

INTRODUCTION: AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY, PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY

1. Autobiographical reflections: philosophy between Trenton and Princeton

In my last two years in graduate school at Temple University (1974-1976), I was awarded a University Teaching Fellowship on the basis of my performance on the examinations; and at that time and for a couple of years thereafter, I taught philosophy at Temple University and at local colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area, including Drexel University's Evening College, a local campus of Penn State and at Rider College in Lawrenceville, New Jersey—on the road between Trenton and Princeton. The work at Drexel and Penn State came to an end after I was called to teach a graduate seminar on work of W.V. Quine at Florida State University in the Spring of 1978, but connection with Rider long persisted.

It was at Rider College (later Rider University) in 1978 that I first meet Guy Weston Stroh (1931-2013). Guy became a colleague and friend for many years, though toward the end of his life, the friendship and collegiality which I had long experienced deteriorated—under institutional pressure I take it. Guy was a native of a small Pennsylvania town, near Allentown, where he would often visit family, and he took his Ph.D. at Princeton University with a dissertation on the philosophy of George Santayana (1863-1952).¹ He first accepted a position at Rider College in 1956 (the college was then in Trenton) and was asked to organize the philosophy department. I first taught evening courses at Rider College in Lawrenceville, NJ from 1978 to 1980.

1. Guy W. Stroh 1958, *An Analysis of Santayana's Ontology in the Light of his Distinction between Essence and Existence*. Princeton dissertation. See also Stroh 1968, *American Philosophy from Edwards to Dewey* and Stroh 1979, *American Ethical Thought*.

Guy Stroh had long been Chair of the philosophy department—an administrative appointment—when I first met him; and as part of this work, he had developed a considerable departmental focus on the history of American philosophy. Guy taught the classic figures of American thought regularly for undergraduate students over a period of more than 40 years. Over that period, he retained a considerable focus on the long philosophical debate between Santayana and John Dewey (1859-1952).² I had been aware of pragmatism and work of C.S. Peirce (1839-1914) in particular, chiefly due to the presence of Philip P. Wiener (1916-1992) and Douglas Greenlee (1935-1979) at Temple University during my graduate years.³ But my work focused on topics in analytical philosophy: the theory of reference and interpretation plus topics in the philosophy of mind.

I became more interested in the history of American thought after Stroh asked me to teach some related courses. Guy Stroh much enjoyed debating philosophy; and this we often did, over many years, at the department, on frequent outings for lunch and on many a Saturday morning trip to the Princeton University bookstore. I first became interested in the work of John Dewey in relationship to Santayana and Guy's related criticisms of Dewey. For Stroh, Santayana provided a conservative, philosophical counter-position to Deweyan liberalism. As I came to understand the theme, the contrast of Dewey and Santayana arose as a popular, quasi-political, philosophical motif in the late 1940's due in part to the influence of Dewey's most famous student, Sidney Hook (1902-1989), and Hook's personal relationship to Santayana. As a general matter, liberals and reformers eventually need to bring the more conservative thinkers along.

2. For an introduction to the Dewey-Santayana debates, see my review article, "The Electronic Dewey," reprinted in Callaway 2008, *Meaning without Analyticity*, pp. 177-182. See also, "Emerson and Santayana on Imagination," pp. 33-45, below.

3. See, e.g. Philip P. Wiener 1949, *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism* and Douglas Greenlee 1973, *Peirce's Concept of Signs*. Though I wrote an M.A. thesis under Greenlee, on internal relations (1974) and took a graduate seminar with Wiener on Peirce, neither convinced me of the importance of Peirce for my own work.

I had been turned down early-on for a full-time position at Rider College; and I did not see eye-to-eye with the Dean of Liberal Arts, Dominic Iorio, though Dean Iorio, a graduate of Fordham University, had originally been hired by Stroh as a member of the philosophy department. Iorio seemed to fit Guy's conception of needed American conservatism. He remained Dean until his retirement in 1997. I recall that Iorio, who had published on Nicolas Malebranche and had done research at the Vatican library in Rome,⁴ did not take to the emphasis on Franz Brentano (1838-1917), in contrast to the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, in my approach to the topic of *intentionality* (roughly, "about-ness;" What does it mean that a mental state or process, a thought, say, be *about* something?) in my Ph.D. dissertation. My interest in Brentano on intentionality was due to his Aristotelian affinity and the work of the influential Brown University philosopher, Roderick Chisholm (1916-1999).⁵ Chisholm was an important advocate in the revival of attention to Brentano and his writings. The contrast of Brentano vs. Husserl on intentionality seemed to be the decisive point in my job interview with Iorio on campus. (It was not that he ever read my dissertation.)

The faculty position went to a young woman of Philadelphia Quaker background who had taken her Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr College writing on R.G. Collingwood.⁶ My subsequent impression was that the administration at Rider College was more interested in establishing a connection to Bryn Mawr College than in various philosophical issues, though it would *not* have helped with Dean Iorio that my dissertation also took up W.V. Quine (1908-2000) and his behavioristic criticisms of Brentano's thesis of intentionality. My question in the dissertation (supervised by Monroe Beardsley, 1915-1985) was whether and how

4. See e.g., Dominick Iorio 1980, *Nicolas Malebranche, A Dialogue between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence of God*.

5. See e.g., Roderick Chisholm and Wilfred Sellers 1958, "Intentionality and the Mental." Chisholm also wrote extensively on Brentano.

6. See Carol Jean Wallace Nicholson, 1977, *Metaphor and Anthropomorphism in Collingwood's Theory of Absolute Presuppositions*. Bryn Mawr College dissertation. Cf. Bryn Mawr philosopher Michael Krausz ed. 1972, *Critical Essays on the Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood*; Krausz 1982, *Relativism, Cognitive and Moral*.

the notion of intentionality could be modernized, in view of Quine's philosophy of science. My theme eventually developed in the direction of a critique of Quine's behaviorism in semantics.

Next came a visiting position at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, as Assistant Professor for a year (1980-1981). This allowed me to teach (along with a great deal of symbolic logic) a course on the philosophy of mind. Some of this focused on Noam Chomsky's hypothesis of an innate language acquisition mechanism. I also led an interdisciplinary faculty discussion group that year devoted to Jerry Fodor's book, *The Language of Thought* (1975). From the perspective of my dissertation, work on the philosophy of language was in the interest of the philosophy of mind. From the perspective of ordinary language and common sense, this is a Wittgensteinian connection—the rejection of private language. In the Summer of 1981, I attended the Summer Institute on Psychology and the Philosophy of Mind, at the University of Washington in Seattle. Shortly thereafter, I went to Africa to teach as a Senior Lecturer at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria (1981-1983). When I had first return from Ohio to the East coast in 1981, I found that my regular part-time teaching opportunities had evaporated entirely. (My standing position at Drexel University had been occupied by a graduate student of one of Beardsley's competitors in the Temple department.) Partly in consequence of that development, when I decided to resign my appointment at Ibadan in December of 1983 (just before the military coupe that overthrew the civilian President Shehu Shagari), I went to work in Europe.

I published a first book in 1993, an historical and critical account of twentieth-century analytical philosophy of language focused on language and meaning. This work is closely related to themes in analytic philosophy from my dissertation.⁷ Subsequently, the long and varied discussions and teaching at Rider College developed in the direction of a joint project. I taught again at Rider as a Visiting Professor of Philosophy 1987-1988, before returning to Europe as a Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the University of Erlangen 1988-1989.

7. See H.G. Callaway 1993, *Context for Meaning and Analysis, A Critical Study in the Philosophy of Language*.

After several years of work in the late 1990s, partly via trans-Atlantic correspondence, Guy Stroh and I published a book of historical readings titled, *American Ethics: A Source Book from Edwards to Dewey* (2000). At the time, I was very much interested in Deweyan themes in contrast to Stroh's focus on Santayana and his more contemplative attitude. Working on our book of readings was a good opportunity to survey the history of American ethical and political thought.

Our book, *American Ethics*, divides into six historical periods, starting from the colonial, religious background and culminating with Dewey and the mid-twentieth century. I successfully insisted on various additions to Guy's early plan for the book. For example, we brought in John Witherspoon "Christian Magnanimity;" as a transition to the Enlightenment figures at the end of the first chapter, William Ellery Channing, "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism," as a transition to the American Romantics at the end of the second chapter, added emphasis on Emerson, in the third chapter, plus Frederick Douglass and Walt Whitman. In Chapter Four, I insisted on a selection from William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, and brought in selections from Alain Locke and Felix Adler in Chapter Five. I would say, in retrospect that Stroh was interested not only in bringing Santayana into contact with Dewey, but also in an *approchement* between American thought and rule utilitarianism; I was more interested in historical continuities and discontinuities in the history of American thought.

At about that time, I also became involved with various scholars of American philosophy, chiefly via internet discussion of Dewey, Peirce and William James. Many of the papers below in this volume were published at that time. The related work also brought me to eventually publish scholarly editions of philosophical texts of some of the chief figures of the various historical periods of our reader, including R.W. Emerson (1803-1882) and William James (1842-1910).⁸ Since I was

8. See my critical, study editions of Emerson and James: Callaway 2006, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Conduct of Life, A Philosophical Reading*; Callaway 2008, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Society and Solitude*; and Callaway 2008, *William James, A Pluralistic Universe, A New Philosophical Reading*. In a similar way, Callaway 2011, *A.J. Dallas, An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the War*, addresses the political philosophy and foreign relations of the early republic.

intensely involved in the theory of meaning and interpretation, I came to think of my work in the history of American thought as practical and quasi-experimental applications of the theory of interpretation. I could see how the various historical figures, over hundreds of years, were reacting to each other, disputing and complementing ideas and themes in common. Since I was often in Europe, I also came to see frequent misunderstandings and even hostility to traditional American thought. At a fundamental level, I would say, there is some European hostility to the general contours of American civilization, anchored in Europe's ethnic nationalisms, though there is also grudging admiration for the American facility in the integration of immigrants. I do not see that these two strands of European thought often confront each other.

I became more deeply aware of the usefulness of counter-posing Dewey and Santayana. My paper, "Liberalism and the Moral significance of Individualism"⁹ dates from this period of intensive study and discussions of Dewey. As it turned out, I was considerably more sympathetic to liberal individualism than was Dewey.¹⁰ In a period of the growing influence of political correctness, this single theme was perhaps sufficient to inhibit the development of lasting professional relationships to many scholars of pragmatism and American philosophy around the country. In spite of that, I did make several lecture tours around American and European universities, often traveling to the U.S. from Europe.

In abstract terms, Dewey is well known to be sympathetic to democratic socialism. But he never settled on institutional forms for his ideal of the "*planning* society." He did hold that development of individuality is consistent with, indeed required by, his political ideals. He favored decentralization of authority, democracy in the workplace, equality in the distribution of wealth, strong civil liberties and representative institutions,¹¹ and he was always skeptical of state socialism.

9. See below, pp. 185ff.

10. Cf. Matthew Festenstein 2014, "Dewey's Political Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "...the Idealist and New Liberal assault on individualism is one important element in the intellectual background of Dewey's political philosophy ..."

11. Cf. Robert B. Westbrook 1991, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, p. 457.

Lacking concrete institutional plans for his “new individualism,” one would expect greater tolerance for alternatives—a tolerance I found prevalently wanting among academic scholars of American pragmatism.

On the other hand, as I think becomes obvious below, I was skeptical of the prevalent role played by deference to academic, institutional insiders among contemporary scholars of the history of the pragmatist tradition. I was also adverse to their “transactional” style of professional interaction—much akin to trading of favors among insiders. The point reflects back on my subsequent experience of the politics of the Philadelphia area which I now understand as very largely a matter of the domination of political and institutional insiders over career opportunities. This definitely tends toward authoritarian structures from which position, the insiders can *almost* do no wrong. Whatever my success abroad or around the country, it amounted to nothing back home. Insiders are persuaded only by their insider peers. Easy-going tolerance of relativism, I discovered, has long been massively prevalent among institutional gate-keepers.

2. The one and the many

Social-cultural pluralism and liberal individuality are closely related social phenomena—particularly so in American society. The recent, more politically inspired movement of multiculturalism¹² illustrates the point by contrast. Multiculturalism is basically an anti-liberal doctrine which suppresses individuality in the direction of identity politics; and this suppression of individuality amounts to a very significant move away from the liberal, more personal or one-on-one, *integrative* tradition of American society. What is fundamental in the contrast is the ethnic, racial and religious pluralism of American society—and of any society so largely formed by immigration and integration. What forms of unity we may have must be fashioned out of the pre-existing pluralism. We as a nation, have properly resisted *forced* segregation and placed policy premiums on the side of social integration.

12. See “Pragmatic Pluralism and American Democracy,” pp. 47-74, below.

If American ethnic and racial diversity is to be integrated socially (and I use the term “diversity” in an all-*inclusive* sense, to include the entire population and all subgroups), then whatever the background or original affiliation of anyone, they must learn to reach across the boundaries of their own background and upbringing and attain to an understanding and appreciation of people with other backgrounds. At the least, there must be a growth of appreciation of the needed (and comparatively thin) commonalities of American life and society. Multiculturalism and identity politics resist this process—tending strongly to reconfigure ethnicities into interest groups practicing varieties of exclusionary identity politics. What is frequently sought is *political coalitions* of otherwise inward-oriented identity groups.

A point that needs to be emphasized, concerning the social process of integration, is that people are changed in the process; they are not only integrated into the larger society, they are also, at the same time, differentiated from their own background reference groups. The process of social integration in a multi-ethnic society is also a process of individuation. In consequence, to reject the typically high levels of individuality in American society is to force people back into the reference groups of origin (or perhaps into a new alternative identity group). Rejecting high levels of individuality is divisive or *dis-integrative*.

It is fundamental in understanding the role of the typically high levels of individuality in the U.S. (and in tendency in any pluralistic society) to emphasize and observe the distinction between pluralism and multiculturalism. Social and cultural pluralism (which contrast with the “interest-group pluralism” of the political scientists) is an indigenous American concept, including a long twentieth-century development.¹³ It is better suited to historical American developments and general conditions of American society, while multiculturalism is chiefly a European (and often neo-liberal) import.¹⁴ In spite of that, the

13. See my Introduction, “The Meaning of Pluralism,” in Callaway 2008, *William James, A Pluralistic Universe*, pp. xi-l.

14. The original European, multiculturalist, political paradigm is plausibly a leftward oriented U.K. with its four, ethnically defined sub-polities: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Assimilating or passing over American

two terms are often conflated. Conflating multiculturalism with factual diversity or with the philosophical tradition of cultural pluralism—which originated in a critique of the demand for one-sided assimilation—threatens moral re-colonization of American society with European-style ethnic nationalism.¹⁵ We can fairly reject demands for over-all uniformity and one-sided assimilation without falling into the opposite error of general, ethnic-racial balkanization.¹⁶ The comparative rigidities of identity politics set self-interest against traditional integrative practices, weakens the middle-class basis of moderate liberal politics and tends to block the formation of new groups, (crossing traditional boundaries) as needed for reform and the solution of newly recognized problems—such as our growing inequalities over several decades.

3. Pragmatism and Putnam’s open question

In a 1995 book, Harvard University philosopher Hilary Putnam (1926-2016) posed a question concerning pragmatism and the revival of the pragmatic tradition in philosophy: “whether an enlightened society can avoid a corrosive moral skepticism without tumbling back into moral authoritarianism.”¹⁷ It is worthwhile to return to Putnam’s question and consider what answers may be given at present, some 20 years later. The focus of Putnam’s question is an evaluation of the pragmatic tradition in American thought; will the revival of the pragmatic tradition avoid contributing to the twin social pitfalls of “corrosive moral skepticism” and “moral authoritarianism”? The present collection of papers shows an interest and engagement with the pragmatic tradition—partly a matter of interpretation of the history of American thought; but the essays also involve critical perspective. The doubts might be

discussions of cultural pluralism in favor of multiculturalism, the Oxford political scientist Alan Ryan did some disservice to the distinctiveness of American pluralism. See Ryan 1995, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, pp. 171-173; 193-194.

15. Cf. below, p. 128.

16. Cf. Arthur Schlesinger 1998, *The Disuniting of America, Reflections on a Multicultural Society*.

17. Hilary Putnam 1995, *Pragmatism, An Open Question*, p. 2.

justly expressed by the idea that the pragmatic tradition has, too often, fallen into what Susan Haack calls “vulgar pragmatism.”¹⁸ This phrase suggests want of principle, as is suggested by much of the ordinary usage of the word “pragmatism,” and the connotations are sometimes harsher yet: suggesting a ruthless and Machiavellian search for mercenary, professional or narrow political advantage; the sort of phenomenon which is sometimes characterized as “instrumentalization” of moral engagement and philosophical discourse.

Under the influence of the revival or the prevalent acquiescence of the reviving pragmatic tradition (as partly detailed in this volume), epistemic and moral relativism have sometimes made common cause with moral authoritarianism.¹⁹ There has been an intensive politicalization and polarization of the American academy and American society which threatens to outrun our available, ameliorative political competence. We have seen a growth of divisiveness and growing economic inequalities at home, linked with uncritical acceptance of globalization, multiculturalism and a prevalent rejection of historical American ideals. From the present perspective, ignorance and distortion of American ideals is central in contemporary American moral and political disorientation. A country shorn of the knowledge of its own history is like a person who has lost all memory and who can consequently muster no decided preferences or expectations about the future. The view below is that contemporary pragmatism has too often been shorn of its needed contextual relation to American history and values. Several of the papers in the present volume may recommend themselves to readers by addressing the related questions and problems.

4. The appeal of corporatism

The topic of corporatism is *not* a matter of business corporations alone, though attention to them is featured in some familiar versions and

18. See e.g. Susan Haack 1997, “Vulgar Rortyism,” where she says that “Rortyism is vulgar pragmatism.” Cf. my review of Haack 1998, “Old Pragmatists for New,” reprinted in Callaway 2008, *Meaning without Analyticity*, pp. 193-201.

19. See my analysis and criticism of contemporary doctrinaire relativism, below, especially, pp. 66-69; 207-210; 233-251.

variations on the concept. Corporatism includes various systems of political ideas and ideals which originated in the late nineteenth century, such as English guild socialism and French syndicalism²⁰ and which have had a variety of twentieth-century expressions and developments. The concept is of some interest here partly because of the appeal it exercised during America's progressive era—a formative period of pragmatist and American progressive political thought.²¹ The basic idea is “the control of a state or organization by large interest groups.”²² However, this simple definition requires some elaboration. In the first place, the usage of the term “corporatism” covers both (the often questionable and misguided) demand for an ideal organic form of polity *and* analytical-empirical description of the function of some contemporary interest-group democracies. Contemporary democracies are sometimes regarded as more corporatist or more pluralist, depending on their degree of consolidation. Higher levels of national or industry-wide consolidation and consensus politics often earn praise for corporatism or neo-corporatism. State corporatism (exemplified in the fascist state) is coercive and thoroughly top-down in character, while neo-corporatism is conceived to be more consensual and based on freely accepted agreements among representatives of government, labor and business. One may reasonably doubt, however, that the cooperative modes of neo-corporatism are viable in larger and more ethnically diverse countries.

Corporatism, though an approach to utopian political or constitutional design early on,²³ vaguely resembles what is called interest-group pluralism, neo-pluralism and elite theory, which are competing

20. See G.D.H. Cole 1922, “Guild Socialism,” in *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1922): “Guild Socialists for the most part have in mind ... the mediaeval principle of *industrial* self-government.” Cf. John Dewey 1888, “The Ethics of Democracy,” p. 246: “democracy is not in reality what it is in name until it is industrial, as well as civil and political.”

21. See Maureen A. Flanagan 2007, *America Reformed, Progressives and Progressivism 1890s-1920s*, pp. 272-276 and her references.

22. *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2008).

23. Cf. Cécile Laborde 2000, *Pluralist Thought and the State in Britain and France, 1900-1925*; Laborde 1996, “Pluralism, Syndicalism and Corporatism: Leon Duguit and the Crisis of the State (1900-1925).”

empirical accounts of social and political *power* arising in contemporary political science.²⁴ Corporatism also has a significant affinity to modes of contemporary continental European political thought and practice.²⁵ Corporatism is “the organization of a society into industrial and professional corporations [sometimes “guilds”] serving as organs of political representation and exercising some control over persons and activities within their jurisdiction.”²⁶ Interest group representation in centralized, or industry-wide collective bargaining among employers and organized labor is regarded as supplementing political representation by party government in contemporary European neo-corporatism.

Although a chief aim and ideal of varieties of corporatism has been to supply individuals with supportive, intermediate social and economic affiliations, seeking in this way to avoid atomization of individuals in the overly powerful, centralized state, the implications of conceiving corporative units as a matter of binding *jurisdictions*, is a crucial turn of thought. Larger-scale and systematic social-political organization focusing on particularities of common economic interests (or ethnicity for instance) tends toward excessive rigidity, approximating to the classical republican concept of destructive political factions, and may well *inhibit* needed flexibility of the electorate—including political reconstruction, reconfigurations and re-ordering of available social and political elements in support of reform.

Political scientist Philippe Schmitter famously proposed the following, still more elaborate and often quoted definition. Corporatism is, he wrote:

... a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered, and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respec-

24. See e.g., Robert A. Dahl 1957, “The Concept of Power;” “A has power over B,” says Dahl, “to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do;” see pp. 202-203.

25. The practice of regularly negotiating pacts or agreements between major social groups such as business and labor is sometimes called *neo-corporatism*. See, e.g., Gerhard Lehmbuch 1977, “Liberal Corporatism and Party Government.”

26. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition.

tive categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.²⁷

The obvious contrast to such a function-based system of interest representation is the geographic districts and units of conventional representative democracies such as congressional districts or the state-wise representation in the U.S. Senate. One naturally asks about the comparative advantages of the proposed alternative; and the defenders' answer is that representation via functional groups allows for higher levels of coordination within the groups and the suppression or exclusion of their otherwise (internal) destructive forms of competition. What is not often emphasized, however, is that this may also imply suppression of *fruitful* completion among social, institutional and political configurations.

The corporatist intermediaries between individual and state, such as labor unions and professional organizations, are supposed to offer better support and greater opportunity to individuals than do the family, local communities, self-organizing small business, religious organizations, or other groups of civil society; but the corporatist ideal also competes with broadly held contemporary conceptions of the independence of civil society. For example, consider the phenomenon of revolving-door employment between governmental agencies of economic regulation and the very firms or organizations they are charged with regulating. The suspicion frequently arises that insider access and information travels all too easily back and forth so that a properly adversarial relation is lost. The public good of regulation may be compromised by direct interest-group representation in the agencies of regulation. Again, according to political scientist Francis Fukuyama, "public sector unions have themselves become part of an elite that uses the political system to protect its own self-interests;" and "they are an integral part of the contemporary Democratic party's political base, making most Democratic politicians loath to challenge them;" the result, as Fukuyama has it, is "a marked decline in the quality of American public administration," since the 1970's, that is, "political

27. Philippe Schmitter 1974, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" pp. 93-94.

decay.”²⁸ At the same time, while insider representation of intensive special interests has grown, geographic representation is seriously compromised by the prevalent practice of gerrymandering to create single-party districts. This tends to suppress broader debate, mutual consultation and contests of interests and ideas within geographic communities and electoral districts. But something more basic than gerrymandering of congressional and legislative districts is clearly involved, since a similar division of “red states” and “blue states” has arisen, though no re-districting is involved. Reflection on this development points in the direction of the political mobilization and over-representation of intensive special interests in particular localities.

What we might focus on in Schmitter’s definition, is the idea that, in contrast with the conception of independent civil society, the guild-like or corporatist units are “granted a representational monopoly within their respective categories.” In accordance with this conception, for example, the American Bar Association, since provided with monopoly power to license or deny the practice of law to individuals, constitutes a state-sponsored corporatist institution. The same is true of labor unions in particular branches of industry, insofar as the workers in a given branch can be compelled to join closed (union) shops. We may ask, more generally, then, whether there is sufficient grounds for the idea that individuals and their interests will be *better* represented to the extent that the government delegates its powers of compulsion, generally, to similar organizations and thus becomes to that degree a corporatist state. Far beyond that idea lies the further prospect of eliminating or diminishing the power of customary districts and geographic units of representation.²⁹ Though doing away with competitive state and local elections has never had much appeal in American society, the growing influence of intensive special interests raises important questions about where policy decisions are actually being made and about undue influence of favored constituencies, institutions and moneyed interests. We have to ask how and why people tend to be

28. Francis Fukuyama 2014, *Political Order and Political Decay*, pp. 163-164.

See also, the crucial political turn in Fukuyama 2006, *After the Neocons*.

29. Compare the analysis in James Q. Whitman 1991, “Of Corporatism, Fascism and the First New Deal,” pp. 752-753.

sorting themselves out in accordance with political affiliations or interests.

Direct appeal to corporatist ideals is much diminished in contemporary western liberal-democracies, in comparison to its theoretical and practical appeal in the early twentieth century—in reaction against the excesses of the Gilded Age. The corporatist ideal, especially on larger scales, is open to deep, stinging criticism by reference to fundamental political rights including freedom of association and freedom of speech.³⁰ However, contemporary social and political problems, including the competitive pressures of globalization, and the prospect of a “race to the bottom” for wages and working conditions, are still capable of evoking the appeal of “organic” social unity and functional interdependence as an antidote.

John Dewey, in his early, idealist phase strongly advocated the organic conception of society: “men are not isolated non-social atoms,” he wrote, “but are men only when in intrinsic relations to men.”³¹ We may seriously doubt, however, that the organic ideal is a positive development for the general run of liberal-democratic societies. As generally understood, it seems an expression of political ideals more plausible in smaller or more homogeneous societies. Consider, in contrast, the American founders, men such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Adams aiming for republican forms on a large scale.

30. Cf. Dewey 1888, p. 245: “The democratic ideal includes liberty, because democracy without initiation from within, without an ideal chosen from within and freely followed from within, is nothing.”

31. Dewey 1888, p. 231; Cf. e.g., Richard Bernstein 2013, “Hegel and Pragmatism,” p. 107, on the appeal of Hegel to pragmatist thinkers and Dewey in particular. “Dewey,” say Bernstein, “naturalized Hegel.” But this is perhaps a more radicalizing interpretation; Cf. Sidney Hook 1976, “Introduction” to Dewey, *Middle Works*, Vol. 2, pp. xix-xx: Dewey’s “trenchant criticism of both capitalism and, later, socialism as operating systems was inspired by his conviction that they failed to provide sufficient opportunities for ordinary persons, . . . , to develop themselves. He had the same faith as the poet, Gray, that among the multitudes was many a “mute and inglorious Milton” whose inability to create and enjoy the works of the spirit was due more to lack of opportunity than to the absence of genetic potential. This Jeffersonian faith in experience and the common man pervades everything he wrote in educational and social philosophy.”

At times they cooperated and at other times they were political adversaries. The founded, surely, a non-corporatist state. But there is no significant sense in which they were not “in intrinsic relation to men.” The phrase seems to hide more than it reveals concerning the differing conceptions and various practices of human sociality.

Contemporary neo-corporatist practices of national or industry-wide extra-legislative interest *mediation* seem to work better in smaller and more homogeneous European countries, say,³² than they do in (E.U.) Europe-as-a-whole or in larger or less homogenous countries. This point alone suggests that corporatist organization of interest groups lacking plausible means for the mediation of highly focused interests represents a formula for destructive factionalism. Organic conceptions of political society tend to be excessively rigid and less dynamic. They leave little room for the development of new groups with new, critical or emergent purposes. In consequence, the ostensibly leftward-oriented ideal of organic social unity has, often enough, functioned to mask or encourage acquiescence in the plans and purposes of the factually more powerful existing institutions and group interests of contemporary societies. Transfer of consensus oriented politics, often involving habitual deference to greater power or authority, from smaller and more homogeneous societies to larger and less homogeneous societies, lacking similar high levels of trust and social-political means of mediation, may easily facilitate, not organic, social neo-corporatism but instead the power of established institutions and large-scale corporations—which will tend to displace intricate, often local and emergent patterns of competition and cooperation.

5. Interest-group pluralism

Interest-group pluralism or “polyarchy” is a vast topic in contemporary political science and political philosophy which exhibits some remark-

32. Typical “neo-corporatist” paradigms are countries such as Austria, Norway and Sweden; but even the larger European countries, and the English-speaking countries generally, tend to be more pluralist and adversarial in policy formulation—as contrasted with more neo-corporatist and strongly consensus oriented politics.

able tension between the empirical and normative features of our conception of democratic government. Theorists have aimed for an empirically adequate account of democratic politics well supported by evidence and empirical studies; and it is difficult to ignore the fact that the best supported accounts of the actual workings of various political systems fall short of the objectives set by our democratic ideals.³³

Interest groups are a natural product of the actual interests and conflicts of interests which exist in any human society. The interests which unite a group may be narrow and specific, say, one group may aim to beautify and maintain a local public park, and another aims to promote a branch of manufacturing; interest groups are sometimes very large and broad-based, such as the AFL-CIO a federation of labor unions. They can be narrowly focused on advancing the interests of group members, or, on the other hand, they may be devoted to the common good, say, good government, public integrity and rooting out corruption. It is standard practice to distinguish interest groups from various *unorganized* interests which exist in a society.³⁴ Interest-group pluralism, then, is the theory and thesis that in liberal democracy, political power *is*, and normatively restated, it *ought to be* dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological interest groups and not held by a single elite or group of elites.³⁵ Robert Dahl's conception of "polyarchy" is not a matter of pure majority rule, nor rule by a standing minority (as in oligarchy), but instead an evolving, competitive and pluralistic system of changing "minorities rule."³⁶ A possible defect often suggested is that coalitions of interest-groups may amount to destructive factions trading favors. It is interesting in this connection

33. Cf. Robert A. Dahl 1984, "Polyarchy, Pluralism and Scale," p. 228. Dahl distinguishes democracy as an ideal, "an end perhaps never achieved," and "polyarchy," as a matter of "distinguishing features of the actual political systems commonly called 'democratic' or 'democracies' in the modern world."

34. "Interest group": A group or organization with particular aims and ideas that tries to influence the government" (*Cambridge Dictionary*).

35. Cf. "Pluralism" in *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (2002).

36. Robert A. Dahl 2006, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, p. 132.

that in a 2006 book, Dahl maintained a studied agnosticism concerning the growth of political inequalities in the U.S.³⁷

The ideal of democratic legitimacy is reflected in the thesis e.g., that “the just powers of government” derive from “the consent of the governed,” to use the Jeffersonian formula from the Declaration of Independence. Again, President Lincoln advocated “government of the people by the people and for the people.” This is the democratic ideal, yet it is often less than clear that policy arising from interest-group pluralism, as empirically ascertained, actually reflects broad public consent or government *by* the people—as contrasted with an equilibrium of more sharply focused, well organized or well financed special or vested interests. We doubt on occasion that the major groups actively engaged in interest-group politics have any pronounced and developed concern for the common good; and the trading of favors among interest groups often seems to be a kind of well-oiled automaton, grinding out legislative and policy results with little relation to the views of the citizens or the public good. It belongs to Francis Fukuyama’s conception of the *decay* of the American political system, e.g., that it “gives excessive representation to the views of interest groups and activist organizations that collectively do not add up to a sovereign American people.”³⁸

However harsh Fukuyama’s judgment may appear, it is mild in comparison to that of some other contemporary political scientists. Princeton University’s Sheldon S. Wolin, e.g., in his 2008 book, *Democracy Incorporated*, holds up the specter of “managed democracy” and “inverted totalitarianism.” While classical totalitarian systems attempted mass mobilization of the people, Wolin’s inverted totalitarianism depends on public passivity, indifference to politics and *private* media as the disseminator of propaganda.³⁹ (Often, the phrase “corporate media” is employed in similar contexts.) Though “inverted totalitarianism” insists on its democratic goals and credentials, its

37. Robert A. Dahl 2006, *On Political Equality*, p. 78: “Achieving truly well-grounded judgments about the future of political equality in the United States probably exceeds our capacities.”

38. Fukuyama 2014, *Political Order and Political Decay*, p. 503.

39. Sheldon S. Wolin 2008, *Democracy Incorporated*, p. 44.

actual priorities are placed heavily on economic growth and expansion. Look for no domineering, charismatic leader, however, since inverted totalitarianism is based on accidental confluence of events and interests.⁴⁰ It is committed to the modern corporation; and in “managed democracy,” Wolin foresees government run increasingly top-down, by elite managerial experts who are creations, not architects of the system, a rejection of the ideal of disinterested public service, and a merger between capitalism and democracy. This prospective dystopia is the triumph of the idea that political societies can be organized by economics considerations alone—a pending domination of extreme neo-liberalism.⁴¹

Wolin’s ideas may suggest to some an imaginary America or even imaginative, political-science fiction. Readers may doubt that Wolin is justified in his usage of “totalitarianism,” in his phrase “inverted totalitarianism,” but his book functions, in scholarly fashion, as an often stirring and dismal warning.

Following the literature in contemporary political science, liberal pluralist democracy has been subject to decay in the U.S. because of the inclination of Congress to place vast regulatory and administrative discretion in the hands of the executive and the agencies of administrative bureaucracy in particular. This amounts to a delegation of legislative power. Congress passes into law various complex and vague provisions which require the agencies charged with execution of the law to engage in discretionary rule-making in order that the law can be sensibly applied. But at this point, the institutions and elements of the public most directly affected by the law become involved with the executive agencies in the formulation of the relevant rules. According to an important line of criticism, this facilitates the capture of policy decisions by the very elements of society which the law is designed to regulate.

One version of this thesis arose in a book, originally published in 1969 by political scientist Theodore J. Lowi.⁴² As an empirically based account of the actual distribution of power in American society,

40. *Ibid.*

41. Cf. Andreas Hess 2008, “Book of the Week: *Democracy Incorporated*.”

42. Theodore J. Lowi 1969, *The End of Liberalism*.

Lowi's view is often called "elite pluralism," and part of the idea is that different interest groups or combinations of interest groups are more influential regarding various particular areas of policy. The point may be regarded as a criticism of the more optimistic version of interest-group pluralism associated with the work of Robert A. Dahl and others. Lowi up-dated and restated his view in a later article: "... liberalism was undoing itself, not because its policy goals would alienate the American people," he argues, "but because its failure to appreciate that the constitutional and political limitations inherent in broad delegation would interfere with their attainment..."⁴³ Lowi is a critic of legislative delegation of power to the bureaucracy:

... every delegation of discretion away from electorally responsible levels of government to professional career administrative agencies is a calculated risk because politics will always flow to the point of discretion; the demand for representation would take place at the point of discretion; and the constitutional forms designed to balance one set of interest against another would not be present at the point of discretion for that purpose.⁴⁴

Interest groups that actually or potentially exercising significant influence over public policy come in various forms, shapes and sizes and have various amounts of actual or potential power. But generally, according to contemporary interest-group pluralism, individuals form interest groups; and on the basis of empirical studies, the summary conclusion is drawn that these groups are important actors in "real existing" democratic politics. On this basis, the further, normative, judgment is sponsored that politically active groups *should* attempt to influence the formulation of governmental policy to favor of their own particular interests. Compare the conclusion offered by Francis Fukuyama:

Pluralist theory holds that the aggregation of all these groups contending with one another constitutes a democratic public interest. But one could argue instead that due to their intrinsic overrepre-

43. Theodore J. Lowi 1986, "Two Roads to Serfdom: Liberalism, Conservatism and Administrative Power," p. 297.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.

sentation of narrow interests, they undermine the possibility of representative democracy expressing a true public interest.⁴⁵

This sets a more philosophical problem: Does excessive emphasis on the particularities of our interests (especially economic interests, though perhaps wedded to ethnic solidarities) and the particularities of focused interest-groups, tend to encourage excesses of power politics and submerge fuller expression of democratic ideals? Does interest-group pluralism or “polyarchy,”⁴⁶ sufficiently provide for “government by the people,” the consent of the governed, and the elucidation and expression of fuller, more adequate conceptions of the common good? What is the conceptual or social-political alternative to interest-group pluralism?

The recent evidence favors the empirical theses of “biased pluralism” and “economic elite domination.” As Gilens and Page put the matter in their influential 2014 paper: “... economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence.”⁴⁷ This does not imply that ordinary citizens never see their policy preferences realized; on the contrary, they often do, “but only because those policies happen also to be preferred by the economically-elite citizens who wield the actual influence.”⁴⁸

The papers in the present volume explore an alternative conception of American pluralism, rooted in the writings of William James and selected contributors to the domestic pragmatist and pluralist traditions. Jamesian and cultural pluralism represent a more philosophical alternative to the conception of pluralism in the theories of political science. What is particularly striking is the contrasting emphases on

45. Fukuyama 2014, *Political Order and Political Decay*, p. 484; cf. pp. 477-487.

46. See, e.g., Dahl 2006, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, p. 84, which provides a sketch of democratic procedures required of a factually “polyarchival” society or organization.

47. Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page 2014, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” p. 564.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 576.

“culture” vs. “interests.”⁴⁹ The opening paper on “Emerson as Educator,” below, shows elements of the philosophical and moral state of American thought before the advent of pragmatism—and before the Gilded Age erosion of the pre-existing mores. Moral constraint and self-restraint were more in evidence—paradigmatically, in the nineteenth-century, moral opposition to slavery. From the present perspective, the crucial difference is a matter of cultural, ethical or religious self-restraint.⁵⁰ Overall, the argument of the present book is that, in contrast with conceiving American society in terms of a collection of intensely competitive, ethnic and political interest-groups, we need to come to see the same society in terms of its contributing cultures of moral self-restraint. The danger in the normative, interest-group conception of democratic pluralism is that it will, under stress, degenerate first in the direction of more restricted polyarchy and self-interested “regulatory capture”—eventuating in plutocracy and oligarchy. Our concern with economic and political equality is best carried forward by the broadest, undivided middle class; yet, politically, the middle class presently appears divided and vanquished; co-opted and divided by race and ethnicity or threatened with deep economic insecurities.

6. Decay and rebirth of democratic pluralism

The effect of continued, unrelenting globalization on domestic interest-group politics has been to intensify competition for influence on policy and politics. It is a development tending from public virtue and constitutional constraint toward growing emphasis on unprincipled expediency; away from democratic accountability in the direction of internally competing and divisive forms of corporatist domination. Various advocates of classical liberalism, big-government (“modern”) liberalism, neo-liberalism and the advocates of the welfare-state or social democracy can all be found favoring large-scale finance, cheap credit,

49. Cf. Fukuyama 1995, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, especially the final chapter on “The Spiritualization of Economic Life,” pp. 355ff.

50. See my “Pragmatic Pluralism and American Democracy,” below, pp. 47-74.

corporate interests, conformity to administrative-institutional fiat, and expansions of international commerce and globalization. It appears that our politicians have been riding the roller coaster of globalization and technical development at the expense of the public interest in reasonable restraint.

It is difficult to see, in that context, how to get much traction on existing problems out of the doctrinal differences in these schools or directions of political and economic thought. Governments of every sort in the Western world and beyond have sponsored or supported big finance, international corporate and commercial interests and globalization as a matter of policy designed to promote international financial and commercial expansion. Other competing interest, such a domestic manufacturing and the viability of a broad middle-class have too often been ignored and the critics of the excesses of globalization marginalized; and this in spite of all negative consequences. The chief myth of neo-liberalism has been that the very pace of technological development and globalization have rendered them immune to criticism, resistance or regulation; and many a politician has ridden this particular grand narrative and bandwagon to great effect.

In an important sense, however, anyone who holds to the freedom of speech and religion and other elements of the Bill of Rights (or the equivalents in other countries) thereby believes in *limited* government. There are certain things which government or the state is *forbidden* to do. The point is fundamental in the rule of law; and we properly expect that the law should be crafted and executed impartially and serve the public good. For any committed democrat, the concept of limited government, the requirement of its lawful self-constraint, is never antiquated. The genuine need to regulate or control the adverse workings of various private interests, e.g., can never justify *unlimited* power of the state. Skepticism on growing executive powers, and unilateral executive war-powers in particular is certainly warranted in a period of nearly continuous wars.

If we consider the fourth amendment to the U.S. constitution in particular, which prohibits “unreasonable search and seizure,” in light of the lack of confidentiality on the internet, our flourishing national security state and the decades-long war on drugs, there are good

grounds for holding that the Bill of Rights has been eroded. “Reasonable search” traditionally involves specific grounds or “probable cause” and a specific warrant issued by a judge in open court. These are important limitations. Yet the tendency has been to undermine the established and traditional interpretations and practices in the interest of national security, an interminable war on terrorism, the war on drugs and expediencies of law enforcement. The enrichment of agencies of law enforcement by seizures of property under the contemporary practices of civil forfeiture involves clear abuse of power.⁵¹

These and other considerations strongly suggest needed attention to the concept of freedom as “non-domination”⁵²—as contrasted with the traditional liberal conception of freedom as non-interference. Freedom, it has been argued, is a legal condition of persons and not primarily a quality of individual acts. If we think of freedom as simply a matter of a higher authority or power *not interfering* or interdicting what one sets out to do, modeled on a benevolent or tolerant master, then this allows that each person is still *subject* to the decisions of some authority or power; and that implies a subject status. It may invite discriminatory restrictions and the sacrifice of public virtue to ruthless expediency. Each person is subject to the discretionary judgment and jurisdiction of institutional authority. Especially where this is a matter not governed by law, then the person is subject to the arbitrary will of another, and that is the definition of domination—the opposite of liberty.

Forms of domination have long had their advocates, and the Hegelian social-political model of the “dialectic of master and slave” is

51. See e.g., Michael Van den Berg 2015, “Proposing a Transactional Approach to Civil Forfeiture Reform,” pp. 868-869: “Civil forfeiture is a truly extraordinary legal doctrine—so much so that those who find themselves subject to a forfeiture proceeding frequently express disbelief that such an action could exist in the United States. The Kafkaesque civil forfeiture system is ancient, labyrinthine, and impermeable to the uninitiated. Despite its esoteric nature, federal state and local authorities utilize this legal doctrine. While the practice once had reputable roots, it has become a tool with enormous potential for abuse.”

52. Cf. e.g., Philip Pettit 2012, *On the People’s Terms* and Pettit 2014, *Just Freedom*, for a recent account of the concept of freedom in the contemporary revival of republicanism. See also the essays in Cécile Laborde and John Maynor eds. 2008, *Republicanism and Political Theory*.

perhaps only the most outlandish and odious example.⁵³ On a grander scale, one might also consider the rejected plan of Alexander Hamilton to cast the young American republic on the model of commercial-military empire. The rejection of this concept is marked by James Madison's turn away from Alexander Hamilton, the Federalists and military-commercial empire toward Jefferson and republicanism in the 1790's.⁵⁴ "Hamilton's banking proposals" came to "look unpalatably like a return to parliamentary monarchy...;" and "Hamilton's stress on empire and military power may well have been an additional cause of Madison's opposition."⁵⁵

It is reasonably to interpret moral and epistemic relativism as the distinctive forms which impositions on freedom of thought and action have taken in recent American experience—and especially in academic life. We have too often, willingly or unwillingly, become the bondsmen of the institutionalized advocates of relativism who function on the basis of administrative or quasi-corporatist prerogative and extra-legal back-channel and self-interested expediency. Converting the relativists' abstract exaggeration of tolerance and forbearance into an obligation to neglect judgment and evaluation of overbearing cultural and individual ambitions, the institutionalized forms welcome broad indifference to varieties of *intolerance* (as long as they practice mutual and reciprocal trading of favors), and exclude broad liberal criticism and alternative conceptions of the just relationships of groups and individuals in the university and in society. Just as "excessive representation of the views of interest groups and activist organizations" *do not* "add up to a sovereign American people"⁵⁶ (and may in fact add up to elite policy capture), in a quite similar way, excessive emphasis on the politicized perspectives of *relativizing*, ethnic interest-groups too often

53. See the brief discussion of this theme p. 236, below.

54. Cf. Lance Banning 1995, *The Sacred Fire of Liberty*, p. 297; Gordon Wood 2009, *Empire of Liberty*, pp. 148-149.

55. Cf. J.G.A Pocock 1975/2016, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p. 530-531.

56. See the quotation from Fukuyama, above, p. xxviii.

adds up to a illiberal, even an anti-liberal form of institutional domination.⁵⁷

If every graduate of such an academic institution is forever obligated, as a condition of its *jurisdiction* over professional status, to follow its every political twist and turn on pain of adverse interventions, then this amounts to subjection to arbitrary corporatist power. It is an arbitrary power which in the name of exaggerated *tolerance*, denies as a matter of doctrine the very possibility of objectivity and impartiality. The revival of the pragmatist tradition has faltered, in a crisis between virtue and corruption—often enough through its unprincipled grasp for institutional power. Given the general emphasis on habit in pragmatist thought and a significant relationship of habit to custom, precedent, law and funded human experience, it is difficult to image how the revival of the pragmatist tradition in American thought could so often fall into its disregard for distinctive elements of American history and American values. Vulgar institutional, insider advantage, often dressed in the colors of institutional power, prestige and success, appears to war with freedom of inquiry and the public good.

57. Cf. Fukuyama 2014, *Political Order and Political Decay*, p. 464, on “insider capture” of policy and “repatriomization” of modern, supposedly impersonal state institutions.