those on the critical and credulous ends of the general spectrum.[513]

[513] The selection of a given hypothesis from a set of facts cannot be absolutely prescribed, since it is subject to these kinds of factors also. Peirce refers to the selection of a hypothesis from a given set of facts as an "abduction" and notes that any abduction cannot be determined before it is formed: "This step of adopting a hypothesis as being suggested by the facts, is what I call *abduction*. I reckon it as a form of inference, however problematical the hypothesis may be held. What are to be the logical rules to which we are to conform in taking this step? There would be no logic in imposing rules, and saying that they ought to be followed, until it is made out that the purpose of hypothesis requires them" (*On the Logic of Drawing History from Ancient Documents Especially from Testimonies (Logic of History)*, 1901).

From a pragmatic and fallibilistic perspective, no process of verification is ever truly complete. Any postulate that we deem "true," even those which are so stable across the instances of our reasoning that we relate to them as axioms, are never so certain that they cannot be undermined or at least modified by some future experience. To take one's current truths for "objective" or "absolute" is to deploy a cultural myth, one which has been continually defied throughout the history of science and human knowledge generally. There simply is no criterion of absoluteness or permanence when it comes to the truth of hypotheses that is, or has ever been, known to us; all we can know is (i) which postulates are reliable now and (ii) look back at the history of successive paradigms and "objective facts" which are now considered false and draw the lesson that those which fall under (i) may eventually become the next century's or millennium's former paradigms and facts. Without the ability to predict the future on the level of mystical prognostication, we are left with the truth we can get and the processes of verification that endear those truths to us – in a continuous cycle of adjustment (and hopefully improvement):

> "[It should be recognized] that knowledge is actuated by a *desire* for truth, that it is an *activity* spurred on and guided by *postulates*, that it needs the stimulus of a *problem*, that it demands *novelties* and seeks new truths, that it is throughout an *experimental* and *progressive* process, and that verification has no end."[514]

[514] *Logic For Use*, 320.

This process, the process of sorting between truth-claims to determine truth and falsity in practice, is necessarily prior to any efficacy of reasoning, formal-logical or otherwise. Without some criterion of determining error, all truth-claims hold the same status; without application in the course of experience, truth-values cannot be assigned.

Now, it will almost certainly be objected that not every hypothesis we act upon is, or has been, verified directly by us – and this is certainly the case. Both Schiller and James weigh in on this. Schiller refers to the acceptance of postulates as 'true' before they have been directly verified as "the principle of faith," which he describes as:

> "...the mental attitude which, for the purposes of action, is willing to take upon trust [apparently] valuable and desirable beliefs, *before* they have been proved 'true,' but in hope that this attitude may promote their *verification*."[515]

Of course, it might be said that pragmatically adopting certain beliefs based on how they work for others, is itself a form of verification, however precarious relying on this can sometimes be. Though, due to the common embodiment and embeddedness of people in a similar spatio-temporal contexts, what generally works for one person is likely to work for another, and it is this awareness (which we draw from regular instances throughout our personal development) which causes us to exercise such "faith."

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[515] *Studies in Humanism*, 357.

James, in his classic *Pragmatism*, explains this common tendency to initially adopt unverified postulates, strictly speaking, in terms of a "credit system" like that which operates when currency is exchanged within an economy:

> "Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass,' so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. You accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truth. But beliefs verified concretely by *somebody* are the posts of the whole superstructure."[516]

So, though this process of accepting the 'truth' of beliefs prior to any personal verification doesn't undermine the need for verification, as James says, by somebody somewhere. That the vast majority of truths originate in the experience of some person is what undergirds the superstructure of human knowledge. And it is the reliability of this general principle that makes participation the credit system of truth pragmatically reasonable. Though, due to the possibility of popular falsehoods like "urban myths," a scientific and critical approach to the ongoing verifications of facts is recommended – as a matter of pragmatism, of course.

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[516] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.

The need for some verification has, to use the phrase of Englebretsen above, the "added blessing" of "consonance with sound common sense." Appeals to common sense are mostly contextual and relative to expertise in a given area, while being generally specious, but Schiller maintains that the process of truth-seeking by testing and verifying hypotheses is exactly what people expect commonsense-wise: "[Pragmatism about truth] is essentially a simple common-sense doctrine."[517]

3.9.3.2.2 The Right to Postulate

But the activity of making truths through a process of verification is more than simply and successively applying certain rules of inference and updating our postulates (hypotheses) as we go along. Rather, it has to do with the construction of hypotheses in the first place. And such hypothesizing is based upon our values and is thus relative to the purposes which our values imply. This creation or formulation of hypotheses, which is prior to any working out of their truth or falsity, is what Schiller refers to as "the right to postulate,"[518] which he identifies with James's well-known but widely misunderstood notion of "the will to believe."[519]

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[517] *Logic For Use*, 444.

[518] *Logic For Use*, 338.

[519] See *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, page 5, where Schiller sums up James's position nicely as follows:

"Professor James first unequivocally advanced the pragmatist doctrine in connection with what he calls the 'Will to believe.' Now this Will to believe was put forward as an intellectual right (in certain cases) to decide between alternative views, each of which seemed to make a legitimate appeal to our nature, by other than purely intellectual considerations, viz. their emotional interest and practical value. Although Professor James laid down a number of conditions limiting the applicability of his Will-to-believe, the chief of which was the willingness to take the risks involved and to abide by the results of subsequent experience, it was not perhaps altogether astonishing that his doctrine should be decried as rank irrationalism."

The "right to postulate" or "will to believe" is the idea that an organism constructs hypotheses to test based on its wants and needs[520] (which are implied by its values), and not by the "permission" of a prior objective "ought" that dictates hypotheses to it:

> "Postulation is the expression of the motive forces which impel us towards a certain assumption, an outcome of every organism's unceasing struggle to transmute its experience into harmonious and acceptable forms. The organism cannot help postulating, because it cannot help trying, because it must act or die, and because from the first it will not acquiesce in less than a complete harmony of its experience. It therefore needs assumptions it can act on and live by, which will serve as means to the attainment of its ends. These assumptions it obtains by postulating them in the hope that they may prove tenable, and the axioms are thus the outcome of a Will-to-believe which has had its way, which has dared to postulate…"[521]

It is the organism itself that determines what constitutes a "problem" with respect to its existence, and thus, it postulates and forms hypotheses based on those determinations, and only from the initial point are they ever adjusted in the light of experience. The "*right* to postulate" means that an organism is not restricted in its right to approach primary

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[520] In *Axioms as Postulates*, 70, Schiller explains that "the 'necessity' of a postulate is simply an indication of our *need*. We want it and so *must* have it, as a means to our ends" (italics original).

[521] *Axioms as Postulates*, 91.

reality and to essentially make demands, which is what Schiller compares the process of postulation to:

> "For to postulate is simply to *demand* what one wants, and why should one not ask for what one wants, if one is candid enough to confess it and honest enough to recognise that it does not follow that one gets it because one has asked for it? On the other hand, there is no sense in abstaining from demanding what we want, because our overscrupulous abstention from trying to get it may be the very thing that prevents us from getting it. So, the right to postulate belongs inalienably to the logic of desire and action, and initially there is no need to limit it."[522]

But this right to postulate does not end with the formulation of initial hypotheses only, but continues even into the process of verification and any adjustment of the initial hypothesis, as Schiller continues:

> "But after a postulate is made, it had better listen to the comment of experience. If our demand is foolish, it will meet with no response, or encounter hostile verdicts. We shall then do well to reconsider it. It does not follow that it should at once be scrapped, for it may be a very valuable postulate which we are rightly loth to renounce; but it may be better to modify it, and it will almost always be well to modify the methods of verification we have tried: by exploring further

[522] *Logic For Use*, 338.

> possibilities; by trying other and subtler methods, we may often succeed in extorting a favorable response."[523]

Larson (2021) compares the process of forming hypotheses relative to our needs and wants to a hunter, who, in tracking an animal, will not get far if they do not dare to postulate relative to their goals:

> "A hunter who reasons that an unknown scent might be from a previously undiscovered species or an extraterrestrial will not advance his or her interests in finding prey. Thus, the hunter is interested in a conjecture that fits his or her specific purposes… the hunter has no prior experience of this phenomenon…, but reasons with a framework that excludes logical possibilities that don't advance the objective."[524]

Thus, there is nothing that constrains us to postulate, or formulate hypotheses, in accordance with any preconceived standard. The "will to believe" or "the right to postulate" are ever-present in living organisms, and though prudence based on past experiences often does set in (and is most often recommended), there is nothing that mandates that it should set in, as the phenomenon of denial demonstrates clearly, whether it be the unwillingness of humans to accept the reality of climate change, or of a hungry

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[523] Ibid.

[524] Erik J. Larson, *The Myth of Artificial Intelligence: Why Computers Can't Think the Way We Do* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap of Harvard, 2021), 164.

polar bear to face the fact that she simply cannot subdue an adult male walrus alone well enough to eat it. We continue postulating relative to our objectives until and unless we set those objectives aside in favor of others.

3.9.4 Schiller on "How [Pragmatic] Truth is Possible Vis-a-vis the Nature of 'Facts'"

This point, following Englebretsen, arises from his question of "how knowledge of truth is possible given the facts are wholly independent of us."[525] The nature of facts has been discussed in the previous chapter (see section 2.3, esp. footnote 117), and they are not, cognitively speaking, "wholly independent of us," but are rather partially constructed according to the experience and perspective of the individual and, very similar to the notion of Kuhnian paradigms,[526] can only be known relative to what Schiller calls "the state of knowledge at the time":

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[525] Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 5.

[526] In *Structure*, Kuhn seems to take a view of facts as partially constructed relative to paradigms, as well as the view that facts simply are. As for the facts as partially constructed relative to paradigms idea of facts, he writes on page 141:

"Those theories, of course, do 'fit the facts,' but only *by transforming previously accessible information into facts that, for the preceding paradigm, had not existed at all*. And that means that theories too do not evolve piecemeal to fit facts that were there all the time. Rather, they emerge together with the facts they fit from a revolutionary reformulation of the preceding scientific tradition, a tradition within which the knowledge-mediated relationship between the scientist and nature was not quite the same" (italics added).

Thus, from this passage, Kuhn seems to say that facts are created from interpretations of data. However, on page 147 Kuhn seems to use "facts" to refer to mere data or observations such that theories "fit" or "agree" with them:

"To the historian, at least, it makes little sense to suggest that verification is establishing the agreement of fact with theory. All historically significant theories have *agreed with the facts*, but only more or less. There is no more precise answer to the question whether or how well an individual theory *fits the facts*. But questions much like that can be asked when theories are taken collectively or even in pairs. It makes a great deal of sense to ask which of two actual and competing theories *fits the facts* better. Though neither Priestley's nor Lavoisier's theory, for example, agreed precisely with existing observations, few contemporaries hesitated more than a decade in concluding that Lavoisier's theory provided the better fit of the two" (italics added).

> "For actually, whatever is taken as fact can be so only relatively to the state of knowledge at the time, and to the position and purposes of the particular inquiry; hence it is out of the question to take any 'fact' as absolute, and it is often difficult to decide which among rival facts it is best to take as fact. It is from differences of opinion as to what is best to do in such cases [of rival facts] that different schools of thought arise in philosophy and science."[527]

For correspondence theorists like Englebretsen, and for most analytic theorists about truth, *facts*[528] occupy the place of truth-makers:

> "Whatever is true (a truth-bearer) is made true by something else (truth-maker). A truth-bearer corresponds to its truth-maker."[529]

Despite their apparently disparate usages, I don't think that these two uses of "fact" are far apart, and it appears to be a constraint on terminology that prompts Kuhn to use it in both senses. On the one hand, facts are not simply given, but interpreted. On the other hand, there is a colloquialism "fits the facts" that means, essentially, "is best able to explain and integrate all available observations." However, it becomes difficult to step out of this way of thinking, since even observations (which are commonly taken as agent-neutral) are theory-laden, which is what Kuhn maintains is the underlying cause of the incommensurability of paradigms. In a very real sense, explains Kuhn, "the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds" (p. 150). Thus, I think this seeming difference in the way that Kuhn understands the nature of "facts" is mostly terminological, and from a careful and overall reading of *Structure*, it appears that Kuhn and Schiller were fairly similar in their approach to facts as relative to "paradigms"/"the state of knowledge" at a given time.

[527] *Logic For Use*, 38.

[528] For Englebretsen, facts are most definitely truth-makers, as he states: "Facts are truth-makers" (131), and reiterates this on pages 5, 88, 123, 151, and others, while citing correspondence theorists from antiquity to the present who agree that facts are truth-makers.

[529] Englebretsen, *Bare Facts and Naked Truths*, 4.

We have already seen that in the pragmatic theory of truth, judgments are truth-bearers. But instead of facts, it is the verification of the judgment (its success in practice) that makes the judgment true, i.e. verification in practice is the pragmatic "truth-maker." As James says,

> "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its *verification*."[530]

Of course, the relevant facts (as partially constructed) are important and figure into the formulation of hypotheses and postulates, but what mediates between a judgment and its truth is the process of verifying it in actual application.

The terminology of "truth-bearer" and "truth-maker" are predominantly used within versions of correspondence theory. The idea is that there is a *correspondence* between truth-bearers and truth-makers; if a token from one somehow fits with a token of the latter, then this is the definition of "truth." And of course, the converse – the lack of agreement between truth-bearer and truth-maker – is the sign of falsity. As we saw above in section 3.8, this conception of truth is inadequate as it not only is analytically trivial and explanatorily vague, but it also takes for granted the necessary process of pragmatic verification to distinguish between truths and mere truth-claims. The correspondence

[530] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.

schema simply offers no *criterion* of truth or error, which is essential to any meaningful theory of truth.

Despite the pragmatic rejection of the correspondence theory of truth, neither James nor Schiller had any issue with the basic correspondence intuition that what we say or claim has to agree with reality, so long as "correspondence" is construed *pragmatically*. That is, so long as the correspondence between our ideas and the world is a matter of what we judge to be the case as it is worked out in practice, rather than being thwarted in some way by aspects of our judgments. But again, the basic definition of truth as "correspondence" or "agreement" with reality, writes James, is not objectionable at all to the pragmatist:

> "Truth, as any dictionary will tell you, is a property of certain of our ideas. It means their 'agreement,' as falsity means their disagreement, with 'reality.' Pragmatists and intellectualists both accept this definition as a matter of course. They begin to quarrel only after the question is raised as to what may precisely be meant by the term 'agreement,' and what by the term 'reality,' when reality is taken as something for our ideas to agree with."[531]

Likewise, Schiller says that the notion of "correspondence" or "agreement" are acceptable just so long as they are taken pragmatically as indicating relations within our

[531] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.

experience that "work,"[532] and that the practical working of our knowledge is the only sense of "correspondence" which actual truth can bear.[533] As he explains elsewhere:

> "The reality to which truth was said to 'correspond,' i.e. which it has to know, is *not* a 'fact' in its own right, which pre-exists cognitive functioning. It is itself a fact *within* knowing, immanently deposited or 'precipitated' by the functioning of our thought. The problem of knowledge, therefore, is *not* – 'how can thought engender truth about reality?' It is rather – 'how can we best describe the continuous cognitive process which engenders our systems of 'truth' and our acceptance of 'reality,' and gradually refines them into more and more adequate means for the control of our experience?' It is in this cognitive elaboration of experience that both reality and truth grow up *pari passu* [side by side]. And so, what was once the most vaporous hypothesis [may be, over the course of time] consolidated into the hardest and most indubitable 'fact.'"[534]

So, in this way, the pragmatic theory of truth can be said to align with the basic correspondence intuition, in that our practical actions successfully "agree" with reality. But, as Schiller notes here, the problem of truth is not how thought can ascertain truth about reality (or, in the phrasing of Englebretsen, "how knowledge of truth is possible given the facts are wholly independent of us.") but is rather about how embodied agents

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[532] *Logic For Use*, 131.

[533] *Riddles of the Sphinx*, 133-134.

[534] *Studies in Humanism*, 426.

successfully navigate the partially-constructed reality of their environments, making broad practical sense of their experiences from their perspective.

3.9.5 Schiller on How Pragmatic Truth Handles "Liar" Statements

The final element of Englebretsen's criteria for a proper theory of truth is to account for how it approaches the "Liar paradox," and Schiller indeed engages with this on the grounds of his superpositional semantics and pragmatic theory of truth.

Schiller begins by citing the ancient form of the paradox, as placed in the mouth of Epimenides, a Cretan philosopher usually placed in the 6th century BCE, who is reputed to have said: "All Cretans are liars."[535] Epimenides, however, was himself a Cretan. So, it has been maintained, Epimenides must have been contradicting himself, since if *all* Cretans are indeed liars, then he himself must have been (according to his own statement) a liar as well. And if this is true, so the reasoning goes, then his fabled statement must also have been a lie, making it false. This in turn is said to produce a situation in which, if the statement was true then it was also false, making it appear paradoxically that both are the case. The more standard form of the Liar sentence is:

"This sentence is false."

Again, the usual interpretation of such sentences is that, *if* it is true, *then* it is false, and if false then true, and so on. Schiller, however, drawing on (a) the distinction between

[535] See *Formal Logic*, 371-373, and *Logic For Use*, 63-64, for Schiller's discussions of the Liar paradox through the lens of his "superpositional" semantics.

potential and actual meaning, (b) the personal nature of linguistic meaning, and (c) the necessity of use in context for actual meaning, argues not only that the paradox is essentially self-imposed, but also that it relies on assumptions which fundamentally abstract away from anything actual.

In dealing with the statement attributed to Epimenides, Schiller first questions why "liar" necessarily denotes someone who only and always lies, never speaking the truth – there is nothing constraining the reader to take the word "liar" in such an extreme and exclusive sense. When someone calls someone else a "liar," they rarely mean that the person *never* tells the truth in any respect. Related to this, Schiller then questions why it should be assumed that, in speaking this sentence, Epimenides himself should be considered such a caliber of truth-teller that his credibility cannot possibly be questioned.[536] Both assumptions are required to read his statement paradoxically, and since there is no basis on which to make either assumption, there is no reason to take it as necessarily implying a paradox.

The paradox, Schiller explains, arises from confusing potential meaning with actual meaning, treating the assertion "All Cretans are liars" as *an independently significant form of words* rather than *the assertion of Epimenides*.[537] If we take it as the latter, there is no logical problem at all, whereas if we take it as the former, we can construe it in such a way that a paradox results. Thus, to read "All Cretans are liars" paradoxically, one must read it as though it meant "All Cretans, including me, only and

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[536] Of course, one might object that the paradox is conditional, i.e. *if* we agree with Epimenides' statement, *then* we run into a paradox of if-true-then-false.

[537] *Formal Logic*, 371-372.

always lie – and this is true." But, as Schiller notes, if Epimenides were to have been asked what he meant, he likely would have clarified that he meant "All *other* Cretans are liars."[538] And in the practical world of language use, we would never think of interpreting the statements of others so unfavorably and would in any case allow them to clarify for themselves the sense of their assertions.[539]

This, notes Schiller, raises a serious question for logic generally: Is it concerned with words irrespective of any context or speaker intention? Without context and speaker intention, words and phrases are infinitely ambiguous as regards their meaning. Even if all their past uses could be compiled finitely in an exhaustive dictionary, their future possible uses, says Schiller, "can no more be predicted than its future pronunciation"[540] – and there is no basis on which to restrict possible usages. That is, except by actual usage in context, and the only way to truly ascertain meaning in context is to inquire of the person who is making use of the words or phrases. Unless logic concerns itself with actual meaning, which is necessarily personal and contextual, it will suffer the arbitrariness of insisting on the particular meanings of terms. Thus, to resolve apparent paradoxes or contradictions which arise from ambiguities in language, the only logical course according to Schiller is to seek clarification from the speaker themselves.[541]

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[538] Ibid.

[539] On page 373 of *Formal Logic*, Schiller says that "In real life there would be no doubt about our choice [i.e. of whether to interpret a speaker's statement in a semantic vacuum or seek their clarification about their own words]; both courtesy and common-sense would allow assertors to purge themselves of 'contradiction' by explaining what they meant."

[540] *Logic For Use*, 63.

[541] Ibid.

Even for more traditional liar sentences like "This sentence is false," the same criterion of meaning applies. The paradox (problem, issue) only arises when we treat Liar sentences as significant all by themselves, that is, when we accord them *actual* meaning independently of any concrete usage in a context. Put another way, the paradox arises from treating propositions as if they were judgments, and judgments require application in a context, and their truth-value is based on the outcome of their verification process – they are not deemed 'true' or 'false' by stipulation.[542] Thus, based on Schiller's version of the pragmatic theory of truth, I offer the following basic resolution to the Liar:

A statement can be potentially true or false (in the sense of the 'good' and 'bad' of cognitive operations) if the propositions it contains could somehow be the verbal form of judgments.

Now, this is admittedly a very broad criterion, and this is intentional. Allow me to clarify this basic solution in several points, and then apply them to the Liar itself:

a. Note that I do not want, as most analytic solutions to the Liar do, to speak in terms of *meaningfulness*, since pragmatically, meaning or significance is always relative to some purpose or aim.

[542] "Stipulation" here refers to either a truth value contained in the predicate (i.e. "is false") or accorded conditionally (i.e. *if* the Liar is 'true,' *then*…).

b. It is important to be as broad as possible when it comes to meaning since, so far as the potential meanings of propositions in concerned, the plasticity[543] of words and terms practically infinite. They can be used, and reused, across contexts to mean anything we need them to.

c. This basic resolution to the Liar only allows for a discussion of the potential meaning of propositions in terms of what might reasonably be a context of application as a judgment. This is confined to our imaginations, since without the power of perfect prognostication, there is no way to tell how propositions (or even the words they contain) might be applied at some future point, even if we cannot think of any particular application at present.

d. Once a proposition is expressive of an actual judgment, *there is no paradox*. The idea of a "paradox" does not apply to judgments, and even if the verbal form of a judgment should appear paradoxical or contradictory, in context it never is – though a judgment may turn out to be *false*.

To begin with, the Liar statement 'this sentence is false' is perfectly meaningful (a), and there are plenty of ways that the proposition could be applied in the context of a judgment (b). For example, "this sentence" could mean "this *very* sentence" or "the sentence I just uttered before this one" or "the sentence I am currently pointing to"). Regarding (c), discussing any potential or hypothetical meaning of 'this sentence is false' is constrained

[543] Schiller prefers to call the ability for words to use any number of past (or take on new) meanings the "plasticity" of language, since "ambiguity" often implies some kind of negativity, and the broad number of possible uses of language is not problematic – unless one assumes at the outset that words must have narrow and fixed meanings. See *Logic For Use*, chapter 4, §10.

by our ability to think of a practical context in which it could represent a judgment, and judgments are not *things* in the sense of objects or semantic entities, but are the actions of real agents engaged in reasoning relative to their values and purposes. This means that if someone were to think of a context in which 'this sentence is false' took on the classical paradoxical meaning, they could *not* be speaking of a sentence in isolation, since this would *not* be expressive of a judgment. And if such a person were to insist that the paradoxical interpretation of 'this sentence is false' *could* represent a concrete judgment, it seems that their only option would be to refer to a situation in which some person spoke it *for the purpose of effecting a verbal paradox.* In this case, there is no issue – there is only a choice to stipulate the meaning of sentence so that it creates a paradoxical contradiction or not. This isn't a "problem," any more than someone who decides to write "p & ~p" or to say "I am exactly 6 feet tall, and I am not exactly 6 feet tall, and I mean this in the most contradictory sense possible" is a problem. They are choosing to say strange things for whatever purpose – and if we want to know that purpose, we will need to consult them for an explanation. And barring intentional self-contradiction, verbal "paradoxes" when expressive of a judgment are never contradictory (d) – where is the contradiction in purposefully bringing about a paradox through stipulating the meaning of terms in a given sentence? If a paradox is the speaker's goal, then through stipulation they can attain it. And if it isn't, then their explanation of what they meant in a practical context of usage will dissipate any issues. The main point here is that, when it comes to

any statement, including the Liar, once it is used in an actual context, there is never any real contradiction.[544]

3.10 What of Analytic Truth?

The pragmatic theory of truth seems to reject, or at least not make use of many of the tools of, formal logic and analytic approaches to truth, and this is indeed the case.[545] Pragmatism (in its classical form) was a departure from analytic conceptions of language, logic, and metaphysics in significant ways, though the tradition remained essentially adjacent to mainstream analytic philosophy. For Stich, analytic approaches to truth and epistemology – which lay claim to rigor via formalisms – actually terminate in subjective considerations, causing him to promote an abandonment of truth (analytically and objectively understood) along with the concerns of traditional epistemology, like justification. Notwithstanding all this, is there a place for analytic and formal-logical approaches to truth? I think there is.

The way to retain analytic approaches to truth is to make a fundamental distinction between *formal* and *actual* conceptions of truth. Bunge (2012) makes this distinction and holds it to be essential:

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[544] See *Formal Logic*, 373, where Schiller states: "As for the declaration 'I lie,' and the answers *yes* to the question 'Are you asleep?' and *no* to the question 'Are you alive?' it may again be suggested that logicians should look at the context, and would do well, at this point, if not before, to contemplate the psychological possibility of *jokes*, and the logical possibility of meaningless forms of speech."

[545] Pragmatists like James and Schiller made use of formal methods, and were not allergic to them, so to speak, but in taking them as instrumentally reliable so far as they go *and* rejecting the tenability the objective or *a priori* use of them, there is not much wind left in the sails of formal analytic approaches to propel pragmatists very far. As such, their use of them was (and is) far less intensive than their positivist (pre-analytic) fellows.

> "There are at least two quite different concepts of truth: formal and factual. Whereas the formal truths are those of logic and mathematics, the factual truths are characteristic of ordinary knowledge, science, and technology. For example, while 'There are infinitely many prime numbers' is a formal truth, 'There are about six billion people at this time' is a factual truth. The confusion between the two kinds of truth is even worse than the confusion between value and price."[546]

And this distinction is quite salient. Whereas formal truth is the binary value of model theory, set theory, calculus, and formal logic – systems in which 'true' and 'false' are synonymous with '1' and '0' – factual truth is fundamentally different in character. As Bunge notes, formal truths may be determined on an *a priori* basis, but factual truths are ascertained only after the fact, and by observation.[547] And formal truth deals in abstractions, like propositions, and not in concrete objects, and factual truth is only obtainable through application and observation.[548]

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[546] Bunge, "The correspondence theory of truth", 65.

[547] Ibid, 66.

[548] Ibid, 67. Reading throughout the essay, Bunge goes in the direction of developing a hypothetico-deductive system to explain what he views as the relation between knowledge and reality which comprises *factual truth*, and I honestly don't see much of a difference between the outcomes of such a system (if one were adequately developed) and the *formal truth* of logic or mathematics. At that point, it seems like it would be a question of *what* was being formalized, either hypothetical abstractions or concrete facts. Nevertheless, I think Bunge is on the right track, and perhaps if not for his own misunderstanding of what Pragmatism represents or implies, he may have adopted "pragmatic truth" as essentially co-extensive with "factual truth," being as it is *a posteriori* and based in observation and the practical application of theories.

Such a distinction between formal and factual truths is, to use Quine's well-known phrase, "a shift toward pragmatism"[549] on the part of Bunge. Schiller would certainly take issue with the idea of any kind of truth being purely "a priori," including that of formal systems, since he viewed formal systems as constructed hypotheses, postulates of relative stability that we treat as rules and axioms. Nevertheless, I think the distinction is meaningful – and one which Pragmatism can abide; after all, if one is coding, then the concept of formal truth will be not only relevant, but pragmatically useful – and the only option when interacting with various coding languages.

What may also be pragmatically useful is the formalization of very local sets of hypotheses, the components of which are cumbersome or complex. Setting them in a meaningful order and representing their various elements with letters for the sake of categorization and organization, to aid in reasoning, is also pragmatically useful. But it is important to remember that in doing so (that is, in meaningfully and reasonably doing so), it must already be ascertained what statements are true and false *before* such organization. If formalization is used to aid in organization and reasoning, it is reasonable to assume that all the statements involved will be considered true. And, so, any inferences drawn from them may be presumed true – but the ultimate test of their truth will always be some process of verification, where such derived conclusions are tested for their accuracy relative to the purpose(s) which urged one to organize and analyze them in the first place.

[549] See the opening paragraph of Quine's well-known essay, *Two Dogmas of Empiricism* (1951).

3.11 Answering the Skeptic

As noted above, Stich challenges what he calls "the skeptical conclusion" by rejecting the idea that truth is valuable in the first place, leading him to accept the following:

1. Truth is basically as the skeptic conceives of it: objective, and likely absolute
2. The skeptic is essentially correct about truth lying beyond the reach of human ken (see 1).
3. Semantic or analytic theories of truth bottom out in arbitrary considerations.
4. Neither 1, 2, nor 3 is of any consequence since truth itself does not matter anyhow.
5. Pragmatism is a kind of crass expediency under which truth has no value.

The pragmatist, however, rejects the truth-has-no-value approach of Stich, and instead adopts the following in response to the skeptic:

I. Truth is *pragmatic*, being neither objective nor absolute.
II. The skeptic is incorrect: truth is within the reach of human understanding.
III. Semantic or analytic theories of truth bottom out in arbitrary considerations.
IV. Truth *is* valuable, pragmatically valuable.
V. Pragmatism is a philosophy rooted in practice and experience under which truth is not only valuable, but its central and fundamental concept.

The only overlap between these approaches is 3/III. The objection to V (i.e. something like 5) will be addressed in the following chapter.

The pragmatic approach to truth answers the skeptic head-on by challenging their conception of truth (or the cultural narrative they continually recount) and arrives at the refutation of skepticism by valuing truth, not by rejecting it as Stich has done, and deeming it entirely irrelevant to human action and purpose. And action, along with its pursuit of purpose, is precisely the reason why it is important to answer skepticism. For Schiller, the skeptic is ultimately no different than the pragmatist, since the skeptic lives by the more probable opinion, just like everyone else.[550] Sure, the skeptic may suffer far more doubt and hesitation than the non-skeptic, but when it comes to carrying out the actions of their lives, they engage in processes which treat human truth as actionable and valuable, as this is simply the nature of knowledge vis-a-vis the way humans actually think – there is simply no other options for humans to operate, practically speaking. The only difference between the skeptic and the pragmatist is that the skeptic continually deplores and denigrates human truth in favor of an imagined and unattainable ideal.[551]

The skeptic is engaging in what James dubbed *vicious abstractionism*,[552] wherein the concrete instances that give rise to a concept are then viewed as lacking in some ideal way, the basis for which is spurious or imaginary (or, in the case of absolute truth, beyond human ken by definition), and the individual instances are then denigrated and

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[550] *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1910, revised edition), 134.

[551] Ibid.

[552] See *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter 13 ("Abstractionism and Relativismus") for James's explanation of vicious abstractionism.

rejected in favor of the idealized concept. Our concept of truth, cognitively speaking, derives from instances of confidence and success in action; instances where ideas which we receive or derive throughout our development are deployed in navigating our experience of our environment and are successful (or, always us to be successful). From these a prototypical instance of truth is constructed, and part of our concept – as is common knowledge – is that often it is the case that our current stock of truths is updated and altered, and at times what we counted as true in the past will be counted as false and exchanged for new truths. This is the nature of human truth – even long-range, well-thought-out, careful, broadly coherent systems of human truth. Everything is subject to possible revision in light of some future element of experience. What the skeptic does, however, is scorns the actual instances from which the concept arises, scorns the way that they and others most effectively navigate the world, and says effectively, "This isn't right, truth should be absolute and objective, not arise naturally in the course of relative and subjective experience through processes of verification – this kind of truth may be beyond any human ability to apprehend, but we should nevertheless think of truth in *this way* and *not* in the human way we know and recognize." The problem is that the skeptic has nothing to base this conception of truth on but their own imagination – no concrete instances to draw from.

The difference between the skeptic and the objectivist is not the posit of an absolute truth (they agree on that). What makes them different is that, while the skeptic pulls back and refuses to call any human truths "Truth," the objectivist, at every stop along the progression of their knowledge, when they feel cannot conceive that their most hallowed truths could be anything but absolute, objective, and permanent, boldly declare

that the truths they subscribe to are indeed the objective or absolute kind. As mentioned above, they did this regarding the geocentric universe, the miasma theory of disease, phlogiston theory, spontaneous generation, absolute space and time, and many others. In fact, the myth of absolute truth continues to be retold, and yet not one of them, either skeptics or objectivists, has or has ever had access to anything other than human truths.

Chapter 4 – Objections to the Pragmatic Truth

Chapter overview:

The purpose of this chapter is field various common objections to the pragmatic theory of truth presented in the latter half of the previous chapter. In the course of answering common objections, the initial sketches of various ideas are presented (e.g. the Rules of Perspectives, the Logic of Values). Both the objections and their answers are organized around two hypothetical cases: the Red Berries Case and the Blue Lagoon Case.

Introduction

The previous two chapters focused mainly on the presentation and explanation of the pragmatic approach metaphysics (chapter 2), the position of Stich on truth (chapter 3), and the pragmatic conception of truth (chapter 3). This chapter is dedicated to answering

some of the primary objections to truth as it is understood in Pragmatism, namely that it is (i) relativistic, (ii) subjectivistic, and (iii) just a form of expediency. Each of these objections and some of their related subtopics will be addressed in turn.

What follows is not complete or exhaustive but attempts to span the major objections which the pragmatic theory of truth faces, and has faced, from critics – most of which are well-known. As such, I have posed possible objections hypothetically, and have not meticulously gone through the historical literature of James's and Schiller's detractors. This is not only unnecessary, but far outside the scope of the current project.

4.1 The Objection of Relativism

Objection: Pragmatism seems to be a form of relativism about truth, and if so, this is problematic because relativism about truth is self-defeating, incoherent, and inconsistent.

Answer: While Pragmatism *is* a kind of relativism, it is *not*, in fact, the kind of relativism that is self-defeating. The related claims of its inconsistency and incoherence are actually based on the import of objectivist assumptions about truth into the operative conception of "truth" on the part of relativism's detractors.

Explanation: Aside from the objections of **subjectivism** and **expediency** (which will be addressed in the next two sections) usually leveled at the pragmatic theory of truth, a concern for relativism is the most common. Schiller is not coy about Pragmatism being a

form of relativism,[553] and neither is James, who refers to pragmatists as "typical relativists."[554] However, it is important to separate common construals of relativism about truth on the part of its critics, and what relativists, particularly pragmatists, mean by the term.

As Haack (1996) has rightly pointed out, "'Relativism' refers, not to a single thesis, but to a whole family. Each resembles the others in claiming that something is relative to something else; each differs from the others in what it claims is relative to what."[555] The basic formula for relativism of various types is "*x* is relative to *y*," where "*x*" may stand for a particular subject matter (e.g., truths, objects, classifications, knowledge, tastes), and "*y*" may stand for various contexts (e.g., individuals, cultures, paradigms, religions).[556] As such, there can be very specific sub-categorizations of moral relativism, epistemic relativism, ontological relativism, semantic relativism, scientific relativism, and so on. The relativism that I will answer for here will be fairly general in type since it will be about truth relative to perspectives – i.e. *x* [pragmatic truth] relative to *y* [perspectives] – which the broadest account of truth possible for the radical empiricism of the pragmatist. This relativism also concerns the truth of statements, but

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[553] See the essay "Humanisms and Humanism" in *Our Human Truths*, 79, where Schiller mentions that Pragmatism ("Humanism") is a kind of relativism, as well as *Problems of Belief*, 139, where he states unequivocally that: "Every known truth, nay, every knowable truth, that could conceivably enter a human head, is *relative*" (italics added).

[554] *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter XIII.

[555] Susan Haack, "Reflections on Relativism: From Momentous Tautology to Seductive Contradiction" in *Philosophical Perspectives* 10, Metaphysics (1996): 297

[556] Martin Kusch, *Relativism in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 1-2.

not statements *per se*. Rather, it concerns the practical concepts and ideas expressed by statements in use – i.e. the focus will always be on the judgment in context, and not on the proposition used to express it, which is only a token verbal form (to use Schiller's terminology). As Quine has said, when it comes to truth, language (of itself) is not the point.[557] However, in those more formal contexts where language *is* the point, there are tools available to state relativism in a consistent and analytically cogent and useful way.[558]

Since its inception, Analytic Philosophy has subscribed almost universally to the notion that relativism is incoherent and "self-defeating."[559] Yet Margolis (1991), himself an analytic philosopher and perhaps the most well-known modern exponent of relativism, has said that the claim that relativism is incoherent and self-defeating is the most persistent myth about it among philosophers.[560] And J.J. Phillips (2007) has correctly noted that "the question of whether relativism is a coherent philosophical doctrine has been a perennial one since the time of Plato."[561] The common kinds of arguments put

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[557] Cf. Quine, *Philosophy of Logic*, 10-11: "...truth should hinge on reality, not language; sentences are language… No sentence is true, but reality makes it so. The sentence 'Snow is white' is true, as Tarski has taught us, if and only if real snow is really white. The same can be said of 'Der Schnee ist weiss'; *language is not the point*. In speaking of the truth of a given sentence there is only indirection; we do better simply to say the sentence [i.e. and not appeal to propositions] and so speak not about language but about the world." (brackets and italics mine)

[558] See John MacFarlane, *Assessment Sensitivity: Relative Truth and its Applications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and the work of Antti Hautamäki, particularly is "The Logic of Viewpoints" (*Studia logica* 42, 2/3, 1983: 187-196) and his more recent *Points of View: A Conceptual Space Approach* (*Foundations of science* 21, 3, 2016: 493-510).

[559] Maria Baghramian and Annalisa Coliva, *Relativism* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 55.

[560] Joseph Margolis, *The Truth About Relativism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil-Blackwell, 1991), 1.

[561] Patrick J.J. Phillips, *The Challenge of Relativism: Its Nature and Limits* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 1.

forward by objectivists for the supposed incoherence and self-contradictory ("self-defeating") nature of relativism are represented by the following pair of examples:

Example Argument <A>

P: According to relativism, any claim made by anyone is true.

P: There are those who claim that relativism is false.

P: The relativist, however, claims that relativism is true

C: Therefore, the relativist must believe that relativism is both true and false.[562]

Or,

Example Argument <B>

P: According to relativism, every judgment must be affirmed as true.

P: Some people judge *x* to be true.

P: Other people judge *x* to be false.

C: Therefore, relativism must affirm the judgment that *x* is both true and false to be true.[563]

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[562] See Baghramian and Coliva, *Relativism*, 27, for the restatement of Plato's Self-Refutation argument on which this is based.

[563] See Ugo Zilioli, *Protagoras and the Challenge of Relativism: Plato's Subtlest Enemy* (Vermont: Ashgate, 2007), 136, for his reconstruction of Plato's argument against Protagoras, on which this has been loosely based.

The relativist about truth will immediately notice that these arguments are incorrect on a number of scores, but mainly that:

1. They misconstrue relativism.
2. They enforce their own sense of "truth."
3. They alternate between perspectives, dismissing and privileging them at their convenience.

I will address each of these (1–3) in turn.

4.1.1 Misconstruing Relativism

According to the common objectivist arguments above, the relativist (including the pragmatist) must affirm any claim and all judgments as true:

<A> According to relativism, any claim made by anyone is true.

<B> According to relativism, every judgment must be affirmed as true.

These construals of what relativism states or implies, however, are entirely inaccurate.

In terms of the "*x* is relative to *y*" schema, pragmatic relativism defines ***truth(s)*** [*x*] as relative to ***perspectives*** [*y*]. "Truth" being perspectival was mentioned in the previous chapter, but "perspectives" themselves will be defined and explained below. To state it briefly here: any statement, idea, concept, notion, or hypothesis – no matter what it may be – is always relative to at least one perspective (though the inhabitants of

multiple perspectives may "share" ideas in that they each subscribe to them; more on this below). Perspectives are, for the pragmatist, an irreducible and inescapable part of knowledge since each human being inhabits one. Thus, so far as human perception and cognition are concerned, it is perspectives all the way down.

And because reality is not a ready-made, static "given," we always add our own conceptual structures and conventions to it as part of our understanding. Thus, the more we zoom in, as it were, into the gaps of our current formalisms and conventions, the more we fill in those gaps with further conventions.[564] This often feels like a process of discovery, and when it comes to the contours of primary reality and the boundary our cognitive processes and dynamics face with it, "discovery" may be an apt description, but really, we are just setting further conventions in place or are logically extending the conventions already in place. The more we focus on current gaps and fill them in, the more detailed and complex and layered our conventions become; and if it is perspectives all the way down, then it is necessarily conventions all the way down as well.[565]

The above statements of relativism put forward by objectivists arise from a desire to not only enforce an absolute and universal (i.e. completely non-relative) conception of

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[564] This history of mathematics and formal logic are prime examples of this process. Systems were introduced based on various axioms and rules related to the uses of symbols representing abstracted quantities and their relations (i.e. numbers), and it attempting to apply them to various hypothetical and actual problems, special extensions of those original systems (and sometimes entirely new separate systems, and often competing systems) were created and formulated, and on the process continues. The more that "gaps" are found in the applications of math(s) and logic(s), the more those with expertise in the (then) current systems filled them in. Now, this could be looked at as a process of "discovering" what already existed, waiting to be revealed (as mathematical Platonists do), or it can be viewed harmonistically as a process of construction (as pragmatists do).

[565] Although it will be discussed more fully in the section below on the *subjectivism* of pragmatic truth, it is important to note here that "perspectives" and "conventions" all the way down, so to speak, does *not* mean any kind of carte blanche subjectivism or constructivism. Everything must always be tempered by the bounds of primary reality and our embodiment within it. There are many ways to "carve up the world," but they are delimited by our embodiment and the purposes we pursue in our respective contexts.

truth, but, as part of that conception, to completely negate any perspective and conceive of the relativist as presuming to have access to a place of agent-neutrality, a god's-eye view perhaps, or some Archimedean point from where they make their judgments unconnected with any particular perspective. But this is precisely what the pragmatic relativist sets out to dispute and deny. There is simply no position that is free of at least one perspective to which it is relative. Ironically enough, relativizing truth to perspectives – rigorously and consistently so – is actually the main antidote to the example arguments above, as well as the general key to understanding the logic of pragmatism itself. This is "ironic" because, while many philosophers have accused relativism of inconsistency, in actual fact, it is the objectivist who is inconsistent, and not the pragmatic relativist.

Conclusion: When the pragmatist says that truth is relative, they are *not* saying that all claims and all judgments are true. Rather, they are saying that whatever propositions are accounted as true, they will be so accounted *relative* to the perspectives of those claiming or judging them to be so. What determines or mediates agreement *between perspective*s is another question entirely, one which will be discussed below in the section on ***subjectivity*.**

4.1.1.1 The "Red Berries" Case

A case that has been offered[566] as a potential counterargument against the relativistic aspect of the pragmatic theory of truth is what I will call the "red berries case." It goes like this:

In some part of the world, there is a group of people who do not know anything about the edibility of berries. Some members of their group become hungry and decide to try eating a certain kind of red berry, which makes them ill: killing some and making others dreadfully sick. So, in response, the survivors of the group who ingested red berries decide that *red berries are poisonous*. As such, whenever one of them sees red berries, they believe them to be poisonous. However, one day, one of the survivors comes upon a kind of red berry which is similar to the first but differs in that it is not poisonous and could be eaten. Nevertheless, they refrain from eating the red berries in front of them believing that they, too, are poisonous.

So, here's the case: There is a survivor standing in front of a plant offering red berries. The **fact** is that these red berries *are not* poisonous. The **belief** of the person standing in front of them, based on their direct experience, is that they *are* poisonous. And here's the question: Is it true, according to the pragmatist, that the berries are poisonous or not?

The simple answer to this question for a pragmatist about truth is: Yes, for the survivor standing in front of the red berries, *it is true* that they are poisonous. Though for

[566] This case was initially suggested by Professor Hanks during my initial project proposal, and it has been at the center of much of my reflection on these topics since. So, I have decided to retain it, use it, and refer back to it throughout this chapter.

those who know differently, as apparently those contemplating the case are, it is *not true* (i.e. it is false) that the red berries are poisonous.

4.1.2 Enforcing the Objective or Absolute Sense of Truth

The charge of self-refutation or self-defeat on the part of relativists stems, in part, from their objectivist interlocutors enforcing their own sense of "truth" – i.e. as being necessarily objective or absolute. As such, relativism is construed as something like an "a la carte objectivism" or a kind of *absolute truth for individuals*, as if its claim was that what is "true" for one person (p) is absolutely so, and likewise the contrary claim by another person (~p) is also "true" for them, and *true absolutely*. Of course, such a position is self-refuting – it is also completely nonsensical, and no relativist (at least not pragmatic relativists) have or ever would claim such a thing. And their operative concepts of "truth," "knowledge," "facts," etc., do not countenance this kind of characterization – in fact, they preclude it entirely.

For the pragmatist, nothing is absolute, whether knowledge, facts, states of affairs, or truths. Rather, everything is contingent and provisional, to one degree or another. Being avid fallibilists, even what would be both personally and socially considered as permanent and immovable truths are still technically subject to possible revision, not merely in the course of time, but from context to context. The very idea of "absolute truth" is, for the pragmatist, conceptually confused. Since truth exists as a relation between our ideas and reality, the former constructed and the latter partially constructed, what would it even mean for any such relation to be "absolute," "objective," "immutable," "eternal" – or any other attribute granted to the truth of cultural myth? The

only concrete way that such a truth could exist would require an omniscient knower,[567] but then again, if somehow such an agent existed, would truth even be a concern for them? It does not appear so. There simply is no agent-neutral valuation, no god's-eye view, no Archimedean point that makes any kind of non-relative, objective, or absolute "truth" possible – this kind of "truth" (and the non-relative certainty required to attain to it) is mythical; not merely beyond human reach, but beyond any reach at all.

Schiller, in one his later works entitled *Problems of Belief* (1924), explains that the belief in an absolute truth arises from (a) an arbitrary assumption, (b) a false assumption, and (c) a fallacious deduction:

(a) The **arbitrary assumption** is that the notion of an absolute truth "must be" assumed since "absoluteness" is implied in the meaning of *truth*.

(b) The **false assumption** is that the notion of absolute truth alone is able to account for current truths.

(c) The **fallacious deduction** is that when current truths are seen to be false (or at least not absolute), it is assumed that they "must" approximate in some way to the absolute truth.[568]

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[567] To put it in the simplest terms: truths exist *in heads*, and nowhere else. So, for an "absolute truth" to exist, it would need to exist *in a head somewhere*. And to ensure that in the course of time that it could never change, the knower would need to be privy to all future experience, that is, they would need to be *omniscient*.

[568] *Problems of Belief*, 140.

The pragmatic conception of truth is a ready alternative to (a), the history of science and human knowledge generally (in addition to the cognitive science of human perception, cognition, and reasoning) shows (b) to be false, and the move from the recognition that today's truths are often counted among tomorrow's falsehoods to the idea that, at the very least, such truths (or at least the beliefs we currently hold as rigorously and unobjectionably true) must in some way approximate to the absolute truth posited to exist is indeed fallacious.[569] Indeed, (c) is an entirely baseless assertion which appears to be in service to a persistent cultural myth, and nothing more. In light of (a), (b), and (c), Schiller continues:

> "Seeing that in genesis, function, and meaning [current human truths] are wholly different from absolute truth, surely the right inference is that they can have no logical connexion with it. The belief in absolute truth, then, remains something of a psychological mystery."[570]

"Truth" (with a capital "T"), of the variety championed by objectivists, and the "truths" of the pragmatist are *not the same*, and their fundamental distinction needs to be noted

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[569] Popper, particularly in his *Objective Knowledge* (1979) explains his concept of *verisimilitude*, or approximation to truth, and readily admits that there is no actual way, in his view, of every knowing what the absolute truth is or if we have attained to it, but at the same time posits that our theories may have a greater or lesser degree of approximation to truth. Popper maintains that the process of updating our truths for new truths in the course of learning and development, or rather, our successive recognition of error, logically necessitates the notion of absolute truth. So, it seems that Popper clearly engages in (a) and (c) of Schiller's list, and also entertains a form of (b) in that he maintains that aiming at absolute truth is the reason for the "verisimilitude" of our current knowledge. But the fallacious nature of Popper's reasoning is entirely evident and is indicative of the force of the cultural myth of absolute truth, i.e. that such a great thinker as Popper would feel constrained to adopt it.

[570] *Problems of Belief*, 140.

and kept track of lest the objectivist and the pragmatist talk past one another and engage in co-equivocation. This could certainly be accomplished via subscripting them as "truth$_1$" and "truth$_2$" but since the pragmatist considers absolute truth to not exist, and to be as far apart as "pony" is from "pegasus," I think referring to the standard objectivist conception of truth via another word entirely is best, the goal being to eliminate it as a useful concept within philosophical discourse. As such, I want to make an essential distinction between pragmatic truth and objectivist "truth" by referring to the latter as *fruth* or *frue*. Being essentially a non-word, it halts the usual associations and implications associated with "Truth" from being invoked, even unconsciously. Thus, when an interlocutor objects to pragmatic truth, asking after the citation of a counterexample "Is *x* true?", the first question will be one of essential clarification, i.e. "Do you mean true or *frue*? Because if the latter, then you are begging the question, while if the former, you are asking a question about how truth is described or reckoned within Pragmatism." Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will refer to the standard objectivist notion of "absolute truth," if not by this full phrase, then by the non-word *fruth*.

When the objectivist mentions "truth" as in Example Arguments <A> and <B>, they are not actually referring to the provisional and perspectival truth that pragmatic relativists would affirm, but to their own conception of *fruth*, which being objective and absolute, must thereby also be universal. And it cannot be universally and objectively true that judgments of *x* and ~*x* are both true, or *frue*. Descriptively, there is no issue with the middle statements of either <A> or <B> (more on this in the next section). But by the objectivist's own reckoning there is a very basic and obvious problem. However, since the nature of truth is exactly what is at issue in the discussion of relativism, assuming

one's own concept (especially when it is that concept which is under discussion) is merely a case of *petitio principii* or begging the question. Thus, the above arguments really amount to the objectivist saying, "Look, if you agreed with me about the nature of truth, then your position would be wrong." But then again, if the pragmatic relativist already agreed with the objectivist about truth, they would not be arguing about it.

The final item I will touch on for this section is that there seems to be a general problem with self-refutation arguments that require for their soundness that their interlocutor(s) adopt the same understanding of key concepts, especially when it is the nature of those concepts which is specifically at issue. Thus, the common example of a self-refuting statement "There is no objective truth" is only self-refuting if it is the case that the one asserting it intends it to be an expression of objective truth. However, if someone is merely offering their best description of the world, and that description does not find a place for objective truth, then "There is no objective truth" *would not be self-refuting at all*. And so is the case with any similar statement: unless the speaker explicitly adopts the concepts which they are attempting to deny, no self-refutation occurs. This does not seem like it would occur all that often in practice.

Conclusion: When the pragmatist says in the case of the red berries that, for the survivor standing in front of the berries, *it is true* that they are poisonous, and for those contemplating the case (apparently possessing the knowledge that they are not poisonous – since they are stipulating it) *it is not true*, what they mean is that it is "true" and not "frue." The pragmatic answer precludes any notion of objectivist truth (*fruth*). Thus, the question posed by the objectivist in the statement of the Red Berries Case above, should

be understood as "Is it *frue*, according to the pragmatist, that the berries are poisonous or not?" To which the pragmatist may reply, "Fruth is not a concept to which I subscribe." This is enough to answer the objectivist enforcing their own notion of truth. However, in the interest of making their position on the matter clear, the pragmatist may also offer something like the following: "Each truth claim is relative to the perspectives of those involved in the case – including those contemplating it, that is, including the perspectives of the thought-experimenters. If the survivor, whose truth-claim is that the red berries *are* poisonous, engages in further verification with regard to the berries, for whatever reason, they may come to update their truths and accept that they are *not* poisonous. And if the concern is the dissonance between the truths of the survivor and thought-experimenter, and how they will come resolve the disagreement between them, this too will require further verification such that the non-poisonousness of these particular berries can be demonstrated adequately enough that they update their truths regarding them." More on this below, in section 4.1.4.

4.1.3 Alternating Between Perspectives

As noted in 4.1.1 above, pragmatic truth, like pragmatic metaphysics, is *perspectival*, that is, it derives from the perspectives of particular agents. As stated previously, this admission is an eschewal of any sort of "god's-eye view" or "view from nowhere" on the grounds that such is impossible – viz. there is no neutral stance available to take and no possibility of stance-independent truths.[571] Despite the common attempts at proposing

[571] Though there are very often similar or identical stance-dependent truths which converge or overlap.

such supposedly neutral perspectives, usually through thought experiments, for the pragmatist they are not possible, and any philosophical attempts at conjuring them are mere exercises in verbal stipulation.

As I use it, a *perspective* is inclusive of anything that derives from a particular person or organism[572] in the way of experiences, ideas, theories, conceptions, etc. This means that whatever is expressed and experienced by an individual is expressed and experienced from their *perspective*. The metaphor of a "perspective" involves not merely sight, but sight from a given location, i.e. a vantage point, such that a viewer cannot view everything from everywhere all at once, and neither can they experience everything all at once. And what is viewed from one vantage point is not necessarily the same in all respects as that viewed from others, even if all viewers are viewing the same object or scene. Extrapolating from this, perspectives are both what an individual is said to "inhabit" and to "have," as manners of speaking – what is being referred to is the totality of an individual organism's experience.

Although there are vastly many more similarities in the ways which we perceive, cognize, and theorize about the world, there are nevertheless significant differences in our cultural and historical embeddedness, personal life experiences, and even relevant physiology – all of which affect how we understand the world; all of which are part of our particular perspectives. Thus, perspectives are an unavoidable aspect of agents, and

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[572] When it comes to truth and metaphysics, *as expressed in language*, perspectives pertain to human persons, but technically, any organism that senses the world inhabits a perspective, though whatever we say about it is an expression of human understanding about another organism's perspective *relative to our own* (as again, we cannot extricate ourselves from the perspective we inhabit).

though their content may overlap,[573] they are never identically placed as it were. Language is the method, the social tool, used for signaling and indicating our experiences to one another, and for leveraging similar experiences in service of goals and purposes, which are broadly implied by our values.

Speaking of values, we have seen in chapters 2 and 3 already that values are suffusive in human experience and are at the base of all aspects of reasoning and cognition, and especially those related to metaphysics and the making of truths. As such, perspectives are likewise suffused with values, and values may be said to be a part of an individual's perspective.[574] This is because "values," as such, are not things that exist of themselves. Rather, this is our collective noun for *instances of valuation*, i.e., the act of ascribing value to things or circumstances, an activity of humans and other organisms (see previous chapter, section 3.9.2.3).

4.1.3.1 The Rules of Perspectives

The following are the unpacked rules of perspectives, as well as some principles of values, to set the stage for both critiquing the self-refutation argument against truth relativism and applying these rules and principles to the red berries case specifically. Together, they constitute a sort of logic for keeping our judgments consistent with regard to truths.

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[573] Much like the circles of a Venn diagram.

[574] Perspectives are "inhabited by" values, "have" values, and values are always tied to given perspective.

(RP1) If an organism senses the world, then it *inhabits a perspective*, and only one perspective.

(RP2) When an organism inhabits a perspective, that *perspective is inescapable*, that is, it is not possible to be extricated from it – especially via verbal stipulation.

(RP3) We can neither privilege nor dismiss a perspective *as a perspective*, in the sense of either displacing (dismissing) or being displaced (privileging) by another perspective; *no perspective can be substituted for another*.

(RP3a) Evaluatively speaking, all organisms "privilege" their own perspective – otherwise motivation would be impossible. So, the "rules of perspectives" are necessarily intertwined with "the logic of values."

(RP4) Perspectives and whatever derives from them (e.g. ideas, concepts, theories, constructs, conventions) can be "shared," but this is *only a manner of speaking* and does not indicate that two organisms share a single perspective or that one perspective is being substituted for (or dismissing/privileging) another. Rather, "sharing" a perspective indicates that two organisms inhabiting their respective perspectives agree on the meaning and implications of their experience(s).[575]

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[575] The language here is meant to anticipate the objection that "sharing a perspective" that multiple organisms can enter into some kind of space where they inhabit an objective perspective (whatever that might mean) and see things "as they *really* are," as opposed to each inhabiting their own individual perspectives while agreeing on a given proposition (which is actually the case). It is also meant to anticipate (and dismiss) the contention that agreement requires implicit exactness between the experiences of the world. As if the presence of any subjectivity beyond communication in the individual experiences of organisms hopelessly cuts them off from one another such that agreement is impossible. But organisms never access each other's subjective experiences, neither their minds or phenomenology, and yet agreement is not only plausible despite this trivial fact, but possible. So far as human interactions are concerned, we have embodied experiences, cognitive associations of body language, smells, sounds (including language), and other cues which enable various degrees of mutual agreement — each individual residing in their own perspective.

(RP4a) When multiple organisms "share" a perspective and operate in accordance with a network of postulates such that the operation becomes habitual and the postulates become axiomatic, this intersubjectivity is what we normally think of as "objectivity."

(RP5) Contradictions are only possible *within a single perspective*,[576] while clashes between inhabitants of disparate perspectives are not contradictions but *disagreements*. Contradictions are aspects of perspectives which may be "shared" in the manner of RP4, e.g. if two agents both subscribe to the same method of reasoning, then when the application of the system results in a contradiction both agents will "share" or acknowledge it.[577]

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[576] In *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 52-53, footnote 4, Schiller notes that human thinking is not so neat as logical and mathematical formalism would perhaps hope it to be:

"To [maintain that to] accept, e.g. a formal contradiction, stultifies the assumption of all thinking, and should consequently debar us from the further use of thinking… is too much, and we usually prefer to reconsider the thought that has ended in a contradiction. Moreover, if we desire to entertain contradictory beliefs, there is a much easier way; *we have merely to refuse to think them together*. This indeed is what the great majority of men have always done" (italics added).

We often navigate contradictions by use of "at the same time" or "on the one hand," etc., and even within scientific paradigms models and theories do not always cohere but are nevertheless held true as useful for fields of inquiry in which they are applied. The fragmentary nature of human thinking and knowledge will be discussed further in section 4.3.1 below.

[577] Although Schiller does not use the nomenclature of "perspectives" as I do here, and likewise does not explicitly reserve the term "contradiction" for epistemic frustrations within a single perspective, he nevertheless indicates something like this sentiment in his criticisms of Plato in the *Theaetetus*:

"Throughout the *Theaetetus*, for example, Plato has assumed that 'knowledge' is of 'universals' and not concerned or connected with the fleeting and variable judgments of individual men about their personal experience… No wonder after [establishing] this that it becomes for him a serious 'contradiction' when A judges to be warm what B judges to be cold, seeing that 'it' [i.e. the 'universal'] cannot be both. But 'it' does not exist in abstraction from the divergent judgments; 'it' stands in this case for *the problem of constructing a 'common' perception*; if the two 'its' are to be brought together into an 'objective' scheme of temperature, A and B must set to work to construct a thermometer, as to the readings of which they can agree. Plato, therefore, has merely debarred himself from understanding the *de facto* genesis and development of our common world of subjective intercourse, and by starting with abstraction from the *personal* character of both judgments, he has manufactured a fallacious contradiction" (*Logic For Use*, 109-110)

4.1.3.2 Principles of Values

Similar to the above, the following are some principles related to values:

(PV1) If an organism takes voluntary actions, it may be said to possess *values*. Speaking of "values" as nouns does not indicate that they are objects, abstract or otherwise. Rather, "values" refer to *acts of valuing* (i.e. according significance relative to taking action) on the part of individual organisms.

(PV2) The influence of values over the conduct of an organism is all-encompassing and may generally be viewed in terms of an order or "hierarchy," though this is far too neat to be anything but a heuristic. The general organization of an organism's values may shift and change between contexts and especially over time.

(PV3) Without values, motivation to action on the part of an organism would be impossible, and motivation is only possible in relation to some kind of value held by it.

(PV4) For all intents and purposes, values are *inexplicable*. Though they may have reasons for what they are, the lines of determination are neither clear, direct, nor complete, but oblique. We can make reasonable sense of values, but it is not altogether clear that such sensemaking isn't cogent explanation touched by well-meaning confabulation – or at times, despite how cogent it seems, it could be *entirely confabulation*.

4.1.3.3 The Logic of Values

The topic of agreement and disagreement under a pragmatic theory of truth will be discussed further in section 4.2.4 below.

Finally, the following is the essential operative rule with regard to values and appeals to values:

(LV) The only way to get an organism to rearrange, alter, or change its values is to *appeal to something that they already value.*[578]

It is my contention that, if the above rules and principles related to perspectives and values are adopted and adhered to by the pragmatist, then their particular brand of relativism will be both descriptively accurate and entirely consistent as a theory of truth. The main reason that the objectivists who posit a self-refuting element at the heart of relativism miss the mark with regard to truth relativism is that they depart from a thoroughgoing perspectivalism in their conceptualization of the position, alternating between perspectives at their own convenience. This results in arguing against a position that relativists, or at least pragmatic relativists like Schiller (and James), do not take.[579] The principles of perspectives and values will be discussed further below.

In the attempts to state relativism in terms of both <A> and <B>, the objectivist is dismissing the perspective of the pragmatic relativist and privileging the view of essentially anyone making a claim or a judgment (see RP3). This they do, apparently on the grounds

[578] It may also be added here, as part of the Logic of Values (maybe LV2?), that any instance of normative language, unless understood in terms of a consistency relation (i.e. one ought to do *x* because it is consistent with the attainment *y*), is a covert appeal to the speaker's *own values*.

[579] In *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter XIV, James notes that the relativism of Pragmatism is always to the perspective of a particular person: "They [i.e. the critics of Pragmatism] forget that in any concrete account of what is denoted by 'truth' in human life, the word can only be used relatively to some particular trower."

that since the pragmatist is the one making the claim of relativism about truth, then the pragmatist is essentially the one doing the privileging and dismissing himself by implication. But, as we have seen above, when objectivists make such claims, they are enforcing their own sense of truth, interpreting the relativist as proposing a kind of "absolutism for individuals," or, that the truths connected with each perspective are somehow absolute and universal, resulting in immediate and damning contradictions. This is what Johnson (2017) has called "unacceptable arbitrariness and radical relativism."[580] Such a "radical" conception of relativism about truth is what Rorty (1982) describes as "the view that every belief on a certain topic, or perhaps about *any* topic, is as good as any other."[581] And though, as he clarifies there, no one actually holds such a position, this construal of relativism is what lies behind the various self-refutation arguments put forward after the style of <A> and <B> presented above. But if the various perspectives are acknowledged and kept distinct in the assessment and description of any particular case, (i.e. none of them either privileged or dismissed, or conflated or confused), then no problems of contradiction actually exist, and the substance of objectivist self-refutation arguments dissipates.

Let us turn now to looking at the red berries case with these same descriptive eyes and see what else is involved from the pragmatic perspective.

4.1.4 The Relativism of the Red Berries Case

In the Red Berries Case, the main question was:

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[580] Johnson, *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason,* 200

[581] Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1982), 166.

Is it true that the berries are poisonous or not?

And the straightforward answer to this question for a pragmatist (assuming the questioner is not enforcing their conception of *fruth* here) is:

Yes, for the survivor standing in front of the red berries, *it is true* that they are poisonous, as in the totality of his experience, this is the case. Though for those who know differently, as apparently those contemplating the case are, it is *not true* (false) that the red berries are poisonous, since, whether by experience or (in this case by hypothetical stipulation) our experience is such that they are not.

What appears to be motivating the Red Berries Case on the part of the objectivist proposing it as a counterexample is that it seems obvious that there is (at least for the pragmatic relativist of the likes of Schiller) a blatant contradiction between a **belief** that the berries are poisonous and a **fact** that they are not. And this is indeed the case, *from the perspective of the thought-experimenter*. This insight reveals what is going on at the base of the objectivist's objection to the perspectival relativity of truth in the view of the pragmatist: because the thought experiment is conceived of as taking place in some agent-neutral space that transcends all perspectives, the thought-experimenter takes for granted their own experience, privileging their own perspective while simultaneously dismissing that of the survivor. In traditional self-refuting arguments, offered by Plato and others, the expectation is that the relativist dismisses their own perspective while

privileging every other perspective aside from their own. By the principles of perspectives listed above (RP5), there is not a contradiction between a **belief** and a **fact**, but rather a disagreement between aspects of experience between two perspectives, that is, between the experience of one agent and another.

When it comes to perspectives, and working out intersubjective truths between them, it is essential that perspectives be consistently acknowledged as they are throughout, none of them being either privileged or dismissed. To do otherwise is to present a fundamentally erroneous and inaccurate description of the world; to either admit of truths (or knowledge) independent of any agent's perspective,[582] or it is to negate perspectives for the sake of others. Neither of these is accurate and, as the objectivist rightly points out in their traditional argumentation, leads almost immediately to absurdities and damning contradictions. What has traditionally been deployed in attempt to ameliorate the problems caused by the privileging/dismissal of any perspectives involved in a given situation is the myth of an objective, absolute, transcendent TRUTH. But this myth has not solved anything. Instead, it has created persistent problems of its own, as was discussed in the previous chapter. The actual solution to the apparent conundrum is to be careful and consistent, not in maintaining the myth of an absolute and immutable truth, but in taking proper account of all perspectives involved – not to affirm their claims or judgments as true in some *de facto* sense, but

[582] See, for example, Popper's definition of "objective knowledge" in his book by the same title: "Knowledge in this objective sense is totally independent of anybody's claim to know; it is also independent of anybody's belief, disposition to assent; or to assert, or to act. Knowledge in the objective sense is *knowledge without a knower*: it is *knowledge without a knowing subject*" (*Objective Knowledge,* 109).

simply to recognize that all claims and judgments are made relative to perspectives and that this is an inescapable descriptive fact.

For the pragmatist, the basic elements of the world are organisms, environments, and the dynamics of perception and cognition as the organisms take action within them. There is no Platonic realm of forms and abstract objects, no Popperian "third world" of ideas and thought, nothing beyond the collective environments and collective perspectives of embodied agents cognizing the world and making sense of their experience – so that they can take actions relative to their respective goals and purposes. What does it mean for the red berries to be poisonous relative to the perspective of the survivor? It means that the survivor's experience is such that they will act in such a way as to not consume or partake of them, lest they be hurt by them. What does it mean for the red berries to not be poisonous to the thought-experimenter? It means that they will act in such a way that, given the need, they would consume them.

Now, as discussed in the previous chapter, both of these truths are subject to update and improvement pending further experience. Perhaps the survivor will become desperate enough with hunger to try eating them again, or perhaps they will notice small differences beyond their redness from the previous berries and decide they may be different, or perhaps they will simply become curious as to another use and try boiling them before consuming them. Each of these courses of action will further their experience and may update how they act with regard to the red berries. The same is possible for the thought-experimenter who, if actually within the hypothetical situation with the knowledge that these particular berries are not poisonous, may eat them and become ill for some other reason (maybe these berries are harmful to humans during a

brief, early stage of development that they were not previously aware of). In this case, the thought-experimenter who has been attempting to privilege their own perspective via verbal stipulation will have to update their own set of truths, specifically as regards these red berries. But at no point in the development of their respective experience may the survivor or the thought-experimenter stomp their feet and declare that their truths are not subject to further revision, as the history of science readily demonstrates.

Conclusion: For the pragmatist, it is true for the survivor that the red berries they have encountered are poisonous (that is, they have categorized them as such, based on their verification thus far in their truth-process), and it is also true that for the thought-experimenter the red berries are *not* poisonous (that is, they have categorized them as such based on their own verification thus far in their truth-process), and there is no contradiction between them, but only disagreement between perspectives. Contradiction is a phenomenon that is internal to a given perspective, while disagreements occur between perspectives. What mediates disagreements between perspectives is a central topic in the next section.

4.2 The Objection of Subjectivism

Objection: Pragmatism seems to be a form of subjectivism about truth, and if so, this is problematic because subjectivism precludes either agreement or disagreement in any genuine way. To put it another way, what is true cannot be a matter of subjective assessment or there will be competing “truths” and no way to decide between them.

Answer: While Pragmatism *is* a *kind* of subjectivism, it is *not*, in fact, of the problematic kind. Nor does subjectivity necessitate the kind of ineffectual solipsism and practical paralysis usually supposed by objectivists.

Explanation: Subjectivism about truth is a broad topic, and much of what concerns subjectivity also concerns relativity. So, in this section, I will focus on three considerations regarding pragmatic truth which are related to its subjectivity: incommensurability, agreement and disagreement, and the "satisfactoriness" of pragmatic truth claimed by James and Schiller.

As with relativism, Schiller is not shy about pragmatic truth being, as he refers to it, "a completely subjective process"[583] and that even facts themselves have to "live in a subjective atmosphere."[584] Being part and parcel of perspectives, subjectivity is (as are perspectives and everything contained in them) inescapable. Thus, Schiller bids the pragmatist to embrace it and attempt to work it out, lest we ever deceive ourselves into thinking that the attainment of a detached objectivity is possible. For Schiller, in light of the growing work of the nascent psychology of his day, "it is folly any longer to close one's eyes to the importance and all-pervasiveness of subjective activities in the making

[583] *Studies in Humanism*, 200.

[584] Ibid, 188.

of truth,"[585] and there is no practice or convention capable of transporting an individual "off the subjective ground he started on."[586] Perspectives are subjective as a matter of description, so reckoning with it is like reckoning with any other aspect of reality. It is important to note that what is being embraced here is *not* "Subjectivism" with a capital "S" (Subjective Idealism), but rather a general recognition of subjectivity, that subjective concerns are an inescapable aspect of all human thought and reasoning. Schiller himself rejects Subjective Idealism, which he viewed as a kind of unbounded Subjectivism that was ultimately unconcerned with actual truth (cf. *Studies in Humanism*, pp. 463 & 465, where Schiller describes it as an extreme opposite a reductive, naturalistic Realism and "practically absurd").

A word up front about the pragmatic theory of truth generally: it is meant as a *description* of what is involved in the truth-process and not a license for justifying whims, or even lies. Although this will be discussed more in the next section, I feel it necessary to emphasize this point. A common reaction to the pragmatic theory of truth[587] is that, if we say that "truth is subjective," then we can simply purport our subjective preferences as truths. This appears to derive from what Johnson (1987) calls the "universal voice," which is viewed as a kind of cosmic moral conscience that operates as a "voice" or "permission-granter" in the epistemic realm[588] such that whatever our

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[585] *Studies in Humanism*, 182.

[586] Ibid, 234.

[587] My contention that this line of reasoning is common is anecdotal, arising from my own out loud engagement with the theory, so to speak, over the past several years.

[588] See Mark Johnson, *The Mind in the Body: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 53-54.

formulas validly state, that is what the permission-granter (whether a god, logic, reason, what have you) *allows* us to say. This is no doubt a result of the cultural embeddedness of Western philosophy, but it is nevertheless wrong-headed – at least so far as the pragmatic theory of truth is concerned. Again, the pragmatic theory and its formulations of truth are meant as *descriptive* and not prescriptive in some permission-granting sense.[589] Thus, in describing truth as essentially subjective, that is, arising from a series of subjective processes and considerations, it is just that: a description – and what may or may not mitigate that subjectivity is another question entirely, though one which will be considered presently.

4.2.1 Incommensurability

As already discussed in chapter 2 (see section 2.1), Devitt compares the metaphysical doctrines of Realism and Constructivism and their respective implications for theory comparison, that is, for our ability to compare the objects posited by disparate scientific theories or paradigms. Devitt maintains that while Realism allows for commensurability, Constructivism incorrigibly leads to *incommensurability*.

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[589] See *Studies in Humanism*, 11, where Schiller says that Pragmatism is "an epistemological method which really describes the facts of actual knowing." In other words, it is *describing* (noting, taking account of) actual human knowledge; thus, if human knowledge is subjective (and it is), then it is not embarrassed to note that and does not, in virtue of such description, constitute a statement of: "The processes of knowing are subjective, so you know, just do whatever you want – that's my theory." Pragmatism neither promotes nor countenances any such attitude.

> "*Incommensurability*: Terms in rival comprehensive theories in a domain differ sufficiently in meaning, especially in reference, to make theories incomparable."[590]

The concern here is with the world and our descriptions of it. Thus, "terms" and their "meaning, especially in reference" are functionally equivalent, in the context of the argument, to the *things*[591] – those segments of reality – which they are meant to indicate.[592] So, in this way, a concern for incommensurability is a concern that if we adopt a constructive approach to metaphysics (that is, to perception and cognition – and this is decidedly the case, see chapter 2[593]), then we will be unable to coherently reason

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[590] Devitt, *Putting Metaphysics First*, 99.

[591] Though I do think it is logically possible for these terms to be essentially interchangeable, I do prefer a broad metaphysics of "things" (as opposed to "objects") and agree with Miller (2008) that "while *things* are ontologically innocent, *objects* are not" (69 and 88, italics added).

[592] Devitt is careful to stipulate that incommensurability "is a semantic doctrine" (102) and not a metaphysical one. This distinction falls flat, however, since his semantics is directly related to his conception of metaphysics (specifically via his causal theory of reference), and in the end discusses objects in the world *via* their terms, which is simply how language works, and thus the distinction between terms and their referents (the words for things are not the same as the words used to refer to them) is basic as well as trivial. Stipulating a distinction between semantic and metaphysical theses, when the former is explicitly predicated on the latter, may have technical import so far as logic is concerned, but in the actual employment of one or the other vis-a-vis concerns for commensurability semantics and metaphysics are inextricably intertwined. As James says, "in this universe of concrete facts you cannot keep hows and whats asunder" (*The Meaning of Truth*, chapter 8, "The Pragmatist Account of Truth and its Misunderstanders") – metaphysics may be conceived as a "what" and semantics as a "how," or vice versa, but in the course of actual reasoning they are together, and their distinction is merely to note a difference in emphasis among philosophical subfields. And since Schiller, and Pragmatism generally, maintains that making of truths and realities are aspects of a single continuous process of perception, cognition, motivation, and sensemaking, the semantic-metaphysics distinction collapses under the weight of experience and is not significant for the purposes of the present discussion.

[593] As Devitt defines Realism, it is excluded as even an option in light of current cognitive science: "*Realism*: Tokens of most commonsense, and scientific, physical types **objectively exist independently of the mental**" (101, italics original, bold added).

about things in the world, either objects (*x*'s) or their properties (*F*'s), whether to agree about them or to disagree about them:

> "The intuitive idea of theory comparison is that what one theory says about *x* or about *F*s is in agreement or disagreement with what the other says about *x* or about *F*s. Sometimes the disagreement might be over the very existence of *x* or *F*s. Agreement and disagreement at the observational level[594] is, of course, particularly important to theory comparison. *Incommensurability* denies that any of these sorts of comparison of rival theories is possible."[595]

The subjectivity of a constructive metaphysics (see chapter 2), of perception and cognition itself, neither inhibits agreement and disagreement, nor does it cause a breakdown in communication, as Devitt implies. Rather, as noted above and in the previous chapter, subjectivity is not only an inescapable aspect of how we cognize the world, but according to Pragmatism it is *already* what frames all of our actions, agreements, and disagreements. The cognitive science is clear, and adopting one formal theory over another cannot change that. And it is in light of fairly standard research in cognitive science that the problem of subjectivity, so far as perception, agreement, and disagreement are concerned, are not problematic at all for the pragmatic theory of truth.

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[594] The reference to the "observational level" indicates that the concern for incommensurability is ultimately a concern over perception and cognition, or rather, how we construe them theoretically (viz. as realist or constructivist).

[595] Devitt, *Putting Metaphysics First*, 100.

4.2.2 The Subjectivity of Perception

As the base of his argument for incommensurability under the subjectivity of constructivism is a defective notion of perception. Devitt begins by introducing T1 and T2, which he calls to stand for "examples of rival comprehensive theories,"[596] and maintains that, under a constructive metaphysics, T1 and T2 "cannot refer to the same entities, because with the move from T1 to T2 the world changes."[597] Then he continues,

> "So there is no way that T1 and T2 can be compared in a way that concerns *Incommensurability*: they cannot agree or disagree about *x* or *F*s because they are not talking about the same *x* or *F*s."[598]

Thus, according to Devitt, the subjectivity (that is, the potential differences in perception and conceptualizing the world between subjects) that comes with constructivism creates mutually unintelligible worlds and their respective contents, such that even terms don't have stable or consistent referents.

Notice first that this argument appears to be an argument for the sake of formalization, or at least for the sake of a formal notion of metaphysics, in the sense that "*x*" must be univocal and have a fixed meaning – at least across subjects – lest a kind of conceptual chaos and an analytical paralysis ensue. This seems to imply that if a given

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[596] Devitt, *Putting Metaphysics First*, 103

[597] Ibid.

[598] Ibid.

subject S1 perceived a thing as x_1 and another subject S2 perceived that same thing as x_2, then S1 and S2 would be incapable of agreeing or disagreeing about x, since their x's are not identical. But this interpretation of how things "must be" under constructivism, though it looks to be sensible and straightforward at first blush, is nevertheless specious for the basic reason that, if x stands for anything, it stands for a *concept* (derived as they from collections of objects), and the way in which concepts cognitively form and develop defies any such reasoning.

The main theories within current cognitive science of concept acquisition and formation are Prototype Theory and Exemplar Theory. Prototype theory was first introduced and developed by Rosch (1973),[599] with subsequent work with Mervis (1975, 1976).[600] The basic idea of the theory is that concepts are categories which are acquired and updated by the construction of a "prototype" to which further possible examples of what fits into the category are compared. Prototypes represent a statistical distribution of properties which are most typically possessed by the things being classed together. Rosch and Mervis (1975) drew on Wittgenstein's well-known concept of family resemblance,[601] i.e. that within groups of objects there is "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing"[602] much like "the various resemblances between

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[599] Eleanor H. Rosch, "Natural Categories" in *Cognitive Psychology* 4, 3 (1973): 328-350.

[600] Eleanor Rosch and Carolyn B. Mervis, "Family Resemblances: Studies in the Internal Structure of Categories" in *Cognitive Psychology* 7, 4 (1975): 574-575; Rosch, et al, "Basic Objects in Natural Categories" in *Cognitive Psychology* 8, 3 (1976): 382-439.

[601] Rosch and Mervis, "Family Resemblances," 574-575.

[602] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translation by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 36e (§66). The notion of family resemblance or viewing concepts like "families" of objects also appears earlier in Wittgenstein's *The Blue Book* (New

members of a family,"[603] positing that such a dynamic[604] serves as the structural principle for the formation of prototypes, as well as a reason for the associative strength between items and categories.[605] Exemplar Theory also emerged during the 1970s, and was introduced by Medin and Schaffer (1978)[606] under the name "Context Theory" and was put forward as a corrective account of concept acquisition and formation to Prototype Theory, since, as they maintained, it "consistently gave a better account of the data,"[607] though this is of course disputed. As such, Exemplar Theory views concept categories as collections *exemplars*, which are not representative of statistical distributions of properties (like prototypes) but are rather typical instances[608] of a given kind of object, which are stored for retrieval and comparison with each new instance, called a *probe stimulus*. Despite the differences between them, the Prototype and Exemplar theories are variations on a basic theme of embodied agents synthesizing conceptual categories of things by associating various experienced instances of that thing. From this point,

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York: Harper-Perennial, 1960), 17 and 33.

[603] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §67.

[604] Rosch and Mervis (1975) define family resemblance operationally as "discrete features no one of which was common to all category members" (584) and found that their statistical measures of family resemblance coincided well with their previous measure of prototypicality.

[605] Rosch and Mervis, "Family Resemblances," 600.

[606] Douglas L. Medin and Marguerite Schaffer, "Context theory of classification learning" in *Psychological Review* 85, 3 (1978): 207-238.

[607] Ibid, 207.

[608] *Exemplars* are also defined as "bodies of knowledge about the properties possessed by a particular member of a class" (Taylor, 2021) derived from those particular class members, previously encountered.

however, I will take the position that Prototype Theory is preferable to Exemplar Theory.[609]

It is important to note that cognitive prototypes do not exist of themselves, and that any attempt to call to mind a typical example of something is going to involve creative improvisation on the part of our imaginations. Chater (2018) considers the exercise of imagining typical examples of a tiger or particular geometric shape, but then notes that when a subject calling these to mind is asked for details about them, they are hard pressed to produce them, and often describe them incorrectly and in self-contradictory ways.[610] This, explains Chater, is because our mental images are improvised and synthesized in the moment, and not mere recalls of crisp mental representations.[611] Even the recall of familiar people and images often lacks details, and when they are imagined, they are imagined incorrectly, like the eye color of a coworker one sees on a daily basis. Yet, when it comes to recognizing our coworkers, or members of any other category or concept we have successfully acquired, we rarely if ever fail to

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[609] There are two reasons for this choice. The main reason is that Exemplar Theory is largely based in cognitivist and computational-representational accounts of cognition, whereas Rosch's Prototype Theory is thoroughly embodied and enactivist. The second reason is that I do not think that synthesis and prototypicality ("family resemblance") are avoidable in concept formation. Taylor (*Concepts and the Appeal to Cognitive Science*, 2009, 29) illustrates the basic psychological processes involved in categorization as follows: (i) perceptual representation → (ii) exemplar retrieval → (iii) similarity computation → (iv) categorization. Steps (ii) and (iii) cannot simply involve the retrieval of the best available exemplar and then have direct lines of association between it and the probe stimulus. If it did, then no categorization would ever take place after the first exemplar was stored since all things are different – equality and sameness are abstractions that do not exist in nature. Comparing probe stimuli with exemplars and performing a similarity computation (assuming Exemplar Theory) is going to involve some kind of "family resemblance" or prototypicality.

[610] See Nick Chater, *The Mind is Flat: The Remarkable Shallowness of the Improvising Brain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), chapter 4.

[611] Chater, *The Mind is Flat*, 74.

make the proper identifications. This appears due to, not to the retrieval of actual individual instances in pristine detail, but the synthesis of a prototype to which all new examples are compared via a structure of family resemblance.

In an incredibly prescient passage from a later work of Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, published in 1896,[612] the formation of concepts from the synthesis of disparate examples is beautifully stated. I have decided to include the entire passage, despite its length:

> "Let us contemplate in particular the formation of concepts: every word becomes a concept, not just when it is meant to serve as a reminder of the single, absolutely individualized original experience to which it owes its emergence, but when it has fit countless similar – that is, strictly speaking, never equal, hence blatantly unequal – cases. Every concept arises by means of equating the unequal. Just as it is certain that no one leaf is exactly the same as any other, so, too, it is certain that the concept leaf is formed by arbitrarily ignoring these individual differences, by forgetting what distinguishes one from the other, thus giving rise to the notion that there is in nature something other than leaves, something like 'The Leaf,' a kind of prototype according to which all leaves were drawn, delineated, colored,

[612] The essay was written in 1873, only one year after the publication of Nietzsche's inaugural work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, but was not published until 1896, by his sister. The celebration of the artistic mode of life toward the essay's conclusion was typical for this period of Nietzsche's thought.

> crimped, painted, but by unskilled hands, so that no specimen turned out correctly or reliably as a copy of the prototype."[613]

In any case, concepts are developed via associations between aggregates of examples or instances of a given thing – all of which are different from each other. In other words, to use the formalistic terms invoked by Devitt, there are no pure, discrete, or neatly defined *x*'s and *F*'s. Instead, either an "*x*" represents a single thing which S1 and S2 experience, in which case they have the object in from of them to reference directly, *or* an "*x*" represents a conceptual category (along with its *F*'s), in which case *x* is prototypical and is no particular thing at all. And if S1 and S2 both have successfully acquired the concept of *x*, then the actual instances which they have associated and synthesized to do so *will almost always be similar, but still entirely different*. And if the instances that make up "*x*" or "*F*" are different for any one subject, then why should it matter that they differ between subjects? The supposed problem of incommensurability due to different subjects, each constructing their own realities and truths subjectively, being prevented from agreeing or disagreeing about *x* or *F*'s "because they are not talking about the same *x* or *F*'s" is fictitious, or at least overwrought, from the perspective of current cognitive science. Concepts are almost never acquired based on the synthesis of the exact same instances within a category, but they are similar enough that human communication and collaboration involving them is rarely thought about as problematic – or, in most instances, under normal conditions, even considered at all.

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[613] Nietzsche, *On Truth and Untruth*, ed. and trans. Taylor Carman (New York: Harper-Perennial, 2010), 26-27. In the context of discussing family resemblances, Wittgenstein also uses the example of leaves. See *Philosophical Investigations*, §73.

4.2.3 Embodied Limits of Subjectivity

So, what is it that generally limits the degree and valence of subjectivity such that people are able to communicate and work together, serving common purposes, participating in common systems, and accomplishing common aims? What prevents a chaotic and runaway subjectivism, regarding truth or anything else? Embodiment. According to Schiller, humans share a trans-empirical *primary reality* out of which they construct their respective "worlds" of experience (see chapter 2). Primary reality, whatever else we may feasibly add to it from our subjectivity, represents a limit to what we may do and how we may act. And since the basis and impetus of our individual metaphysics are our respective values, similar values will result in similar metaphysical constructions, which will result in the making of similar truths (more on this in the next section). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that our similar human physiology results in similar basic conceptual metaphors, and a similar cultural embeddedness results in similar kind of metaphors (i.e. orientational, ontological, and structural), which form the basis not only of our thinking and reasoning, but also make way for the formation of new metaphors.[614] It is the similarity of embodiment among humans that allows them to navigate their lives alongside other humans in a thoroughly subjective fashion, without descending into abject chaos and confusion. Instead, for all of our many differences, humans in general tend to converge, or at least, it is overwhelmingly evident that convergence between subjects is possible.

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[614] See Lakoff and Johnson, *The Metaphors We Live By*, chapters 22 and 26.

The intensely common phenomenon of *simultaneous invention,* sometimes called "multiple discovery," illustrates the convergent nature of thinking and reasoning due to similar embodiment. In contrast to the standard heroic model of invention, under which each item of invention or aspect of progress is viewed as taking place by the individual genius of a single mind, the newer cultural model of invention views scientific progress and innovation as a social process.[615] The rather routine fact of history is that most of the inventions, ideas, and elements of progress which we enjoy were invented or discovered simultaneously by multiple independent individuals in roughly the same time periods and the same general cultural *milieux*. Some prominent examples of multiple, simultaneous, independent invention include the telescope, the telegraph, the steam engine, the cotton gin, the telephone, the lightbulb, the movie projector, the automobile, the airplane, the radio, the television, the computer, lasers, and calculus[616] – though there are others. And this phenomenon is so pervasive throughout history that cultural historians have posited that perhaps, given the presence of a host of common factors, inventions might be said to be inevitable, socially speaking.[617]

Considering the subjective and constructive nature of human perception and knowledge, the prevalence of simultaneous invention points to a tendency of subjective experience and perspectives to converge due to aspects of general embodiment. Thus, if

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[615] See Peter E. Gratzinger, "Was the Telescope Obvious: An Inquiry Into Simultaneous Invention" in *Columbia Science and Technology Law Review* 13, 1 (2011): 71-96, and also Mark A. Lemley, "The Myth of the Sole Inventor" in *Michigan Law Review* 110, 5 (2012): 709-760.

[616] Ibid.

[617] Ibid.

similarly embodied agents face similar problems and obstacles in the pursuit of their values, and likewise possess a similar cultural embeddedness, along with its host of conceptual metaphors, then it seems that in all likelihood similar reasoning will occur, resulting in similar ideas, inventions, and innovations, as history has demonstrated for us. So, it isn't that great minds think alike, but that great *similarly embodied* minds think alike.

4.2.4 Agreement and Disagreement

For the pragmatist, what ultimately allows for agreements between perspectives (in addition to the elements of similar embodiment already mentioned), and what mitigates or mediates disagreements between perspectives, are actions and practical outcomes relative to a specific goal or set of goals between agents. Neither agreement nor disagreement is a kind of detached mental assent to mere statements of fact, though it may often involve assent as well. Rather, the concern for agreeing or disagreeing *is for the sake of some action or practical end.* In other words, if we cannot agree, then how will we work and function together, societally or otherwise? All thinking and reasoning is for the sake of action, whether for the individual agent from their perspective, or for multiple agents inhabiting multiple perspectives. Values, and especially the goals and purposes they imply (see above, sections 4.1.3 and 4.1.4., and the previous chapter, section 3.9.2.3), are at the base of every instance of agreement or disagreement.

Agreement is when mutual understanding is reached, such that each agent who is party to the agreement has a reasonable assurance that their own values in a particular case will be shared such that, relative to the goal(s) they understand themselves to share

with other agents, similar actions or properly collaborative action will be taken. Disagreement consists in this not being the case, whether because their values are at practical odds or whether they are at metaphysical odds in that each understands the way the world is to be different. And since agreements and disagreements are formed on the basis of either the past experiences of each agent, or on co-experimentation – or both – agreements and disagreements are a result of the larger pragmatic epistemological process of sensemaking; integrating our understanding of others as part of our own perspectives. In this way, navigating agreements and disagreements is a function of verification (see previous chapter, section 3.9.3.2), that is, analyzing *language* (not merely the words of linguistic constructions, but its necessarily embodied aspects of body posture, gestures, prosody, context, and circumstance) in terms of what it practically implies.

The realist's concern over the subjectivism of the constructivist or pragmatist, is one of precision in language and communication, particularly as it applies to logical reasoning, and this concern is reflected in the incommensurability argument of Devitt over the tenability of sharing identical *x*'s and *F*'s. Schiller was not only intensely suspicious of formalisms in general, but highly critical of the ways in which they had come to be used in formal logic. The central complaint expressed by Schiller is that formalism reorients truth to being symbol-based, rather than practical:

> "Formalism has abstracted from the relation by which the value, i.e. the truth-or-falsity of assertions, is determined. It abstracts from their relation to purpose and use."[618]

Not only is Schiller dismissive of rigid formalisms as a path to truth because of their usual abstraction away from pragmatic considerations of context and relevance to purpose, and action,[619] also because it attempts to bifurcate the consideration of the psychology of reasoning from the formal structure of logic. Being "superficial and devoid of psychological subtlety," Schiller maintains that formalizing language into logical constructs is an exercise which is unable to penetrate the "real meaning of the reasoning."[620] And this is a sentiment expressed regularly throughout Schiller's work.

The impulse to formalisms is part of the objectivist and ideal language approach to natural language, deeming it as hopelessly ambiguous and in need of regimentation – to be "translated" into some kind of formal notation. A prominent historical example of this is Leibniz's proposal to develop a "universal language" (*characteristica universalis*) which would preclude and dispel all confusions between people. Instead of discussion, its users would simply say to one another, "Let us calculate, without further ado, and see who is right."[621] But I would like to suggest, and I think that Schiller would agree, that

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[618] *Logic For Use,* 177.

[619] In *Logic For Use*, Schiller states: "Relevance… is a conception utterly alien [to the] Formalism… [of] intellectualistic logic" (94).

[620] *Formal Logic*, 224.

[621] See Leibniz, *The Art of Discovery* (1685) for this passage and fuller discussion.

the arrow of clarification and agreements points in the opposite direction: not from natural language → formal language, but from formal language → natural language. Despite the aims of logicians to construct a perfected language that lacks any trace of ambiguity, a formal system of symbols will always need to be explained and delineated in natural language before it can become intelligible or useful in practice. This *communication regress*, the retreat by communicators to natural language for meaning and intelligibility, is inescapable.[622]

Also inescapable are the need for what I will call *mutual agreement* and *mutual awareness*, and it that order. When two users of language embark on communication, they cannot present to each other a nondescript series of contextless symbols. Rather, they must retreat to a common natural language (a *communication regress*) and then begin an exchange of gestures, sounds, or sentences as precisely—in construction, word usage, and sentential sequence—as they are able until they reach a common understanding, or a *mutual agreement*. The duration of this exchange will depend on the degree of precision in their exchange; the greater the precision, the briefer the exchange. And the criterion of "precision" is not absolute, but relative, not only to the linguistic ability (vocabulary, register, etc.) of each language user, but also their individual perspectives and personal context. For example, precision should not be equated with terseness, since terseness can often lead to the need for repetition and explication on the part of the speaker who is using terse language, lengthening the path to *mutual agreement.* Such agreement is only possible when both communicators arrive at a

[622] It should not be surprising that the more versatile (natural language) is preferred over the less so (formal language). Since language is a complex social tool more than it is an abstract symbol system, this makes sense.

recognition of a shared context or *mutual awareness*. This context is usually of necessity quite narrow and specific, and is never perfect or complete, but only pragmatically enough to accomplish the shared purposes at hand. Only after a regression to natural language has taken place (assuming it is possible), and agreement has been reached from a common context of physical location, experiences, etc., can a pair of communicators consider the possibility of a procession toward the expression of ideas in a mathematical-style code such as a formal logic. And if a formal symbol system is not used to merely organize and arrange the ideas of those people involved, then it can actually get in the way of clear thinking and pragmatic agreement (or the amelioration of disagreement), as Schiller indicates.

But none of the efforts toward a common goal can guarantee or secure agreements or dispel disagreements between individual perspectives in some comprehensive or final way. As Schiller notes in multiple places, every judgment is an experiment and involves risk, and such risk is an ineliminable part of all human reasoning, whether individually or collectively.[623] This is just a part of the fallibilism at the base of pragmatic theories of knowledge and truth. We can only ever achieve what is good enough for our purposes, broadly speaking, although that "good enough" is often highly succinct and enables us to engage the world with a high degree of accuracy in our predictions and judgments.[624]

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[623] *Formal Logic*, 318, 338, and 347.

[624] Consistent, rigorous, and broadly applicable systems of reasoning, such as mathematics, are incredibly useful in this regard. When the inhabitants of multiple perspectives can understand, subscribe to, and apply such systems, the ability to resolve disagreements and operate in concert with one another toward common goals and purposes becomes much greater. Thus, something like math is *pragmatically* useful, when relevant, in attaining *mutual agreement* and *mutual awareness*.

But, as Schiller says, "we never eliminate the risk [that] the uncontrolled course of events may turn them [i.e. our truths] into falsehoods,"[625] and the attempt to regiment the course of events with formalisms is "to use a logical formula as a sort of… talisman."[626] There simply is no way to secure a common perspective, some kind of objective and agent-neutral perspective via formalisms or recourse to the cultural myth of objective truth – setting up common modes and systems of reasoning is an achievement of pragmatic collaboration between perspectives, not a datum that can be assumed at the outset. And of course, aside from the course of events, there is also no way to secure assent to even the most rigorously demonstrated logical and scientific proofs, as anyone who has argued with an anti-logical or anti-scientific mind can attest. Agreement on these, or any other, grounds is predicated on whether the individuals involved in an endeavor or dispute share the same values, e.g. whether they mutually value the constructs, systems, and metrics involved in logical or scientific analysis.[627] As Schiller notes even about arithmetic:

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[625] *Formal Logic*, 256.

[626] Ibid, 254.

[627] In *Structure*, 94, Kuhn describes the disagreements between paradigms in much the same way:

"Yet, whatever its force, the status of the circular argument is only that of persuasion. It cannot be made logically or even probabilistically compelling for those who refuse to step into the circle. The premises and values shared by the two parties to a debate over paradigms are not sufficiently extensive for that. As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice—there is no standard higher than the assent of the relevant community. To discover how scientific revolutions are effected, we shall therefore have to examine not only the impact of nature and of logic, but also the techniques of persuasive argumentation effective within the quite special groups that constitute the community of scientists."

If we switch out entire paradigms for individual perspectives, viewing them as a kind of paradigm-in-miniature, this passage communicates exactly the issue of agreements and disagreements between agents and their subjective experiences: (1) Arguing from one's own experience and perspective, on the basis of their values, is ultimately *circular*, (2) The only recourse one has to convince someone with whom they do not share directly relevant values is *persuasion* – and in any case, whether one agrees or disagrees with

> "That 2 and 2 *must be* 4 only remarks the rejection of some other result: *if* we desire to adhere to our system of arithmetical assumptions and are determined to go on counting, we cannot be called upon to add 2 and 2 in any other way… behind even *'can't'* there always lurks a *'won't'*... No one need add 2 and 2 as 4 unless he needs to add, i.e. *wills* to add them, because he [pragmatically] *needs* arithmetic."[628]

And about color perception:

> "When you and I both see 'red,' that means that we agree in the arranging of colours, but leaves inscrutable (and indeed unmeaning) the question whether your experience in seeing 'red' is the same as mine."[629]

Unless each individual pragmatically adopts the constructs and systems involved in a disagreement, unless their values in these regards align to a significant enough degree, elimination of disagreement or the effecting of agreement may not be possible – but this is not due to a "problem of subjectivity" (or of metaphysical constructivism). Rather, it is

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another person, they only have recourse to *the logic of values*, (3) Nothing can be compelling of itself and agreement is always by personal assent, not force – however such force might work, and it does not seem that it really could, (4) Logic and proofs are effective for those who similarly adopt the frameworks and assumptions on which they are based, but for those who do not they are ineffective – once again, persuasion (i.e. applying the logic of values) is the only way to get one's recalcitrant interlocutors to, as Kuhn says, step into the circle.

[628] *Axioms as Postulates*, 70-71, footnote 5.

[629] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 31.

because, for various reasons as we encounter other embodied organisms in the world, values are not always shared on every front. And in any case, the exactness of perception is unimportant, so long as the constructs involved (e.g. arithmetic, the ordering of colors) are ascribed to such that the common purpose is not practically undermined.

As for the worry of subjectivity undermining universal truth, descriptively speaking, there often are "competing truths" at odds with one another and, if held within a single perspective, would constitute a contradiction,[630] [631] and a retreat into the cultural myth of a singular, objective truth does not change (or even help to improve) that fact. Any competing truths which grow up within disparate perspectives are innocuous (and even irrelevant) until a common need or purpose arises between agents. Once there is a common goal, need, or purpose within a similar set of circumstances, agents will need to engage in communication and co-experimentation until they reach a mutual understanding. It is working toward common purposes that mitigates, and the practical consequences and outcomes of such efforts, which is able to mitigate disagreements between competing truths hailing from different perspectives. The path to agreement between the subjective perspectives of different individuals, according to Schiller,

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[630] Note that to say "There is a *contradiction* between the claims of S1 and S2" represents an analysis of claims within the perspective of another subject, S3. To deny this is to dismiss the perspective inhabited by S3, the one considering both claims together.

[631] As mentioned above (see footnote 20) contradictions are, in the view of Schiller, not always significant, as he notes: "It is perfectly easy to cherish contradictions in one's mind, provided that they are kept apart, and not allowed to [practically] meet" (*Formal Logic*, p. 124). In other words, contradictions only really become significant in light of some practical end which they inhibit in some way. Once a goal or purpose requires the resolution of a particular contradiction, then it becomes significant and the individual (or group of individuals, if they all "share" a particular contradiction) must take the necessary steps to resolve it.

involves "the problem of constructing a common perception," and its solution is to arrive at a common way to judge the truths of various people together:

> "...when A judges to be warm [i.e. "'It' is warm"] what B judges to be cold [i.e. "'It' is cold"], …'it' cannot be both, but 'it' does not exist in abstraction from the divergent judgments; 'it' stands in this case for *the problem of constructing a 'common' perception*, if the two 'its' are to be brought together into an 'objective' scheme of temperature, A and B must set to work to construct a thermometer, as to the readings of which they can agree."[632]

Arriving at intersubjective ("objective") truth is not a matter of citing myths and making proclamations as to what other "must accept," but is rather, like anything else conceived of by Pragmatism, a *process* – a continual process wherein humans within their various perspectives negotiate with one another, appealing to what is similar and common among them, in practical pursuits of common aims and purposes. As Schiller notes, the attempt to "depersonalize truth" (i.e. to detach it from concrete individual perspectives) is to entertain a fictitious notion:

> "If every 'truth' originates with an individual thinker facing an actual problem and choosing the best solution that presents itself to his mind, and framing the best judgment for containing it that he can conceive, and succeeding in winning

[632] *Studies in Humanism*, 110.

> the assent of others to the goodness of his judgment, it surely follows that depersonalization [i.e. the depersonalization of truth] is a fiction."[633]

It is a fiction to present truth as a depersonalized process that does not involve the negotiation of perspectives. We do not experience the process of producing ("making"; "discovering") truths in this way, but rather have become accustomed to citing a myth of an impersonal, objective, absolute, transcendent truth when characterizing those truths which have survived the gauntlet of the negotiation process to win intersubjective approval and subscription.

Finally, in response to the claim that construing the process of determining truths as subjective undermines the very possibility of truth, Schiller makes it clear that:

> "A plethora of truths is not the same as none at all. And to start with subjective truths does not condemn us to end with them. It only means that we should trace out the interesting process of mutual exchanges and adjustments by which the mind gets to know its world, and by which the common truths that get social recognition are segregated from the personal truths of immediate experience that remain individual and incommunicable. We can thus observe the growth of the objective out of the subjective, until we reach the common world of common sense and understand its working… To reject [the notion of absolute truth] is not

[633] *Must Philosophers Disagree?*, 104.

> to reject objectivity; it is to regard objectivity as an achievement, not as a datum."[634]

It is often taken for granted that the world we consider simply and commonly known is predominantly objectively the way which we understand it to be, but the world amenable to our shared "common sense" is the product of a process that begins in individual subjectivity and, being constrained by the world and our embodied place in it, grows to become the intersubjective ("objective") body of knowledge by which we all work together toward common goals and purposes. This is a process and an achievement, one which regularly and reliably produces human truths and defies any kind of absolute or transcendent truth.

4.2.5 Truth as Satisfactory

The last item I will address in this section is the claim made by Pragmatism that the true is the option out of however many possible alternatives which is the most "satisfactory" (see previous chapter, section 3.9.2.2 on the pragmatic sense of "good"). Of course, however much a judgment is satisfactory to an individual in a given context is certainly a subjective call, even when principled and not whimsical, as James aptly states in *Pragmatism*, Lecture II:

[634] *Our Human Truths*, 184-185.

> "We hold a theory true just in proportion to its success in solving [a problem]... But success in solving this problem is eminently a matter of approximation. We say this theory solves it on the whole more satisfactorily than that theory; but that means more satisfactorily to ourselves, and individuals will emphasize their points of satisfaction differently."

But the aspect of truth's satisfactoriness, though ultimately subjective in nature, is nevertheless – like subjectivity itself – not problematic. Descriptively speaking (and the pragmatic theory of truth is primarily at attempt to describe), the survivor in the Red Berries Case who, upon seeing that the berries in front of them are red and associates them with the previous red berries which caused illness and death, moves on to forage and eat something else without a second thought is *satisfied* with their judgment regarding them. The truth (the judgment that "red berries are poisonous and since these berries are red they are to be avoided"), is what satisfies the survivor's overall needs and interests with respect to their inquiry concerning them.

Schiller states clearly his position that truths are satisfactory,[635] and that the ultimate goal of all of philosophy is to aim for "complete satisfaction."[636] James likewise equates the true with the satisfactory.[637] In Schiller's view, *satisfaction* is an essential part of human thought, along with purpose, interest, and emotion:

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[635] *Logic For Use*, 124 and 147.

[636] *Studies in Humanism*, 13.

[637] See *Pragmatism*, Lecture VII, and *The Meaning of Truth*, Lecture III (there he mentions the satisfactoriness of truth in connection with the Pragmatism of Dewey): "...the true and the satisfactory do mean the same thing," and Lecture XII (there he mentions the satisfactoriness of truth in connection with

> "…our thinking depends for its very existence on the presence in it of (a) interest, (b) purpose, (c) emotion, (d) satisfaction…"[638]

And again,

> "Purpose, interest, desire, emotion, satisfaction, are more essential to thinking that steam is to a steam-engine."[639]

So, what is this "satisfaction"? Notice that in each of these passages it is placed at the end of the list. This is purposeful since the description of truth as that which is satisfactory to an individual describes *the end or the pausing of inquiry regarding a given hypothesis or area of knowledge.* In other words, Pragmatism is attempting to account for why some theories are chosen over others and why inquiry tends to stop or pause for periods of time. Satisfaction holds the answer to each of these questions. And this is not unlike the "normal science" of the Kuhnian cycle.

In *Structure*, Kuhn articulates a descriptive theory of scientific revolutions that accounts for periods between what he calls "normal science." Normal science represents times of relative equilibrium in which any research conducted is based on past scientific

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the Pragmatism of Schiller).

[638] *Studies in Humanism*, 81.

[639] Ibid, 83.

achievements that provide the basis for further practice.[640] According to Kuhn, "Normal science does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none"[641] – normal science is the "business as usual" of the scientific community. As this business is carried out within one or more overarching *paradigms*, which represent not only the empirical practices of the scientific community at a given time, but also the theories, models, facts, and operative hypotheses by which they are considered true and accurate. For Kuhn, normal science is essentially "paradigms in operation."[642]

As for the phases of the cycle which takes place between periods of normal science, that is, between the construction and adoption of successive paradigms, they are: anomaly, crisis, and revolution (i.e. adopting a new paradigm), which of course then results in a return to normal science. The details of each of these stages are too broad to go into fully here, but in brief, science carries out its operations and research using the theories and principles derived from past achievements (*normal science*), then eventually encounters persistent and numerous violations of expectation under the current paradigm (*anomaly*),[643] which in the course of time lead to a critical density of anomalies which makes way for the introduction of new theories and models to solve the emerging problems which the current paradigm cannot adequately address (*crisis*), and this finally

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[640] *Structure* (1970 edition), 10.

[641] Ibid, 52.

[642] Ibid, 11.

[643] Kuhn in *Structure* makes it clear that "persistent and recognized anomaly does not always induce crisis" (81), and that the scientists operating under a given paradigm "do not treat anomalies as counter-instances at first, even when they are severe and prolonged" (77). Instead, scientists carry on with the assumption that the anomalies are, or will be, explainable somehow by the current paradigm.

leads to the construction and adoption of a new paradigm (*revolution*), which in turn induces a period of stability and normalcy.

Although this cycle is not specifically discussing the satisfactoriness of truth in a pragmatic sense, it is nevertheless analogous to it since, as Schiller says, "Experience is experiment."[644] Also, Kuhn himself describes the agreement between theory and outcomes in terms of satisfaction,[645] and similarly frames the relationship between individual scientists (and the scientific community) and solutions to problems under a paradigm as those which "satisfy":

> "The scientist [as a member of a scientific community] must, for example, be concerned to solve problems about the behavior of nature. In addition, though his concern with nature may be global in its extent, the problems on which he works must be problems of detail. More important [sic], the solutions that *satisfy* him may not be merely personal, but must instead be accepted as solutions by many."[646]

Thus, satisfaction, as Kuhn indicates and Schiller maintains, plays a role in the human selection of solutions to problems. We are continually working toward an equilibrium, a kind of overarching harmony in our knowledge, that is, in what we consider as true. And

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[644] *Studies in Humanism*, 191.

[645] *Structure*, 32.

[646] *Structure*, 168, italics mine.

it is this harmony, maintains Schiller, which is the "sole essential problem of philosophy"[647] in that the general tendency of human psychology to desire a systemization of knowledge is part of a larger pursuit of harmony within the breadth of our experience.[648] And this pursuit of harmony is directly associated with satisfactoriness of truth and the desire to remove or resolve contradictions:

> "[T]he struggle to avoid and remove contradictions appears as an integral part of the great cosmic striving towards satisfaction, harmony, and equilibrium."[649]

The "harmony" of Schiller's Pragmatism and the "normal science" of Kuhn's history of scientific revolutions involve the equilibrium and assurance of cohesion and coherence among current knowledge and practice – i.e. they both explain the "satisfaction" of pragmatic truth, that is, they account for where inquiry *ends*, or at least where it pauses for a time until new problems arise that call for new solutions, upsetting the satisfaction of knowers and driving them to seek it once again.

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[647] *Studies in Humanism*, 227.

[648] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 50.

[649] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 188. In *Studies in Humanism*, 139-140, Schiller qualifies that, although the removal or resolution of contradictions is important, it is not *the* most important aspect of philosophy, as was supposed by many of his Absolute Idealist interlocutors:

"Getting rid of contradictions is no doubt *one* aspect of our efforts to harmonize our experience, but it is by no means the easiest or most logical starting-point." (139)

"Nor again is success in removing contradictions quite the alpha and omega of philosophy as intellectualists are fond of assuming. If it were, philosophy would be in a bad way. A severe construction [i.e. application] of the principle would work sad havoc with most philosophic systems…" (140)

See also footnotes (20) and (75).

4.2.5.1 The “Blue Lagoon” Case

The satisfaction of truth may be illustrated in another example, which I will call the Blue Lagoon Case, based loosely on the 1908 British novel by Henry De Vere Stacpoole, which was later turned into a major motion picture in 1980.

The Blue Lagoon Case: Two naive young children are shipwrecked and survive alone on an island. As they grow, they develop a set of truths, about food, about the ocean, about life, about the jungle, about sex and childbirth, and everything else they might encounter. And if they reach a point of no further curiosity and no further problems to overcome (that is, if they reach a kind of equilibrium in their daily activities), their truths will become stable and *satisfactory*, until, that is, they are rescued. Once they are rescued and return to society, with its new environment, technology, etc., the scope of their experiences, along with their pursuits, interests, values, and the problems in need of a solution, will fundamentally change (and likely expand). This will invite a kind of crisis (to use Kuhn’s terms) and disrupt the relative harmony (to use Schiller’s terms) they enjoyed while on the island by themselves, thus spurring a new pursuit of systemization and broad practical coherence among their set of truths. But until they encounter different circumstances, new problems, or engage in new inquiries from those which they found necessary while on the island, their inquiry will stop due to their *satisfaction*.

Thus, “satisfaction” is descriptive of the end of the process of inquiry, and though subjective, does not equate to simply choosing what one might want, consequences and

facts be damned. Such is descriptive of crass expediency, not Pragmatism; it is an attempt to construe the pragmatic theory of truth as a license to deceive and cheat (more on this in the next section), rather than as a descriptive account of the truth process.

We are not all that different from the children marooned on the isle of the Blue Lagoon. Like them, we make truth-valuations of various aspects of the experience which makes up our perspective, and when we find rules and theories which allow us to solve the problems we are aware of and attain to the goals and purposes which derive from our values, then we are for the moment satisfied, and whenever we are faced with a difficulty in the course of our activities, we will draw on everything we have learned up until that point and choose the course which appears to best satisfy us, relative to our purposes. If it succeeds, then we will count it as such, and if not, then we will count it as error and try something else – all the while updating our set of truths as we go in pursuit of satisfaction and harmony:

> "As regards the psychical fact of the truth-valuation, Truth may be called the ultimate function of our intellectual activity. As regards the objects[650] valued as 'true,' Truth is that manipulation of them which turns out upon trial to be useful, primarily for any human end, but ultimately for that perfect harmony for our whole life which forms our final aspiration."[651]

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[650] Schiller here is referring to "objects of thought" or aspects of experience that a person mentally reflects on at a given time; he is not referring to physical objects (like chairs or tables) as being considered "true" or "false."

[651] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 111.

Conclusion: The subjective dimensions of pragmatic truth are not problematic, and do not prevent either agreement or disagreement about the world. Similar embodiment serves as a constraint on our reasoning and a strong restraint on the kinds of runaway subjectivism that is often a concern by metaphysical objectivists regarding constructivism, including the variety adopted by Pragmatism. What ultimately mitigates subjectivity and mediates between agents within their various perspectives is practical outcomes and efficacy. Agents who disagree or who have different experiences, or differing interpretations of the same experience, can communicate, analyze, and engage in co-experimentation and exploration together. Prior to any action, agents may motivate others to adopt their beliefs and truth-valuations through the Logic of Values, that is, through an appeal to something else that the individual already values. Once ways of reliably achieving purposes and goals between individuals have been discovered and achieved, there are periods of satisfaction, harmony, and equilibrium, which are only upset by the presentation of new problems to be solved or new interests to be pursued (as shown in the Blue Lagoon Case). In terms of the Red Berries Case, the survivor and the thought-experimenter currently have differing truth-valuations regarding the nature of the red berries, each satisfied relative to their own purposes. This is often the case between individual perspectives, and it does not present a problem unless we are demanding absolute truth and perfect certainty, which Pragmatism views as precluded by material impossibility. But should the survivor and the thought-experimenter communicate together in such that they reach mutual understanding and awareness regarding the status of the red berries, then the survivor may update their truth-valuations to include what they have experientially gained from the thought-experimenter. An update would likely occur when

the survivor trusts the thought-experimenter that these particular berries are not poisonous, or (more likely) when the thought-experimenter demonstrates convincingly to the survivor that the red berries in question are indeed not poisonous and are different from the previous berries (or simply that "redness" does not always indicate "poisonous"). This is the way of agreement and disagreement, and formal concerns for whether our *x*'s and *F*'s are exactly identical are simply wrong-headed and out of touch with the cognitive science of perception and cognition.

4.3 The Objection of Expediency

The objection to the pragmatic theory of truth on the grounds that it endorses a kind of crass expediency is perhaps its most common objection, but also the easiest to answer since it is based on such a fundamental error in understanding the nature of Pragmatism and its construal of truth. Most analytic attempts to state the theory are something like:

< *p* > is true just in case it is useful to believe that *p*[652]

Or,

x is true iff *x* is useful to believe[653]

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[652] Schmitt, *Truth*, 78.

[653] Horwich*, truth,* 121.

Or, and this is one of the friendliest formulations I have found,

A belief is true iff it is useful in practice.[654]

Not only are these short statements woefully inadequate for expressing the pragmatic conception of truth, but they lend themselves to issues arising from semantic underdetermination, and I suspect that in each of these formulations, an objectivist sense of "true" (frue) is being subtly enforced. And this, no doubt, is why the pragmatic theory of truth is often explained as a theory of truth-as-utility (e.g. Schmitt 1995, Horwich 1998, Burgess and Burgess 2011[655]), which invites the criticism that pragmatic truth is merely a kind of crass and unprincipled, short-sighted expediency masquerading as truth. Such accusations are often drawn from well-known passages in classical pragmatic literature, like that of James in *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI "The Pragmatist Conception of Truth":

> "'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion."

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[654] Burgess and Burgess, *Truth*, 3.

[655] Schmitt, *Truth*; Horwich*, truth*; Burgess and Burgess, *Truth*.

Along with their fairly charitable formulation of pragmatic truth, Burgess and Burgess note (see there, 3) some of the historical objections to what they call "utility theory" and note that: "These objections are so obvious that the reader will likely guess that… [William] James must have held more interesting views than a simplistic reading of the… utility slogans would suggest." This is indeed the case.

This seems to confirm the immediate objections to pragmatic truth as mere expediency, that is, until one takes note of the very next line:

> "...Expedient in almost any fashion; ***and expedient in the long run and on the whole of course***; for what meets expediently all the experience in sight won't necessarily meet all farther experiences equally satisfactorily. Experience, as we know, has ways of boiling over, and making us correct our present formulas."

Thus, by "what works," "what is useful to believe," "what is expedient," "what is useful in practice" – any all other such formulations, the pragmatist means in the sense of a broad, practical coherence that is sensitive to the longest range of perspicuity possible within the knower's ken. There is simply no place for purposeful short-sightedness on the part of the pragmatist about truth, but rather:

> "The truth of [anything] has to run the gauntlet of all our other truths. It is on trial by them and they on trial by it. Our final opinion about [anything] can be settled only after all the truths have straightened themselves out together."[656]

And as Schiller states,

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[656] *Pragmatism*, Lecture III.

> "Truth is the useful, efficient, workable, to which our practical experience tends to restrict our truth-valuations; if anything the reverse of this professes to be true, it is (sooner or later) detected and rejected."[657]

And again,

> "It must be admitted, nay, emphasised, that to say that *all truth must work* and *be useful* is not, strictly, to define it at all. It is to insist on a very important and vital requirement which has been unfortunately overlooked; but it has not the *form* of a definition. It does *not* make 'truth' *convertible with* 'what works,' nor *identify* it with 'usefulness,' though from the earliest days this false conversion has been falsely foisted upon Pragmatism."[658]

Clearly, crass expediency is not what either James or Schiller have in mind when formulating Pragmatism. But this sense of what pragmatism about truth implies persists in current philosophical circles, despite the strenuous objection of classical Pragmatism to the contrary.

Based on the James passage regarding expediency and truth, Massimi (herself an advocate of a kind of perspectival, non-absolute truth) characterizes the pragmatic

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[657] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 59.

[658] *Logic For Use*, 157.

approach to truth as one of crass expediency with no regard to actual (that is, obtainable) facts:

> "A scientific model is true [on a Jamesian conception of truth] if it successfully facilitates and enables activities (be they epistemic or not). If the billiard-ball model of Brownian motion helps scientists to predict the behaviour of gas molecules, for example, the model is (pragmatically) true. *The falseness of the presumption of perfectly spherical molecules does not matter.*"[659]

But this is *not* what Pragmatism (or James) maintains. Rather, the pragmatic approach is that a theory is true insofar as it satisfies the theorists in their particular ends. It is not that obtainable facts "do not matter" but that all facts are not continually relevant all of the time. The shape of molecules will not become relevant (that is, they won't "matter") until their exact shape constitutes some interest or purpose such that it is the subject of an experiment or is involved in some problem. Once it is, then experiments will be performed, and if successful, we will then know their shape, and if not (or until we do) their shape will be at the center of a scientific puzzle. But Massimi is confusing knowledge of facts with their relevance in a given set of circumstances. Even if the pragmatist knows the actual shape of gas molecules is not billiard-ball-like, this will be irrelevant until it becomes relevant – i.e., it will not matter until it does. Pragmatism

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[659] Michela Massimi, "Getting it right" in *Aeon*, 2019), para. 21 (italics added): https://aeon.co/essays/its-time-for-a-robust-philosophical-defence-of-truth-in-science.

recognizes idealizations,[660] as well as why they are useful: they simplify the complexities involved. All complexities of all realities present in a given situation are not relevant, but only those which are (for whichever reasons). So long as the calculations satisfy local expectations in context, then only what is relevant is relevant. Schiller makes this point beautifully:

> "Absolute accuracy is not possible, if only because no human instrument and no human sense can measure it. But neither is it needed: what is needed is accuracy sufficient for the purpose in hand. If no one wishes to measure the height of a mountain in millimetres, or to evaluate π to 10,000 places of decimals for any rational purpose, it follows that such excessive accuracy is not only needless but also wrong. It is a waste of time and an obstacle in the way of the end desired."[661]

Thus, it is not about whether the facts matter (of course they do), it is about whether any or all possible facts are relevant to the calculations necessary at any given time and in any given context. Those that are, and which practically cohere in the widest available sense, are taken into account, and those which are not are not – factual though they may be.

In answering the bare objection, that is where it could end. The idea that Pragmatism proposes a truth-as-utility is simply *false*, and there is nothing more to it than

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[660] See *Logic For Use*, chapter 18, § 14 for a brief discussion of Schiller's view of the nature and role of abstractions in science (idealizations and fictions included).

[661] *Logic For Use*, 109.

that. Any claims to the contrary are simply uninformed as to the position of Pragmatism regarding the usefulness of truth. But, I have a few more thoughts to share on this point.

4.3.1 Truth as Useful

There is almost an air of offense at the notion of the true being the useful. Yet, when nearly anyone who values truth is asked why it ought to be valued, they will respond with either "for its own sake" (which is a virtuous reply indeed, but answers nothing) or "because the truth is useful" – and there, as the Bard of Avon placed in the mouth of Hamlet, is "the rub." It can be claimed that truth has some kind of value *simpliciter* (if such were even possible, see previous chapter, section 3.9.2.3), but that doesn't explain why anyone should care about it. However, if we are honest, we know that we care about truth because truths are beneficial, as Blackburn (2018) says, "truth radiates benefits such as knowledge and, perhaps most notably, success in coping with the world,"[662] since:

> "When we are out of touch with the way things work we are set to fail in our actions, but when we know our way about we succeed. Success is a mark that we are getting things right; failure denotes that we have not done so."[663]

Thus, the pragmatic claim that *what is true is useful* should not immediately startle anyone. Caring about what is true arises from a concern for avoiding error, and truth and

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[662] Simon Blackburn, *On Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 14.

[663] Ibid, 37.

error may only be determined pragmatically, in the course of human experience, and never *a priori*[664] (see previous chapter).

The statement that "the truth is the useful" does not imply a biconditional that $t \Leftrightarrow u$, but rather that $t \supset u$ or a Venn diagram with the circle of *truths* set inside a wider circle of *useful beliefs* (i.e. all A's are B's, does not imply that all B's are A's). There are plenty of useful things to believe (in a short-sighted sense) that are not true. As previously with the statement of James regarding the expediency of beliefs, the idea that Pragmatism equates truth with mere utility or usefulness is usually drawn from his statement elsewhere that:

> "... that 'it is useful because it is true or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing…"[665]

And on first blush, this passage appears to justify the belief that, for the pragmatist about truth, there is a biconditional relationship between "true" *t* and "useful" *u*. However, as with the previous passage, the context is eminently important to consider when interpreting James's intent here. Let us look at it from a more direct angle (bold added):

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[664] Schiller regards the claim that the truths of mathematics or of formal logic are *a priori* as specious since these are human constructions which themselves arise out of experience and are then [pragmatically] applied to further experience. Thus, they remain conditional (cf. *Problems of Belief*, 24). And he notes the existence of multiple logics, geometries, and other mathematical systems – each of which is relative to itself and the purposes for which it was derived – as pointing to the constructed, and therefore non-*a priori* nature of even formal systems (cf. "Non-Euclidean Geometry and Kantian *A Priori*" in *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*).

[665] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.

> "We store… extra truths away in our memories, and with the overflow we fill our books of reference. Whenever such an extra truth becomes practically relevant to one of our emergencies, it passes from cold-storage to do work in the world, and our belief in it grows active. You can say of it **then** either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely that here is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified. True is the name for whatever idea starts the verification-process, useful is the name for its completed function in experience."

James here is referring to a particular stage of the truth-process, namely that of verification in use (see previous chapter, section 3.9.3.2). In other words, once a truth has been received as true enough to act upon, and reckoned as common enough knowledge that it may even be recorded in reference books, then at such a point it may be deployed in an actual circumstance where it is relevant (i.e. "it passes from cold-storage to do work in the world).[666] And once a truth is applied successfully in a given circumstance, ***then*** – at that endpoint, the completion of a verification process through use – may someone either describe that truth as *true because useful* or *useful because true*. In the world of actual human reasoning and action, this point is the closest we can get to a kind of certainty, though it falls far shy of the absoluteness or permanence desired by the objectivist. Thus, James was making a particular point about a very specific phase of the

[666] Schiller cites this idea of James in *Logic For Use*, 421: "Moreover, as William James has pointed out, most of our 'truths' are thus kept in reserve, and only mobilized when wanted. This is why intellectualism fails to see any connexion between truthfulness and usefulness. A truth, while not *in* use does not seem to be *of* use."

truth-process, and not a general claim about pragmatic truth, i.e. that *truth* is nothing more than *utility*.

This crass sense of "pragmatism" (pseudo-pragmatism) arises from two places: (i) the colloquial use of "pragmatism" and "pragmatic" is overwhelmingly in the sense of short-sighted utility: a concern for immediate outcomes, truth-be-damned, and a devil-may-care utilitarianism of action, and (ii) it proceeds from absolutist and objectivist assumptions about truth. Regarding (i), it is a simple fact that despite the predominant colloquial usages of the term "pragmatism," James and Schiller nevertheless used this word to name their philosophical system *and* clarified repeatedly that they did not mean to communicate a belief in truth as mere utility (see chapter 1, section 1.3). As for (ii), if one enforces an objectivist conception of truth (fruth), then what results is the kind of "pragmatism" where what matters is achieving goals, and truth/facts/the way things actually are is not relevant or is at least less relevant than simply obtaining what one desires. And it is this perceived bifurcation between truth and practical success that led Stich into his dilemma and ultimately to adopt a colloquial notion of pragmatism, rather than a classical Jamesian or Schillerian one.

So, if truth is not absolute or objective – if it arises endogenously within subjective experience – then why retain it at all? Why not just say that there is no such thing as "truth"? The reason is that, so long as there is a limit to what beliefs we can credibly adopt, and so long as we cannot simply freely dictate what we can successfully act on, there will always be a difference between "truth" and arbitrary whim. Sure, there are beliefs that work within the bounds of practical reality better than others, but reforming and refining our stock of truths, is the stuff of human growth and development,

and is indeed the very method of philosophy and science. The pragmatist about truth looks at the pseudo-pragmatist and cautions them against their short-sighted thinking, against valuing mere utility in the now (at the expense of broad practical coherence) and is emphatic that continually ignoring known factors making decisions and taking action will eventually catch up with them – such an attitude will very likely end in ruin (and this, too, is a truth derived from experience).

Not only this, but the relativity of truth to purpose does not mean a single, immediate purpose in isolation at any one time. Truths are relative to all the many goals, aims, and purposes dictated by the plethora of values held by any one person – all at once. Of course, the "web of beliefs" idea of Quine and Ullian (1978), in the sense of a grand harmony of beliefs as they are cognitively stored, has not been upheld by cognitive science, at least not such a neat arrangement of beliefs. Human thinking is far less idealized than that. Instead, cognitive-scientific research has shown that beliefs are compartmentalized in "fragments," which are areas of belief which are not associated with one another.[667] Fragments are like warehouses of information stored in causal isolation from one another, though they will often contain the same or similar information in a kind of redundancy.[668] This isolation and redundancy, on first blush would seem to be a picture of confusion that undermines the broad practical coherence envisioned by

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[667] Nicolas Porot and Eric Mandelbaum, "The Science of Belief: A Progress Report" in *The Cognitive Science of Belief: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, eds. Julien Musolino, Joseph Sommer, and Pernille Hemmer (2023), 69. There the authors mention the papers of Bendaña and Mandelbaum, "The Fragmentation of Belief" (2021), and Elgac and Rayo, "Fragmentation and Information Access" (2021), both of which argue for the cognitive storage of beliefs in overlapping "fragments" rather than a single cohesive "web," as posited analytically.

[668] Porot and Mandelbaum, *The Cognitive Science of Belief*, 69.

pragmatic truth. Though from the standpoint of the "web of belief" idealization, fragments represent a counterexample to the kinds of perfect holism and coherence envisioned by those who adopt such a concept of cognitive belief storage, fragments nevertheless have their advantages and actually guard against potential chaos and poor reasoning. According to Porot and Mandelbaum (2023):

> "Fragmentation thus allows for both representational redundancy and a lack of epistemic closure. Representational redundancy is achieved by allowing different tokens of the same type of belief to appear in multiple data structures; lack of closure arises when the premises of an argument are housed in distinct fragments."[669]

Allowing for "representational redundancy" means allowing for the same information, the same beliefs, to be stored in different fragments *so that* it can be available to all the other information in a fragment, but without there being a kind of mental chaos. "Epistemic closure" refers to the drawing of inferences from multiple premises. Cognitively, this refers to construction of judgments on the basis of beliefs, hypotheses, and theories. The prevention of epistemic closure means that logical operations cannot be performed across fragments housing contradictory beliefs. Of course, epistemic closure does occur and does result in poor inferences, but it occurs much less frequently due to

[669] Ibid.

the sequestering of beliefs in fragments and would happen far more frequently under a unified web.[670] Thus, continue Porot and Mandelbaum,

> "Fragmentation solves a central puzzle in psychological theorizing: How is it that people seem to abhor inconsistencies and yet harbor so many inconsistent beliefs? It allows for a belief system riddled with inconsistencies, as long as those inconsistencies are sequestered from one another in separate fragments. *Each fragment is internally consistent and contains no redundant representations.* But across fragments, consistency (and simplicity) is not maintained, and representational redundancy and inconsistency are expected. Thus, fragmentation can explain inconsistent beliefs while allowing our belief system to scaffold rational behavior. *As long as only one fragment controls our behavior at any time, and as long as our fragments are more or less consistent, rational action will be the norm.*"[671]

It has been theorized that new fragments are created by what Bendaña and Mandelbaum (2021) call the *environmental principle* which is that "novel fragments are opened up in novel environments," or novel spatiotemporal contexts.[672] Of course, for pragmatic truth

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[670] Joseph Bendaña and Eric Mandelbaum in their "The Fragmentation of Belief" in *The Fragmented Mind*, eds. Cristin Borgoni, Dirk Kindermann, and Andrea Onofri (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021, first edition), state that fragmentation decreases the likelihood that inconsistent beliefs will be coactivated (100).

[671] Porot and Mandelbaum, *The Cognitive Science of Belief*, 69 (italics added).

[672] *The Fragmented Mind*, pp. 97-98.

context is of central importance, as we have seen, so relativizing the creation and maintenance of cognitive fragments to contexts makes sense, but it does not go far enough. Contexts are contexts *of something*, and that something is meaning-ascription, judging, and taking actions within those contexts. Thus, the internal consistency of fragments, along with their apparent singularity in cognition, are relevant to, not merely the spatiotemporal contexts which give rise to them, but the information they house is for the sake of successfully acting relative to our values within those contexts, and as such, fragments are ultimately relativized to purposes. But single, isolated purposes dictated by single values, which would make short-sighted thinking and crass expediency the norm in human thinking (and in some cases it is, but at a local scope of daily human activities it usually isn't), but instead our purposes, though sequestered and context-sensitive, are nevertheless associated in a continual network in which clusters of values come to bear on any particular choice.

That fragments are ultimately relativized to purposes and not merely spatiotemporal contexts is borne out by what Bendaña and Mandelbaum (2021) call the *merge principle*, where "if two fragments that contain inconsistent information are coactivated, then they will be rendered *consistent*,"[673] that is, "the two previous fragments are then merged to form a new, consistent fragment."[674] But render consistent *how*? The authors surmise that when fragments are combined, inconsistencies are dissolved and any weaker beliefs are deleted or sequestered (in a different fragment), but they do not provide an explanation as to *why* or *how* such inconsistencies are resolved in the new

[673] Borgoni, et al, *The Fragmented Mind*, 99.

[674] Ibid.

merged fragment. It stands to reason that there is an underlying pragmatic principle at work here, and that inconsistencies are not dissolved, and weaker beliefs are not dispensed with, through some analytic means, but by taking account of the practical outcomes of judgments in the disparate contexts which are coming into contact with one another in a merge.

Take the survivor in the Red Berries Case. In their initial encounter with red berries, they were poisoned, and in their subsequent encounter they see the red berries, count the judgment that they are poisonous as true and continue their avoidance of them. That is, the survivor activated the same fragment in both cases. Now, let us propose that the survivor has another fragment that is activated whenever they have tea (the "tea fragment"), and that in the tea fragment is stored information on making tea from various leaves and berries. Let us also propose that on one occasion, they encounter someone making tea from red berries, the same red berries which are *not* poisonous but which they nevertheless avoid in the Red Berries Case, and that this activates the "red berries fragment" causing them to warn the person currently making tea from them. The person making tea may respond that they are aware that *some* red berries are poisonous, and that these are not those red berries, and that they have been drinking them in tea for a long time with no ill effects. This person may also offer a cup of tea to the survivor who may drink it and be surprised that they do not suffer ill effects from it. In the end, the survivor will have had numerous practical experiences and made various judgments in that context, activating multiple fragments.

But the merging process could take place, or merely an update to a single fragment. For instance, the survivor may merge his "red berries fragment" and his "tea

fragment," and drop resolve the conflict between *p* ("All red berries are poisonous") and ~*p* ("Not all red berries are poisonous"), by dropping *p* as the weaker belief.[675] Or, the survivor may simply update their "tea fragment" with the belief that drinking tea made from red berries is not harmful, while still avoiding the consumption of any red berries when they find them foraging. This could be a simple sequestering of beliefs between fragments, or it could be an expression of a skeptical stance on the part of the survivor. For instance, it would be possible for the survivor to think that the tea-maker was self-deceived and that it was the process of boiling that "killed" the poison in the berries (or at least weakened or diluted it) and not that some red berries are poisonous while some are not. Thus, the belief that red berries should not be consumed could be reasonably maintained. On this line of reasoning, the survivor would merge the "tea" and "red berries" fragments and retain the belief that *p* while adding another belief *k* (that boiling red berries makes them safe enough to drink a tea from, since the poison is diluted somehow).

Pragmatism and pseudo-pragmatism do not have the same aims, and they also do not have the same theory – or even the same reverence – for truth. And for Pragmatism, short-sighted and reckless thinking is not even on the menu of its subjective "goods."

Conclusion: Although Pragmatism emphasizes that the value of truth lies in its usefulness in navigating one's environment, and that all true beliefs will also be useful, it does not equate truth with mere expediency of the moment. The aim of pragmatic truth is a broad,

[675] Borgoni, et al, *The Fragmented Mind*, 99.

practical coherence over the longest possible term – and all construals to the opposite are simply mistaken. The reason that the pragmatic theorist about truth describes the belief of the survivor in the Red Berries Case as *true* is due their faithfulness to a consistent descriptive relativity, such that "true" always means "true" in some concrete circumstance, that is, *true to someone*. In this case, the survivor counts the non-poisonous red berries in front of them as being poisonous and so avoids them. This they do because of their past experiences and because red berries constitute no other interest for them in their current context and the scope of their particular perspective. If some need or new experience with red berries should arise, then perhaps they will experiment with their world further and find that not all red berries are poisonous, in which case they will update their stock of truths. This in no way requires the pragmatist onlooker (standing in the shoes of the thought-experimenter) to affirm the survivor's belief about the berries to the nullification of their own, nor does it require them to contradict themselves because they say that, *relative to the survivor*, the proposition "All red berries are poisonous" is true, while relative to their own experiences, the same proposition is false.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Chapter overview:
Introduction
5.1 *Affirming the Predicament*
5.2 *Resolving the Dilemma*
5.3 *The Indispensability of Truth*
5.4 *Adopting a Pragmatic Approach to Truth*

Introduction

The previous three chapters have been focused on a more or less traditional presentation of a theory of truth: beginning with an account of its metaphysical underpinnings (chapter 2) and then unpacking the elements of a complete theory of truth (chapter 3). The motivation for this presentation has been some of the claims of Stich regarding the value of truth in evaluating cognitive systems, and cognitive science generally, as put forward in his *Fragmentation of Reason* (chapter 3). In place of the pseudo-pragmatism of Stich, spurred on as it is by frustrations with an objectivist notion of truth based upon correspondence and supposedly obtained by analytic means, I have offered the pragmatic theory of truth, and specifically that formulation defended by F.C.S. Schiller. To be sure, I have presented far more material related to the pragmatic theory of truth than is necessary to answer the claims of Stich with which I am primarily concerned. The reason for this is that, along with answering Stich, my other primary goal in this project has been to engage with the work of a prominent and prolific, yet mostly unfamiliar, classical Pragmatist who formulations are valuable to second-generation cognitive science in the current "turn," as well as to philosophy of cognitive science generally. The history of classical Pragmatism will also benefit from the explanations and explications that I have

developed thus far (though there is still more to do – more on this in the section on future directions below).

As for chapter 4, I have defended the pragmatic theory of truth (in its Schillerian form) against the common criticisms of it being relativistic, subjective, and merely a form of expedience (i.e. "useful" or "satisfactory"). In doing so, I have introduced and developed principles for key concepts like "perspectives" and "values," and have engaged with relevant research in cognitive science. Rather than attempting to reassert and reinforce the usual scientific narrative of a mind-independent world and a world-independent mind by appealing to "objectivity" in an attempt to "ground" my understanding of truth in the usual fashion, I have instead decided to openly embrace its relativity and subjectivity. I have opted to view the usual understanding of the subjective-objective schema as overplayed and overestimated. Relativity and subjectivity are not a *de facto* threat to truth that must be theoretically sequestered and-or eliminated – the runaway versions of them often cited in philosophical counterexamples are actually mitigated and tempered by the similar embodiment and embeddedness of our cognitive processes. I further highlight that our cultural and ideological relationship to "objectivity" is similar to that noted by Nietzsche with regard to the existence of a god: Philosophy mourns, as it were, the "death" of complete objectivity brought on by embodied and enactive models of cognition by consigning itself to extreme relativism, much like religionists in the West consign themselves to nihilism upon concluding that god does not exist. But this is unnecessary; just as the recognition that gods do not exist doesn't entail nihilism, the recognition that objectivity is not possible (as it is traditionally understood) doesn't entail unrestrained and whimsical subjectivity. Just as Nietzsche called on

European religionists to recognize that since gods never existed, they have always been the creators of their own values, I call on objectivists to recognize that since objectivity as they are accustomed to thinking of it has never been possible, all of the stable systems and frameworks they make regular appeal to as "objective" have always been a human achievement, and not a mere datum of experience.

Lastly, I have throughout made a concerted effort to engage with the ideas of those who have become mainstays and whose works serve as the conceptual infrastructure of contemporary philosophy of science, especially Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The main reason for this is that the classical Pragmatists, and Schiller in particular, was continually focused on truth vis-a-vis scientific inquiry and progress. Not only this, but by all accounts Kuhn was unfamiliar with the writings of William James or F.C.S. Schiller when writing *Structure*, and yet his formulations regarding the nature of science and human knowledge generally run tightly in parallel with Pragmatism. This strong resemblance between Kuhn's epistemology and pragmatic approaches, though without any apparent direct influence from the literature of Pragmatism, has already been noticed in the larger world of Philosophy[676] – and in all of

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[676] In her relatively recent volume, *Kuhn's Legacy: Epistemology, Metaphilosophy, and Pragmatism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 168, Bojana Mladenović writes regarding Kuhn that:

"Neither in his books and articles nor in the few interviews that he gave did he recognize American pragmatism as a formative influence on his thought. To my knowledge, he never even mentioned the philosophical works of Peirce, James, or Dewey. Yet Kuhn's epistemology not only shows striking similarities to some distinctive and crucial aspects of their work but is also *structurally* a pragmatic epistemology."

Mladenović goes on to argue that certain elements of Pragmatism were philosophically upstream from Kuhn's thought through the works of Quine, Goodman, and Putnam (189). However, I find it unlikely that such stark parallels would arise from work that was more Peircean than Jamesian or Schillerian. Nonetheless, the parallels exist and are uncanny, though we may never ascertain their source. My suspicion is that Mladenović is correct regarding the general influence of logical empiricism on Kuhn, amenable to Pragmatism as many of its elements were, but that the fruition of his philosophy of science was genuinely

my study of Kuhn alongside James and Schiller, I noticed it as well.[677] As such, I have made efforts to note similarities and to use Kuhn's ideas to help explain those of Schiller. In a sense, though not in any "objective" sense, drawing lines of connection and comparison to Kuhn helps to ground the thought of Schiller (much of which is intrepid and strongly stated) by showing how it may be contextualized to a significant extent within an established school of thought in the philosophy of science. The pragmatic theory of truth may be seen as the completion of the Kuhnian project in that it embraces the progression of science and knowledge as a series of paradigm shifts, and then offers a "strong conception of truth"[678] to replace correspondence.

Now, after all of the above, we have come to this final chapter, which by all accounts is fairly straightforward. In my years teaching academic writing, I have emphasized to my students that, when it comes to conclusions, nothing entirely new should be introduced, as new thoughts are for the body of the essay or paper. Thus, I will try to follow my own advice, and only answer the central claims of Stich which were first enumerated in chapter 1, reiterating the main points discussed in chapters 2, 3, and 4. Though some new things will be said, they will be the applications of the content of the

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his own. And this, I think, lends credibility to Kuhnian and pragmatic accounts of the nature and progress of science and human knowledge, since both are intended as *descriptive* and not normative at all.

[677] I had come to my own conclusions regarding the parallels between Kuhn and Jamesian-Schillerian formulations of Pragmatism years before encountering Mladenović's important book.

[678] See Kuhn in *Road*, 95, where he states:

"Though both rationality and relativism are somehow implicated, what is fundamentally at stake is rather the correspondence theory of truth, the notion that the goal, when evaluating scientific laws or theories, is to determine whether or not they correspond to an external mind-independent world. It is that notion, whether in absolute or probabilistic form, that I'm persuaded must vanish together with foundationalism. What replaces it will still require *a strong conception of truth*, but not, except in the most trivial sense, correspondence truth." (italics added)

previous three chapters to Stich's central claims. The general style of the following sections will be far less technical and more relaxed than that of previous chapters.

To review, the central claims of Stich's argument (S) are:

i. S: *Assessing beliefs in terms of truth is impossible.*

ii. S: *There is an intractable divide between truth and practical success.*

iii. S: *Truth and true beliefs have no value whatsoever.*

iv. S: *We (cognitive scientists) should adopt a pragmatic standard of belief.*

5.1 Affirming the Predicament

(i) S: *Assessing beliefs in terms of truth is impossible.*

This is essentially a statement of Stich's *predicament*, and it relies on notions of "objective truth" (fruth) and analytic approaches to supposedly ascertaining it. Thus, it is really only a predicament for objectivists about truth who require an interpretation function to map beliefs to reality in response to a correspondence intuition. As it is worded, knowing what "assessing" and "truth" imply for Stich, **I can agree with this claim**. But I prefer to affirm its alternate formulation: *Analytic theories of truth ultimately meet with failure*. In other words, analytic theories are inadequate as criterions of truth, either of objective truth since their particulars ultimately terminate in subjective intuitions, or of pragmatic truth, since they cannot be used to distinguish truths from truth-claims, or even errors. I have not argued with this but have taken this position throughout this project. As noted in chapter 3, traditional theories like the correspondence theory of truth are explanatorily vague and analytically trivial. Instead of explaining what

"correspondence" means or implies, they merely create more abstract entities and set them in relation to one another, never really giving an account of "the particular go" of truth or correspondence. And the schema into which propositions and facts are placed are so trivial that one needs to already know which statements are true and which are false *before* placing them into the schema. If not, then it is entirely possible that someone could use the correspondence schema to reassure themselves of the "truth" of false conceptions of the world. The correspondence schema serves to reinforce what one already believes to be true. Even under a semantic theory of truth, like that of Tarski, how can truth conditions or satisfaction conditions be formulated and compiled (which are essential to the application of the theory) unless it is already known which statements are true and which are not?

So, with regard to analytic theories of truth, we find ourselves in the situation that, for their schemas to work we need to already know what truth is, rendering them trivial, and if we do not know what the truth is, they are practically useless in helping us to discover it. What is really taking place is that the correspondence theorist is taking an initial statement p, restating it as proposition [p], formulating yet another sentence in response to [p], a fact <p> (which just happens to look like [p] or its simple negation, though it is stipulated to have been derived from "the world"), and then setting p, [p], and <p> in abstract relations to one another – and because its system of terms all work together without contradiction or redundancy, it is presented as a cogent "theory of truth." But really, language never meets the world, only *more* language, and no actual criterion of truth is offered, but merely assumed.

Under a pragmatic approach to truth, assessing beliefs *is* possible. The pragmatist rejects the idea that "truth" is a function of symbols, and instead insists that the only way anyone knows that anything is "true" or "false" is by practical experimentation out in the world. Truths are "made" or "discovered" by processes of verification. And even if most of the truths we accept are part of a social "credit system" (to use a Jamesian analogy[679]), they are provisionally true until we apply them, in which case we verify them for ourselves. Thus, we may have heard all of our lives that the ocean is salty or that the earth is spherical, and we may accept these as common truths, but it isn't until they become relevant to us and enter our experience that they become truths for us. Just like if a person was told their whole life that the earth is flat or that childbirth tickles, they may repeat these or accept these as true, but when they end up on the International Space Station or go into labor, they will verify these as "false" and formulate new truths. This is how the process of knowledge actually works, and it is based on the predictive processing that is generally at work in both our conscious and unconscious[680] cognition. Thus, when a correspondence theorist (or any analytic truth theorist) sets up statements in their

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[679] See Pragmatism, Lecture VI, where James offers an analogy explaining our relationship to truths in terms of banking:

"Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass,' so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever. You accept my verification of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other's truth. But beliefs verified concretely by somebody are the posts of the whole superstructure."

[680] I use "unconscious" to refer to "cognitive processes not amenable to conscious awareness," rather than to the commonly invoked Freudian notion of the "sub" or "unconscious."

correspondence schemas,[681] if they already know that "grass is green" because they have seen grass and share a color vocabulary with other English speakers, then they are simply arranging sentences, but if they use a sentence like "an octopus lives at the bottom of the reef" and neither they nor anyone else has ever visited the bottom of that particular reef, then they will not be able to ascertain the truth of the statement until they either visit the bottom of the reef themselves or someone else does in an acceptably verifiable way. And once this practical exploration and experimentation occurs, they will then be able to set the *statement* "an octopus lives at the bottom of the reef" (or, its *proposition*) opposite a *fact*, formulated as either "an octopus lives at the bottom of the reef" or "an octopus does not live at the bottom of the reef" in response to the initial statement, and then place them in relation to one another, to see if the proposition *corresponds* to the fact. But why do this if the truth is already obtained through practical means? And if this doesn't aid in obtaining truth, why retain it? In what way is it a "theory of truth"? The need for practical verification in the case of any analytic theory to make it meaningful,[682] and our routine

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[681] Or correspondence-*type* schemas. Even deflationary accounts like Tarski's equivalence schema ⌜ ⟨*p*⟩ is true iff *p* ⌝ suffer from the same analytic triviality as more complex correspondence theories in that they do not provide a criterion of truth and are only reliable *after* one has already ascertained the truth behind the statements set into relation with one another.

[682] Even coherence theorists, though they are on the right track and moving toward a pragmatic account in prioritizing coherence (viz. Pragmatism is interested in a broad, practical coherence among beliefs, even if not a strict logical coherence across all areas of knowledge – though this may serve as an ideal, despite it not being necessary as a criterion of truth itself), relies on practical investigation and experience to ascertain truths and for a proposition to cohere with a given set of true propositions, it must already be known (by practical, experimental means) which propositions belong in the set of "true propositions." If mere inclusion in the set by verbal stipulation is all that is required, then truth breaks down and becomes a useless category, and the coherence theorist would then be faced with the question of, if it is possible to simply stipulate that some propositions are true, then why would coherence with them be the criterion for truth for some propositions and not others. And conversely, if we practically investigate to verify true propositions, then why wouldn't we take the same route for the proposition under consideration? Why choose a different standard (that of "coherence") for it than for the others? Of course, this is purely hypothetical, and no coherence theorist to my knowledge adopts such a position, but the fact remains that

acceptance of such verification as indicative of truth (in both everyday activities and highly structured environments like laboratories), indicates that – unless we are objectivists or skeptics – the assessment of beliefs in terms of truth *is* possible, and that truth is determined *pragmatically*.

Stich, in assuming truth to be objective and best ascertained by deploying analytic formalisms (such as interpretation functions), finds himself a predicament where the kinds of beliefs that can be assessed is limited, and the choices necessary to arrive at one of many possible interpretation functions is idiosyncratic, terminating as they do in subjective considerations. This apparent predicament, where the pursuit of something as important as truth ends up mired in unresolvable questions (unresolvable, that is, in any normatively objective way) prompts Stich to disregard it altogether in favor of a consequentialist (i.e. a consequences-only) approach to cognitive evaluation. But if Stich had questioned the objectivist assumptions at the base of his traditional analytic theorizing (which he also decidedly abandons, along with truth), then he would not have found himself in a predicament. For the pragmatist, there is no such predicament, as analytic approaches to truth are at best representations of what we already know by practical experimentation and experience. And since pragmatic truth is fallibilist (that is, subject to revision and improvement) and not absolute, objective, or transcendent, there is no need to satisfy endless lists of a priori conditions to arrive at truth. Thus, and as will become clearer below, adopting a pragmatic theory of truth prevents any such predicament.

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for even a coherentist schema to work, it must already be known which sentences are true and which are not.

5.2 Resolving the Dilemma

(ii) S: *There is an intractable divide between truth and practical success.*

I disagree with this claim (which is mostly implicit in Stich, though it is strongly implied by his self-imposed ultimatum between truth and achieving goals – and is further confirmed by his choice to call his consequentialism-sans-truth "pragmatism" in the colloquial sense). Truth and practical success only come apart when truth is viewed as objective and completely independent of minds or actions (i.e. independent of an organism-environment system). Truth arises from experimentation and investigation of the world, which is indicative of an active exploration by an organism of its environment and is not restricted to highly formalized methods of scientific inquiry conducted in laboratories. We postulate, test the hypothesis (or, usually, sets of hypotheses) through action, update based on outcomes, and repeat the process. Those hypotheses with the broadest success in navigating the world and making sense of our overall experience, we treat as "axioms" or "laws" and more or less take them for granted in the processes of our reasoning until some attempt at applying them is frustrated, and we either update our hypotheses with note of a special case, adjust them, or amend them altogether. As noted above, many of our truths come to us, not by direct experience, but by trusting the experience of others and taking them at their word, and so long as the application of such truths is not frustrated by our own experience, we will continue to trust and rely on them. But in this, truth and practical success go hand-in-hand, and the former is predicated on the latter – *not*, as it is usually erroneously assumed, in spite of facts, but by taking all known and relevant facts *into account* in the process of our exploration.

If one assumes that truth and practical success come apart, then they are likely to (a) have situations in mind wherein facts are either ignored or suppressed somehow (as occurs under the crass expediency of pseudo-pragmatic reasoning), as if pragmatic truth can ever be in spite of known facts, or (b) be engaged in an objectivist denial of what happens at the level of theories and paradigms, which depend on making the best sense of data we are aware of, per our experimentation. When we reason about things with which we are eminently familiar, which we take for granted as being trivial and obvious to all due to their intense regularity and thus the almost effortless reliability of our application of all the hypotheses related to them, we forget that what happens at the edge of our knowledge once occurred as we were making sense of the world into which we were born. We forget that even the simple belief persistence of objects when they are out of our sight was once up for grabs, cognitively speaking,[683] until we developed a reliable hypothesis that they do, and so with everything that we consider to be true. This process of determining what is true is not undone by a concern for practical success but is intimately predicated on it. And it is no different than a scientist with data sets in front of them, attempting to find the theory that best fits the majority of it – what works, and works best, is accepted, while anything that does not is rejected, or perhaps not even given serious consideration in the first place.

Objectivist denial of the processes involved in determining truth at all levels of complexity also involves a denial of the epochal and cultural situatedness which permeates the entire progression of science and human knowledge throughout its history

[683] See *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter III, where James gives the example of a child's rattle falling out of sight.

which, if it demonstrates anything, shows that truth changes.[684] It shows that nothing "objective" or "absolute" has ever been reliably obtained except by forceful assertion or stipulation, that is, except by appealing to the persistent cultural myth in the West of an eternal and never-changing truth that is divorced entirely from human action or striving. So, one is faced with a choice between (a) or (b), between conflating the association of truth and practical success with a facts-be-damned pseudo-pragmatism or denying that all truth arises from a common cognitive process of postulation and experimentation – or perhaps one might choose both – but neither is well-founded.

Stich arrives at his dilemma through the assumption that people don't care about truth (objectively conceived) and only really care about obtaining their goals and values. As he sees it, it's difficult to see how anyone could ascertain the truth, let alone care about it. Each person could conceivably construct their own interpretation function and use it to derive the "TRUTH," but since each function is laden with various, and

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[684] In many places throughout this dissertation, I have appealed to the history of science and human knowledge as demonstrating the impermanent nature of what we know and what we have adopted as "objectively true." Kuhn makes a similar case based on the history of science in *Road* (see page 95). Viewed through an objectivist lens, such an appeal could be understood as evidence that we have never yet arrived at truth, or that what we are continually engaged in amounts to various degrees of verisimilitude. This, however, is not at all the conclusion I have intended to draw or be drawn by citing the history of science, and neither is it the conclusion of Pragmatism. Instead, what Pragmatism sees in the history of science are successive truths which subsequently are adjusted, improved, and many of which are eventually set aside as false. In Lecture VI of *Pragmatism*, William James explains that "Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, scholastic metaphysics, were expedient for centuries, but human experience has boiled over those limits, and we now call these things only relatively true, or true within those borders of experience." As he also says there, "We must live today by what truth we can get today, and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood." Thus, an appeal to the history of science and human knowledge serves a dual purpose in my argumentation: (i) it serves as a strong counterexample to the objectivist view of truth, and it forces them to either explain how they can know for sure that what they current believe to be "objectively true" is as much, and is not just another step that will be looked back on by their successors as false, and (ii) it serves to demonstrate that there is no concrete basis on which to propose that truth is "really" absolute, objective, permanent, and transcendent – rather, the only truth that humans have ever known (shy of adopting religious premises) has been pragmatic, and it appears to be the only truth that is possible.

sometimes conflicting analytic assumptions, what results is not a unitary truth, but rather TRUTH, TRUTH*, TRUTH**, and so on. The choice of any particular function and truth it produces is entirely subjective, and besides (reasons Stich), who really cares if their beliefs are based on TRUTH** or TRUTH****, so long as they achieve their goals and purposes? Thus, he concludes that there is a dilemma between truth and the practical success of attaining one's values, and that since what people really care about is the latter, truth has no value, even instrumental value. But again, this dilemma arises from specifically objectivist assumptions about truth, as noted above. A pragmatic theory of truth acknowledges that it is possible, and entirely probable, that there will descriptively be various truths (in varying grades of similarity) between perspectives and that each person will have their own standards of verification in terms of type and degree. It will further recognize that most aspects of the truth-process are based in subjective considerations, though they will be mitigated by our common embodiment.

Yet, for the pragmatist, none of this is problematic; it is neither an affront to truth, nor does it result in a dilemma between valuing truth or valuing practical success. Pragmatism espouses a thoroughly fallibilistic and embodied conception of truth, as a conceptual category, the content of which is continually subject to update and improvement. When the truths reckoned by different people conflict, the disagreement may not be problematic at all, since not everyone is forced to interact with every other human being. But in cases where two people need to work together in a common interest, then each will take the outcomes of their respective processes of postulation and experimentation and engage in a kind of co-experimentation, adjusting and developing their perspectives such that they make similar sense of their common experiences until

they reach mutual understanding – and a stable, intersubjective framework and understanding is what we usually call "objectivity." Thus, as noted above, objectivity is the achievement of sustained intersubjective interaction and cooperation, and not merely an unquestionable datum. If Stich had not been deterred by the subjective dimensions of the truth process, the dilemma would never have arisen for him. Once again, the adoption of a pragmatic theory of truth precludes any such dilemma.

5.3 The Indispensability of Truth

(iii) S: *Truth and true beliefs have no value whatsoever.*

I disagree with this claim. This claim is the most explicit of the four, as made by Stich; he maintains not that truth may have some modicum of value but that it is less than the value of just pursuing our goals, but that truth has no value whatsoever, either intrinsic or instrumental.[685] Instead, Stich proposes a consequentialist approach, one that attempts to disregard truth altogether in favor of goal-achievement alone.

As noted in the introduction, truth is a necessary category. Without it (or something like it, e.g. Dewey's "warranted assertability"), coherently conceptualizing errors, lies, fictions, analytical rigor, and the seriousness of inquiry becomes impossible, as there is no distinction that can be meaningfully made between what qualifies as them and what does not. Truth is also conceptually prior to them in that we are only able to point out and identify errors, lies, and the rest (i.e. how things are not) relative to some account of how things are. Claiming that truth has no value, and that one intends to

[685] Stich, *Fragmentation of Reason*, 101.

ignore it altogether in pursuit of their goals, leaves open the important question of how one intends to relate to facts. The process of "making" or "discovering" truths (depending on the terms of one's metaphysic) – as laid out by Schiller – involves a continual cognitive process, which has both conscious and subconscious[686] elements, of taking note of data, then constructing or deriving facts from them, and then arriving at truths from the relevant facts. Of course, the path from facts to truths involves constructing hypotheses and testing them through experimentation, but presently what is relevant is that – as a routine matter of normal cognition – humans take note of and derive facts. Our data set may be defective, our facts may be constructed poorly against background beliefs inimical to many of our goals, and the truths (admittedly in a fallibilistic, pragmatic sense) we arrive at may not serve us as long or as reliably we would hope, but as we navigate our environment, the *data* → *facts* → *truths* process continues so long as we are alive.

The *data* → *facts* → *truths* process goes on in one of four ways: (i) while caring about truth (i.e. as opposed to error), (ii) while in denial (i.e. a state of "ignorance is bliss"), which ironically admits that there is more to know than one is currently aware of, (iii) while caring about truth, but only in as much as it serves one's own immediate goals – i.e. the interest or person of others be damned, or (iv) under some kind of mental duress (such as schizophrenia) where this process is not occurring in any principled way, such that even if they care about truth and want the facts, their pathology prevents them from

[686] As noted in the introduction, I do not use the terms "unconscious" or "subconscious" in the common, Freudian sense, but merely to indicate "processes of cognition and perception which are not amenable to direct conscious awareness." In other words, I reject the almost personal dualism of "conscious" versus "subconscious," and intend simply to affirm that what occurs in perception and cognition is not exhausted by what we are or can be aware of as part of our usual direct experience.

obtaining or deriving them, to no fault of their own. In (i), (ii), and (iii), the knower admits of a category of "truth," and likewise is aware of the business of constructing or deriving facts from data, and it doesn't seem that either the category (even if only for basic purposes of reasoning) or the concern for facts is avoidable – a purely consequentialist view of cognition that supposedly does not include a category of truth (and by extension, facts) doesn't even seem plausible.

To make sense of all the items which are not truth but are either contrasted with it or constitute its negation, it is not necessary to have an objectivist, absolutist, transcendental view of truth – an embodied, fallibilist, constructivist, relativist, subjective notion of truth, one that is continually subject to revision and improvement, will do. In fact, as Schiller states regarding the skeptic who assumes an objectivist view of truth, accepting the Western myth of a perfect non-human truth beyond, while also maintains that it is impossible for humans to ever ascertain it:

> "The skeptic *has* to admit, and does admit, our human truth… He acts on, and lives by, the more probable opinion, like everyone else. He cannot therefore dispense with the humanist [i.e. pragmatist] notion of truth, though alongside of it he is pleased to retain the empty ideal of an absolute truth which no actual truth can realize."[687]

[687] *Riddles of the Sphinx* (revised edition), 134.

In other words, dogmatize as the objectivist about truth may, we all operate on a similar general framework due to the similar embodiment of our cognitive systems. And it is that actual notion of truth, the pragmatic one readily and routinely within human grasp, that we rely on in our every activity, from driving a car to operating and interpreting the data produced by a particle accelerator. Thus, some category of truth (or its equivalent by another name) is not only necessary to make sense of how we cognize the world and pursue our goals and purposes, but it seems that such a category is inevitable, and that claiming not to care about it is either an ineffectual attempt at denying relevant facts or the expression of an intent to ignore them. In either case, facts are noted, and truths derived.

In short: truth *is* valuable, and by all accounts appears to be conceptually necessary. For Stich to conclude that truth has no value whatsoever and that a consequentialism which involves no regard for truth (or something like it) is possible is hasty and incorrect. Also, conceiving of truth as objective or absolute is entirely unnecessary for truth to serve its conceptual function. The persistent myth about the transcendent nature of truth adds nothing, either theoretically or practically, to how humans actually reason to a greater or lesser degree. The truth we value and make regular use of is a pragmatic one.

5.4 Adopting a Pragmatic Approach to Truth

(iv) S: *We (cognitive scientists) should adopt a pragmatic standard of belief.*

If understood in a particular way, **I can agree with this claim** – and in a sense I affirm the spirit of Stich's conclusion while opposing its letter, so to speak. This claim, as made

by Stich, means essentially that *cognitive scientists should adopt a pseudo-pragmatic standard of evaluating beliefs*, that is, beliefs should *not* be judged based on a consideration of truth, but only with regard to whether or not they serve the agent in achieving their goals and purposes. And of course, I reject this entirely for all the reasons already mentioned in the previous sections. But if this claim is taken as *cognitive scientists should adopt a pragmatic standard of true belief*,[688] then it all but embodies the force of this entire dissertation, and results in large part from similar lines of reasoning.

Similar to Stich, it is also my contention that analytic theories of truth are inadequate. I go even further and maintain that they also cannot provide any guidance as to how we might tell truth from error or distinguish between truths and mere truth-claims. Without this distinction, interpretation functions either trivially tell us what we already know (and possibly give us false assurance regarding false beliefs that we do not know are false), or they are useless and a non-starter in the pursuit of actual truths. Additionally, if someone takes an analytic approach to truth and adopts an objectivist outlook as well, then when nearly every component of analytic interpretation functions terminates in subjective considerations, they will take this as indicating that either (a) truth is beyond us, or (b) that truth is simply worthless, as Stich does in *Fragmentation*. As such, truth being without any value whatsoever, Stich proposes that we adopt a "pragmatic approach" to the evaluation of cognitive processes, namely those involved in belief-formation. But I reject conclusions (a) and (b) entirely – my reason for proposing

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[688] As noted in chapter 3, I am using "truth" and "true belief" as functionally synonymous since the pragmatic theory of truth does not countenance the reification of truth itself, as if it were a thing or a property. Rather, when Pragmatism discusses "truth," it is only conveniently abstract away from the concrete instances of true belief in each individual knower. Thus, the difference between "truth" and "true belief" is one of emphasis and specificity.

that we adopt a pragmatic theory of truth is simply that it is the most accurate, and the most cogent, account of actual human reasoning. The objectivist myth of a never-changing truth that supposedly exists somewhere between a world-independent mind and a mind-independent world is of no practical help whatsoever – it only serves to get in the way of progress, leading as it has throughout history to epistemic recalcitrance and ideological entrenchment.

Where I differ with Stich on this point is not only with his notions surrounding the nature of truth, but with what he considers to be "pragmatism." I will say this as nearly every pragmatist in history, including (and perhaps especially) James and Schiller, has repeatedly done so since the pragmatist theory of truth was first enunciated in the late twentieth century: Pragmatism is concerned with truth, and any attempt to characterize it as dispensing with truth or not caring about relevant facts *is entirely inaccurate*. Period – bold it, underline it, and announce it with a megaphone. Pragmatism, with its notion of a truth as a valuation of cognitive processes involved in active, experimental reasoning that is entirely fallibilistic and relativistic is entirely capable on its own grounds to distinguish between truths and lies, errors, fictions, and all the rest. Not only is it capable conceptually of doing so, it does so – it is a theory of truth after all. The central and repeated criticism of authentic pragmatists is that their theory is the opposite of the foregoing statements and that it is not only incapable of distinguishing between truth and error, but also has no interest in doing so. But this is a criticism of Stich's brand of "pragmatism" (what I have dubbed "pseudo-pragmatism"), which is a conceptually deficient notion of pragmatism which amounts to crass expediency, and not a criticism of the theory espoused by Schiller and other classical pragmatists. In short: if we are

supposing either a notion of truth that involves deceit, denial, or flagrant disregard for facts – or which dispenses with the notion of truth altogether – what we are discussing is not Pragmatism, either in practice or by definition.

What I wholeheartedly propose is that second-generation cognitive science adopt an authentically pragmatic theory of truth, either identical or similar to that put forward by Schiller, since it offers the best alternative to standard analytic approaches, none of which has much useful application or purchase within embodied cognitive science anyhow, judging by the conspicuous absence of any comprehensive discussion of truth in the emerging "4E" enactivist literature. Pragmatic truth accords well with how humans actually reason and is thus the best suited for evaluations of cognitive processes.

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Appendix

The Extension of "Truth"

In chapter 5 of *Studies in Humanism* (entitled "The Ambiguity of Truth"), Schiller suggests that "to clear up our ideas [about truth], let us first observe the extension of the term,"[689] and this is what I would like to accomplish here. Part of the difficulty in understanding the pragmatic conception of truth is that "truth" is used by both Schiller and James to describe various aspects of the truth process, as it occurs within the organism–environment system. Additionally, it has been the general approach of traditional analytic philosophy of language and metaphysics to try and isolate the meaning of "truth" in a single reductive definition, which Pragmatism tends to resist as a matter of philosophical method. Between the pragmatic and analytic approaches, as they meet in actual discussion, the pragmatic conception of truth might be viewed as vague or inconsistent, which it certainly is not once properly understood. As such, I would like to offer a list of the ways in which Schiller and James describe "truth" (as a *relation*, *property*, *category*, *process*, *valuation*, *verified postulate*, and *true judgment*) along with an explanation of how each of these descriptions can be viewed within the scope of a single (radical-empirical) notion of truth existing "in heads."

What "Truth" Is

(i) "truth" is a *relation* — James describes truth as a relation "which may obtain between an idea (opinion, belief, statement, or what not[690]) and its object"[691]; a relation which "falls inside the continuities of concrete experience,"[692] but "not [a relation] of our ideas to non-human realities, but of the conceptual parts of our experience to sensational parts"[693] or "of less fixed parts of experience (predicates) to other relatively more fixed parts (subjects)."[694] This characterization is from the psychological, or "subjective side of the truth-relation."[695] Looking at both of its sides, truth "is essentially a relation between two things, an idea, on the one hand, and a reality outside of the idea, on the other."[696]

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[689] *Studies in Humanism*, 143.
[690] In chapter 1 of *The Meaning of Truth*, James offers three more functional synonyms for "idea": feeling, state of consciousness, and thought.
[691] *The Meaning of Truth*, Preface.
[692] Ibid, chapter 1.
[693] Ibid, chapter 3.
[694] Ibid.
[695] Ibid, chapter 12.
[696] Ibid, chapter 7.

(ii) "truth" is a *property* — James also describes truth as "a property of certain of our ideas"[697]; Schiller refers to it as an "attribute."[698] However, so far as metaphysical properties go, truth, James clarifies that truth, "is not a stagnant property inherent in [an idea]"[699] but is more like an emergent property that ideas have when they in proper relation to reality.

(iii) "truth" is a *category* — James calls truth a "category"[700] and a "class-name."[701] Normally, pragmatism is careful to speak of "truths in the plural,"[702] and conceive of *the* Truth (a collective noun with a capital 'T') as "simply a collective name for verification-processes"[703] or, as Schiller writes, "the totality of things [i.e. ideas, thoughts, propositions, judgments] to which this mode of treatment [i.e. verification] is applied."[704] The category of truth, the class under which true ideas are placed, is mutable,[705] that is, it is improvable and updatable upon further verification and experience.[706]

(iv) "truth" is a *process* — James refers to truth as a "process" under various names: "truth-process,"[707] "verification process,"[708] "the process of validation,"[709] and "process of leading [i.e. between different parts of experience]."[710] The truth-process is where the ideas of a knower are verified and validated such that "truth is *made*… in the course of experience."[711] Schiller likewise refers to the truth-process as a "process of verification"[712] or "validation,"[713] an "*experimental* and *progressive* process"[714] of extracting truths from experience "like the refining of a metal extracted from its ores."[715] And this process has no end, since verification continues so long as active experience continues.[716] Verification and

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[697] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI; *The Meaning of Truth*, preface.
[698] *Studies in Humanism*, 144.
[699] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI; *The Meaning of Truth*, preface.
[700] *Pragmatism*, Lecture II.
[701] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI; *The Meaning of Truth*, preface.
[702] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.
[703] Ibid.
[704] *Studies in Humanism*, 144.
[705] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.
[706] *Formal Logic*, 224 and 328; *Logic For Use*, 7, 106, 128, 210, 279, 418, 442; *et alia*.
[707] *The Meaning of Truth*, preface, chapter 12.
[708] Ibid, chapter 7.
[709] Ibid, chapter 8.
[710] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.
[711] Ibid.
[712] Cf. *Logic For Use*, 421: "verification-process."
[713] *Logic For Use*, 168.
[714] Ibid, 321
[715] Ibid, 146.
[716] Ibid, 321.

truth are inextricable since, as Schiller writes, "verification, then, is the name of the indispensable process to which truths owe their value, and without which no truth arises."[717]

(v) "truth" is a *valuation* — Schiller describes truth ("true") as a "valuation,"[718] maintaining that "truth is a form of value"[719] and indeed that "all truths are values."[720] Viewing "true" and "false" as evaluative labels which knowers attach to certain ideas, Schiller sees them as a species of value alongside other pairs, such as "beautiful" and "ugly," "pleasant" and "unpleasant," and "good" and "bad."[721]

(vi) "truth" is a *verified postulate/hypothesis* — The activity of postulation (formulating hypotheses) is central to human reasoning for both James and Schiller. James's well-known "will to believe" idea is reforged by Schiller as "the right to postulate,"[722] that is, the right to "make demands" by posting (and then practically testing) hypotheses that best serve our desires, wants, and needs.[723] "A postulate," writes Schiller, "is simply an indication of our *need*, we want it so *must* have it as a means to our end."[724] In other words, when attempting to solve a problem or accomplish a goal, why would any knower hypothesize *not* in relation to the desired solution or goal, but in relation to something else? And since "experience is experiment,"[725] all of our beliefs (all of our truths) are postulates; anything considered an "axiom" is, according to Schiller, not something different than a postulate, but rather indicates a hypothesis that is so efficacious in action that is "promoted"[726] to axiomatic status, having been duly "sifted"[727] by verification processes.[728] And as there as degrees to which a postulate may be verified, there are likewise degrees to which certain hypotheses may be considered "axiomatic."[729] For James as well as Schiller, a verified postulate or hypothesis is a truth.[730]

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[717] Ibid, 352.
[718] *Logic For Use*, 147; *Studies in Humanism*, 152. It should be noted that, along with "true," "false" is likewise a value, albeit a negative one (see *Logic For Use*, 97, 147-148, 153, 188, 191, and cf. 39-40).
[719] *Studies in Humanism*, 154.
[720] *Logic For Use*, 32.
[721] *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, 54-55; *Studies in Humanism*, 143; *Logic For Use*, 102-103, 147.
[722] *Logic For Use*, 338-340.
[723] Ibid.
[724] *Axioms as Postulates*, 70.
[725] *Studies in Humanism*, 191.
[726] *Axioms as Postulates*, 64.
[727] Ibid.
[728] See *Formal Logic*, 293: "…postulation is a well-defined and typically human way of obtaining general propositions which, when they have been sufficiently verified in use, may attain the highest degrees of certainty and be looked upon as *axioms*."
[729] Ibid, 124: "A postulate does not become axiomatic until it has been found to be workable and in proportion as it is so."
[730] *The Meaning of Truth*, chapter 8; Cf. *Axioms as Postulates*, 107-108; *Studies in Humanism*, 8, 193, 362; *Humanism, Philosophical Essays*, xv; *Formal Logic*, 347.

(vii) "truth" is a *true judgment/proposition* — Schiller writes that "by *a truth* we mean a proposition to which this attribute 'true' has somehow [i.e. as a result of some process of verification] been attached."[731] In his philosophy of language and logic, Schiller makes a sharp distinction between *propositions* and *judgments*, the former being only possible or potential and the latter being actual. As he writes, "A proposition is never more than *potentially* true; it becomes (actually) true if it is used in ·a suitable context, but then it turns into a judgment."[732] For Schiller, propositions are properly abstract and hypothetical, and so their truth values (and even their meanings[733]) can never be actual. Rather, it is only and always judgments, ideas or conceptions deployed in an actual context of use, which are both entirely meaningful and true or false.[734] To be sure, Schiller (and James) both at times refer to judgments generally as "propositions" as a manner of speaking, and this should not lead to confusion, so long as the potential/actual distinction is maintained: propositions which remain abstract and detached from actual circumstances remain "propositions," while propositions which are used by actual knowers in context become "judgments" and are no longer strictly propositions.

Putting It All Together

Placing (i) – (vii) into the context and scope of the organism–environment system, specifically that of a human knower acting and interacting with the elements of the existential context(s) in which they exist, makes understanding each of the above senses of "truth" much easier:

When a human knower has an idea (thought, conception, etc.) which they have not yet put to practical test, that idea is a postulate, a hypothesis, to be tested in experience. Should it lead to success in practical application, as a judgment of the knower as they navigate their environs, it will thereby be verified (or, validated) as *true*, and should it fail, it will either be tested again in other circumstances or considered *false*. Thus, the knower will value successful ideas as "true," and will thereby place them into the category of "truth" and consider them to have the emergent property of being true when used in certain contexts. That is, ideas in the category of "truth" are those which are in successful relation with relevant parts of reality. This entire process, the process of testing, verification, or validation, is the process by which truths emerge for human knowers, so it is rightly called a "truth-process."

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[731] *Studies in Humanism*, 144.
[732] *Logic For Use*, 118.
[733] Ibid, 210-211.
[734] Ibid, 177.

Each of the characterizations of "truth" used by James and Schiller are meant to emphasize that truth is not a stagnant, fixed, static, pre-existent object that somehow exists apart from human knowers and their individual and collective processes of experience and inquiry through action, but is rather something that is a result of cognitive processes, existing only between knowers and the world. As James says, "our account of truth is an account of truths in the plural, of processes of leading, realized *in rebus*"[735] — not *ante rem*. The radical empiricism underlying the pragmatic approach means that, strictly speaking, truths can and do only exist in the actual heads of knowers, emerging as they do by complex processes or trial-and-error. Experience undifferentiated in what knowers are attempting to disambiguate, organize, and get into consistent productive relationship with, and truth (whether discussed as a category, a relation, a process, and so on) is the primary vehicle for achieving this disambiguation. As Schiller says, "For the truth will then mean these devices by which we operate on reality and control the flux [of experience]."[736]

[735] *Pragmatism*, Lecture VI.
[736] *Formal Logic*, 133.