David L. Hildebrand

Putnam, Pragmatism, and Dewey

Hilary Putnam's commitment to pragmatism is deepening. In his recent collection of essays, *Words and Life* (1994), he enumerates the pragmatist theses he finds compelling:

> What I find attractive in pragmatism is not a systematic theory in the usual sense at all. It is rather a certain group of theses ... Cursorily summarized, those theses are
>
> (1) antiscepticism: pragmatists hold that doubt requires justification just as much as belief ...
>
> (2) fallibilism: pragmatists hold that there is never a metaphysical guarantee to be had that such-and-such a belief will never need revision (that one can be both fallibilistic and anitisceptical is perhaps the unique insight of American pragmatism.);
>
> (3) the thesis that there is no fundamental dichotomy between "facts" and "values"; and
>
> (4) the thesis that, in a certain sense, practice is primary in philosophy. (WL 152)[1]

Further, in *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (1995) Putnam vigorously defends the classical pragmatists' picture of inquiry by distancing it from Carnapian positivism:

> The pragmatist picture is totally different [from Carnap's]. For Peirce and Dewey, inquiry is cooperative human interaction with an environment; and both aspects, the active intervention, the active manipulation of the environment, and the cooperation with other human beings, are vital. ...Ideas must be put under strain, if

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> they are to prove their worth; and Dewey and James both followed Peirce in this respect. (POQ 70-71)

Over the past two decades, significant attention has been paid to Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam. Of central interest has been their debate regarding realism and antirealism, as well as their doctrinal shifts away from analytic philosophy towards some version of pragmatism. However, up until now only Rorty's formulations of pragmatism (and his interpretations of figures in classical pragmatism) have been carefully examined by more than a handful of scholars of American philosophy.[2] Putnam's writings on pragmatism have yet to undergo a similar degree of scrutiny.[3] It is hoped that this essay encourages further critical evaluations of Putnam's work in American philosophy.

I proceed as follows: after describing some of Putnam's motives for moving toward classical pragmatism, I focus upon his interpretations of Dewey's epistemology and metaphilosophy. Though Putnam's general approach to Dewey is a promising one, several fundamental problems of interpretation merit discussion. Of central importance is Putnam's presentation of Dewey on the issues of knowledge and truth and his construal of the classical pragmatist thesis (4) "that, in a certain sense, practice is primary in philosophy." I assess Putnam's view of what counts as a "practical starting point" and argue that Dewey's characterization of it is significantly different and superior. General comments about the relation of Putnam's neopragmatism to Deweyan pragmatism conclude the paper.[4]

I. Putnam's Turn Towards Classical Pragmatism

For many, Hilary Putnam's turn to pragmatism over the last two decades comes as no surprise. Over the years, Putnam has spilled a considerable amount of ink chronicling his evolution as a philosopher: his early beginnings in the philosophy of mind, language, and mathematics, later reworkings of metaphysics and epistemology, and most recently his focus upon ethical and political issues. His development as a realist — from "metaphysical" to "internal" to "pragmatic/natural/direct"— is a theme that recurs in these works and is a central preoccupation. Though Putnam's development as an individual philosopher is important, here the main concern is why Putnam has turned so enthusiastically to pragmatism and how he thinks the ideas of the classical pragmatists may help reorient philosophy.[5]

Which contemporary debates *outside* of philosophy does he believe call for the pragmatists' mediation? Two basic conflicts motivate Putnam to promote pragmatism as a palliative; one is cultural, the other is philosophical. The cultural controversies will be familiar to academics in almost any field. English departments quarrel over issues of content, such as which writers should be included in the literary canon, and whether such a thing should even exist; they argue over method, questioning whether texts are best interpreted by emphasizing intrinsic or extrinsic factors. History and Art History departments factionalize around

similar issues of legitimation while the natural sciences (e.g., Physics) debate whether their theories are ultimate accounts of nature's structure or simply useful tools for the amelioration of current and impending problems.[6] As Putnam notes, our current "culture wars" would not seem foreign to Dewey, who participated in similar debates in his own day.[7]

Philosophically, these cultural schisms are rooted in the long-standing debate over realism. Putnam sees that classical pragmatism addressed the fundamentals of this controversy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and he suggests that classical pragmatism may also provide a way out of the deadlocks of the late twentieth century:

> Dewey, as I read him, was concerned to show that we can retain something of the spirit of Aristotle's defense of the common-sense world, against the excesses of both the metaphysicians and the sophists, without thereby committing ourselves to the metaphysical essentialism that Aristotle propounded. ...I am convinced that ... the search for a middle way between reactionary metaphysics and irresponsible relativism — was also one of Dewey's concerns throughout his exemplary philosophical career. (DL 1 447)

Indeed, Putnam finds in pragmatism a defensible and radically different form of realism that he believes can mediate the realism and antirealism debate in which he has been deeply involved.[8]

Central to the pragmatist's realist solution is the thesis that, as Putnam puts it, "practice is primary in philosophy." Dewey and other classical pragmatists emphasized this thesis by insisting that any adequate reconstruction of philosophy has to presuppose its own social relevance. Like Rorty, Putnam has expressed impatience with the continued disconnection of professional philosophy from social problems and has agreed that Dewey was correct to argue that the project of constructing systematic accounts of the world from an absolute or God's-eye perspective has not only been unsuccessful by philosophical standards, it has come to seem reprehensible because of its isolation from human beings and their problems. In *Renewing Philosophy* Putnam writes,

> Dewey held that the idea of a single theory that explains everything has been a disaster in the history of philosophy. ...While we should not stop trying to make our theories consistent ... in philosophy we should abandon the dream of a single absolute conception of the world, he thought. Instead ... we should see philosophy as a reflection on how human beings can resolve the various

> sorts of problematical situations that they encounter, whether in science, in ethics, in politics, in education, or wherever. My own philosophical evolution has been from a view like Bernard Williams' to a view much more like John Dewey's. (RP 2-3)

In short, contemporary social and philosophical problems motivate Putnam's call for renewed attention to classical pragmatism. He has paid that attention, along with his wife and collaborator, Ruth Anna Putnam, by writing a number of critical reappraisals of various classical pragmatists and also by incorporating some of their key insights into his own work. Both the extent of the Putnams' efforts and the scope of their influence call for more critical examination of their work. For the remainder of this essay, I focus on their interpretation of John Dewey's epistemology and metaphilosophy, as well as the degree to which Hilary Putnam's ideas have come to resemble Dewey's.

II. Truth, Verification, and Relativism

Like many other analytic philosophers in the twentieth century, Putnam rejects the metaphysical realism (hereafter MR) so long a part of traditional epistemology. He argues that truth must not be represented "as simply a mystery mental act by which we relate ourselves to a relation called 'correspondence' that is totally independent of the practices by which we ***decide*** what is and what is not true" (POQ 11). Of course, once this extreme form of realism is rejected, there are many ways one can go. Putnam first devised his "internal" realism, and has lately replaced it with a "pragmatic" or "natural" realism. What is most interesting about these positions from the standpoint of this paper is how they reflect upon classical pragmatism.

According to Putnam, the classical pragmatists' response to MR was too extreme. Indeed, it was not as extreme as is Rortyan deconstruction (also called "relativism" by Putnam) but it offends in a similar way: it destroys an important aspect of the notion of "truth." It does this by identifying truth and verification. Putnam writes,

> To be sure, rejection of that sort of metaphysical realism [correspondence] does not require us to follow the pragmatists in identifying the true with what is (or would be) "verified" in the long run. Unlike the pragmatists, I do not believe that truth can be ***defined*** in terms of verification. (POQ 11)

This is a familiar charge against pragmatism. To estimate its force, one might ask two questions: first, what does Putnam believe is being lost by such an identification? Second, in what sense does he think truth and verification are distinct?[9]

First, one of the things Putnam does not want to see lost is what he calls the "tenselessly true." To see why pragmatism is destructive of this, it is necessary to quote Putnam at length.

> What we have spoken of so far are what James called "half-truths," these being the best anyone can hope to achieve, but always subject to correction by subsequent experience. James also appears to accept the Peircean idea of truth (he calls it "absolute truth") as a coherent system of beliefs which will ultimately be accepted by the widest possible community of inquirers as the result of strenuous and attentive inquiry (what Peirce called the "final opinion"). However, James accepts this notion only as a regulative ideal...
>
> ... This bifurcation of the notion of truth into a notion of available truth (half-truth) and unavailable but regulative "absolute truth" is obviously problematic. Dewey proposes to remove the difficulty: he jettisons the notion of "absolute truth" and settles for half-truth (renamed "warranted assertibility"). But the price of this seems too high in another way; it loses a desirable distinction (and one that James recognizes) between saying of a statement that it is warrantedly assertible on the basis of all the evidence we have to date and saying that it is ("tenselessly") true. (RHF 221-222)

Though Putnam has retracted his criticism that Dewey "settles for half-truth,"[10] he still rejects Dewey's theory of truth. In a very recent article, the Putnams write "Hilary Putnam ... *rejects* James', Dewey's, and Peirce's theories of truth on the ground that all three thinkers believe that a proposition cannot be true unless it is 'fated' to be verified in the long run."[11] I will comment upon this issue in the next section; for the moment, let's stay with the puzzle regarding what could Putnam intend by "tenselessly" true. A clue might be found in Putnam's notion of truth as "idealized warrant" for rational beings. Putnam writes that

> The picture I propose instead is not the picture of Kant's transcendental idealism, but it is certainly related to it. It is the picture that truth comes to nothing more than idealized rational acceptability. ...All I ask is that what is supposed to be "true" be ***warrantable*** on the basis of experience and intelligence for creatures with "a rational and sensible nature." (RHF 41)

By grounding "true" in "warrant" and "warrant" in "rational nature," Putnam seems to be looking for a way to nip relativism in the bud. His fear is that by attending to the contexts of knowledge, which are perspectival and particular, we blur the line between "truth" and "inquiry" and too easily slip headlong into relativism.

His maneuvers to block relativism are rooted in ethical concerns, not in some dogmatic hope that epistemology and metaphysics can reveal the way things really are. Specifically, he tries to block the Rortyan relativist, whose clumsy attacks upon MR have led, Putnam believes, to ethical relativism. In ***Realism with a Human Face,*** Putnam sought to identify his common ground and his differences with Rorty.

> [Like the Rortyan relativist, the Putnamian internal realist] is willing to think of reference as internal to "texts" (or theories), ***provided*** we recognize that there are better and worse "texts." "Better" and "worse" may themselves depend on our historical situation and our purposes; there is no notion of a God's-Eye View of Truth here. But the notion of a right (or at least a "better") answer to a question is subject to two constraints:
>
> *(1)* ***Rightness is not subjective.*** What is better and worse to say about most questions of real human concern is not just a matter of ***opinion.*** ...
>
> *(2)* ***Rightness goes beyond justification.*** ...My own view is that truth is to be identified with idealized justification, rather than with justification-on-present-evidence. "Truth" in this sense is as context sensitive as *we* are. (RHF 114-115)

Here Putnam's tool is "idealized justification," and like "rational nature" it is meant to prevent the slide toward an unsophisticated (Rortyan) relativism. But why is this move necessary? After all, as long as inquiry is done with care, there is no reason that "present evidence" could not provide a satisfactory answer — which one we might even call "better" or "right." Perhaps Putnam assumes that all "present evidence" is necessarily inadequate; that would be a very unpragmatic assumption indeed. If he has not assumed that, then his response (meant to counter Rorty's slide from epistemological to ethical relativism) seems draconian.

To better understand his move to block the relativist, it helps to know that Putnam is inspired by a Kantian model of humanity. In ***Realism and Reason*** Putnam wrote,

> Let us recognize that one of our fundamental self-conceptualizations ... is that we are ***thinkers,*** and that ***as*** thinkers we are committed to there being ***some*** kind of truth, some kind of correctness which is substantial and not merely "disquotational." That means that there is no eliminating the normative. (RR 246)

Seeing rationality as something that is part of ***us,*** Putnam rejects deflationary and reductionist conceptions of truth. Believing that we are committed to some kind of truth "which is substantial and not merely 'disquotational'" he will not accept that calling a sentence "true" is simply saying that speakers who share a language and possess the same evidence may substitute and assert an equivalent sentence with the same degree of warrant; as Putnam puts it, for a Tarskian "To say a sentence is true is just to make an equivalent statement" (WL 269). Recently, Putnam explained the sense in which truth is "substantial." Truth is substantial because it is a kind of property:

> In my view, however, we do have a notion of truth, even if we don't have an enlightening account of "the nature of truth" in the high metaphysical sense, and in my view truth is ***a*** property of many of the sentences we utter and write. ...If asked why I hold on to this idea, in the face of our lack of success with the high metaphysical enterprise, I would answer that we can recognize many clear cases of truth, as well as of falsity. (WL 265)

In sum, Putnam's beliefs about truth and verification present a picture which is ambiguously pragmatic. He has argued that the classical pragmatist responses to MR were too drastic because they identified truth too closely with verification (inquiry in the long run), and doing this damaged an important notion for Putnam, the "tenselessly" true. Tenseless truth shows that human nature is — if not ultimately, at least for this historical epoch — rational. If rationality is no longer taken to be our nature, objectivity in moral matters is compromised. To assess the weight of these charges, the next section will focus on the following questions. First, how valid is Putnam's charge that pragmatism, particularly Dewey's, identifies truth with verification too closely? Is it valid to reject Dewey's theory of truth because of its affinity to Peirce's? Second, can Putnam's notions of "truth as idealized justification" and "tenseless truth" be taken as updated versions of Deweyan ideas? In what sense are they pragmatic ideas?

III. Natural Realism, Old and New

Before assessing Putnam's specific criticisms of Dewey, it is worth noting some historical precedents. As did many of this century's early realists, Putnam

hesitates about certain aspects of the early pragmatists' antirealism — particularly the supposed claim that truth cannot be isolated from verification. To be sure, Putnam does not argue, as neorealist W.P. Montague did,[12] that pragmatism's identification of truth with verification was *idealistic* (because verification was just part of the self's subjective experience). Nor does he propose (as Montague did) the realist counter-claim that verification leads to truth only because it discovers a preexisting relation (which would, of course, be MR). But Putnam does want to insist that there is *some* kind of agreement that obtains between our language and the world. The early realists argued that a distinction must be made between ideas that "correspond" to reality and ideas that "agree" with reality. In "Professor Dewey's View of Agreement," critical realist Roy Wood Sellars argued that knowledge is achieved when we fulfill a need by finding an idea that *agrees* with the world outside us.[13] When this agreement takes place, we say the idea *is* true, that the idea agrees with the physical world *as we conceive of it.* That last qualification is added by Sellars because given the epistemological problems of psychophysical dualism we cannot know what the real world is like. But because we are "natural realists," Sellars says, we believe that our amended vision of the world is the way *the world was all along.* If we are told that a stick in water is not bent and we verify this, we say that the judgment about the stick was true of the world; we do not say that our verification *made* it true.

In his recent "Dewey Lectures," Putnam also espouses a "natural realism" and he offers it as a moderate course between MR and deconstruction. This strategy, consciously or unconsciously, is deeply reminiscent of Sellars, who believed his natural realist version of "agreement" could provide a moderate course between pragmatism and rational idealism. To recall, Sellars wrote,

> Extreme pragmatists emphasize too strenuously the fact of function, of reconstruction, of change, the personal side. Extreme intellectualists see only the formal, the structural, the timeless, and thus may fall into the copy view. As in most controversies, a middle position is more likely to be right.[14]

Sellars' statement expresses a critical bias that Putnam, along with many other analytic philosophers, have long used in their assessments of pragmatism. In their view, pragmatism rushes toward reconstructive action, lacking reflection. In their haste to combat the metaphysical realist's Truth — abstract and viewed from Nowhere — the pragmatists emphasize inquiry and justification to a degree that, in effect, eliminates truth altogether. This is why, despite Putnam's hearty approval of Dewey's theory of inquiry, he rejects the Dewey-Peirce definition of truth. Verification, even in an ideal and subjunctive "long run," still ignores Putnam's dicta that rightness "is not subjective," that it "goes beyond justification." Rather than give up on truth entirely, as do Rortyans and Deweyans, Putnam seeks a

way that "pure knowledge" might remain "tenselessly true." His solution is to split the difference between pragmatists and metaphysical realists with "idealized justification."

But this solution is neither called for nor tenable. Dewey would agree with Putnam that ***truth is not the product of a correspondence with reality;*** he would also agree that ***truth is constrained by evidence and context,*** and is not simply the product of subjective opinion. Yet Dewey would question why Putnam goes ahead to define truth as "idealized" justification. If, historically, Putnam is right to say that the project of formulating a definition of truth-free-from-all-contexts was futile, then why would he think it could be any easier to determine what "idealized justification" comes to? This latter question seems no less unanswerable. One might defend Putnam here by saying "No — it is not ***justification*** that is idealized, rather the future ***community*** of scientific inquirers presenting it." But this move makes the problem no less intractable. For even if one idealizes "community" rather than "justification" there is still the basic problem of how "idealized" can be substantially spelled out, as well as the related (and thorny) problem of which community best exemplifies the paradigm: "we" wet liberals (Rorty's "we"), "we" recent immigrants, "we" Christian Scientists. In short, who are "we"?

It's worth asking if there is a significant difference between Putnam's truth-as-idealized-justification and Dewey's own, basically Peircean, definition of truth. Perhaps the most palpable difference is the attitude behind their proposals. Putnam's construal of "true" means to make truth "substantial," a bulwark against relativism. Dewey's definition of truth, according to Putnam, can't provide that because it runs truth and verification together, tending toward relativism — for him, it is simply Peirce all over again. However, if Putnam had supplemented *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* by attending to Dewey's "Experience, Knowledge and Value: A Rejoinder" (1941), he might have avoided making too much of Dewey's ***definition of truth*** and would have focused upon Dewey's ***theory of inquiry.*** In that article, defending his theories against Betrand Russell's misconstruals, Dewey clarified his motives for even defining truth at all.

> There is a distinction made in my theory between validity and truth. The latter is defined, following Peirce, as the ideal limit of indefinitely continued inquiry. This definition is, of course, a definition of truth ***as an abstract idea.*** This definition gives Mr. Russell a surprising amount of trouble, due I think to the fact that he omits all reference to the part played in the theory of Peirce — which I follow — by the principle of the continuity of inquiry. ...
>
> The "truth" of any present proposition is, by the definition subject to the outcome of continued inquiries; ***its***

> "truth" if the word must be used, is provisional; as *near* the truth as inquiry has *as yet* come, a matter determined not by a guess at some future belief but by the care and pains with which inquiry has been conducted up to the present time. (LW 14: 56- 57)[15]

What is important here is how Dewey's definition of truth consciously places the focus back upon inquiry. If we must define truth, Dewey is saying, then Peirce's formulation will do. Just remember that this definition (a) merely defines truth *as an abstract idea*[16] and, (b) is, in virtue of the principle of the continuity of inquiry, conceptually inseparable from the process of inquiry.[17]

The difference between Putnam's "truth as idealized justification" and Dewey's "truth as the ideal limit of inquiry" may seem slight, but I believe it is rooted in different attitudes about what philosophy should try to achieve. For some reason, Putnam finds something valuable in the project of defining truth. Dewey made an effort to define truth mostly because his interlocutors could not (or would not) understand his theory of inquiry without first requiring that he take a stand on truth. (For contemporary pragmatists, not much has changed.) In the *Logic* Dewey writes,

> The attainment of settled beliefs is a progressive matter; *there is no belief so settled as not to be exposed to further inquiry.* ... In scientific inquiry, the criterion of what is taken to be settled, or to be knowledge, is being *so* settled that it is available as a resource in further inquiry; not being settled in such a way as not to be subject to revision in further inquiry. (LW 12: 16, my emphasis)

Had he been considering the issue currently under discussion, Dewey could just as easily have said that *there is no belief so true as not to be exposed to further inquiry.* A set of statements are taken as true, that is, as knowledge, because we can use them to answer further questions, i.e., because they are now functioning as a resource within inquiry. Formulating definitions of what "really true" might mean seems pointless, for it is a project that is bound either to look for a God's eye point of view (which Putnam has repudiated) or for some assurance that what is now a resource for further inquiry will *always* be a resource. Dewey's reply — or Rorty's, for that matter — would be "Who knows? We change, the universe changes, our problems change. Why do you need such assurance, anyway?" Ultimately, Dewey and Putnam's different attitudes about truth stem from their rather different views about how "practice is primary in philosophy."[18] I will return to this difference in the last section of this essay.

IV. Pure and Practical Knowledge, Commonsense and Scientific Value

Other remarks by Putnam highlight his epistemological differences with pragmatism, and particularly with Dewey. As we saw earlier, pragmatism has the unfortunate tendency to undermine the tenselessly true. Unless it is construed properly, it will also fail to provide a basis for "pure knowledge," which has traditionally been an objective for philosophers, theoretical scientists, and theologians, and is something which Putnam would also like to preserve, albeit in an attenuated form. The question is, can Dewey be read in a way that makes room for "pure knowledge" of any kind?

According to Putnam, he can. How? First, Dewey correctly saw that pure and applied science were interdependent and interpenetrating activities; he also saw that instrumental and terminal values were interdependent and interpenetrating. Crucially, and more controversially, Putnam interprets Dewey to support a difference in kind between scientific and ethical values. And it is this which directly supports the pure knowledge/practical knowledge distinction his pragmatism would preserve. For example, about Dewey's *Logic* Putnam writes:

> What Dewey's argument [in the *Logic*] does show is that there is a certain overlap between scientific values and ethical values; but even where they overlap, these values remain different. Scientific values are not simply instrumental ... but they are relativized to a context — the context of knowledge acquisition — and knowledge acquisition itself is something that can be criticized ethically. (WL 174)

In reply, I'd comment that Putnam is right to say that Dewey would insist upon not exempting scientific institutions from ethical scrutiny; it is also makes sense to suggest that scientists *qua* scientists take *as central to practice* a different set of values. (For example, scientists particularly favor values such as thoroughness, corroboration, experimental innovation, abstractive imagination, consistency, adequacy, honesty, and so forth.) But it is less plausible for Putnam to infer that since there are certain sets of values whose function is particularly important to scientific practices, Dewey would have considered those values to be "scientific," if by that it is meant that they stand in a *categorical* contrast to, say, ethical or aesthetic values.

Let me be careful here. I am not implying that Putnam is a positivist — he clearly rejects absolute demarcations between science and ethics as human enterprises. But his claim that scientific values are different from ethical values makes it hard to reconcile his view with Dewey's. But he needs this distinction, and wants to find it in Dewey, because he thinks that the distinction between "pure" and "practical" knowledge is also worth saving.

> [W]e are not — nor were we ever — interested in knowledge only for its practical benefits; curiosity is coeval with the species itself, and pure knowledge is always, to some extent, and in some areas, a terminal value even for the least curious among us. (WL 173)

I suspect that Putnam downplays Dewey's emphasis upon the continuity between ethical and scientific inquiry because it threatens not only the "tenselessly true", but "pure knowledge" as well. And while Putnam doesn't absolutely separate pure and practical knowledge, he is unwilling to drop this distinction since skepticism and relativism still pose a threat.[19] But Putnam's distinction between pure and practical knowledge would have troubled Dewey. In the *Logic* Dewey notes that "knowledge" may be taken in two ways, as the closing phase of inquiry *or* as the product of inquiry. The sense of "knowledge" intended by Putnam's phrase "pure knowledge" is the more substantive connotation, knowledge as the end *product* of inquiry. Formulating such definitions is not troublesome, *per se*. In fact, Dewey defines knowledge qua product in the *Logic:* "It is the convergent and cumulative effect of continued inquiry that defines knowledge in its general meaning" (LW 12:16). But what is noteworthy here is the *utter* lack of transcendent undertones and the pointed stress upon the continuity of knowledge with inquiry mentioned above.

Can one find anything like "pure knowledge" in Dewey's mature works? The closest I have come is the passage (quoted above) in the *Logic* stating that the mark of knowledge is "being *so* settled that it is available as a resource in further inquiry" (LW 12: 16). But this is not very close to "pure knowledge" at all. If "pure knowledge" is taken to mean what "knowledge" meant in traditional epistemology, it is likely to be just another source of confusion which Dewey would recommend we avoid. He writes:

> Knowledge is then supposed to have a meaning of its own apart from connection with and reference to inquiry. The theory of inquiry is then necessarily subordinated to this meaning as a fixed external end. ...The idea that any knowledge in particular can be instituted apart from its being the consummation of inquiry, and that knowledge in general can be defined apart from this connection is, moreover, one of the sources of confusion in logical theory. (LW 12: 15-16)[20]

In short, the pure knowledge/practical knowledge distinction is a dangerous one which should not be imputed to Dewey. Moreover, if Putnam wants his theory to reflect Dewey's insights, he, too, should avoid it. It is dangerous for two reasons. First, because it tends to encourage shallow and piecemeal understandings

of what "practical" comes to in pragmatism. (And this, in turn, promotes unfairly abbreviated characterizations of pragmatism as a philosophy which rationalizes the achievement of mundane or shortsighted ends.) Second, retaining the phrase "pure knowledge" opens the door to any number of interpretations, including the Metaphysical Realism Putnam has rejected. "Knowledge," Dewey warns, "as an abstract term, is a name for the product of competent inquiries. Apart from this relation, its meaning is so empty that any content or filling may be arbitrarily poured in" (LW 12: 16).

V. The Practical Starting Point: Putnam's View Assessed

Finally, I would like to consider Putnam's construal of the pragmatist's practical starting point, or as Putnam puts it, "the thesis that, in a certain sense, practice is primary in philosophy" (WL 152). How one construes a particular philosophy's practical starting point is, I believe, fundamental to one's overall interpretation of that philosophy. In various places, Putnam has discussed why he repudiated the starting point of metaphysical realism in favor of a practical starting point. One important source of his dissatisfaction is ethical. Putnam came to see Dewey as a model philosopher not only because he believed Dewey's arguments were often superior, but because Dewey, from early on, demanded relevancy of philosophy:

> If one wishes to pursue just about any topic in Dewey's thought, it is, however, necessary to keep Dewey's thoroughgoing radicalism in mind at all times. Although Dewey was not an economic determinist (or, indeed, a determinist of any kind), he did see philosophical ideas and their conflicts as products of the conflicts and difficulties of social life. (WL 224)

Unlike some older and newer critics,[22] Putnam sincerely extols the degree to which Dewey integrated his moral convictions into a philosophy with an unabashedly ethical orientation. "If I have taken John Dewey as a model it is because his reflection on democracy never degenerated into propaganda for the status quo" (RP 198). In *Words and Life* the Putnams add that Dewey was "as concerned to combat a splitting of American society into rigid classes ... as to combat the division into ethnic groups; indeed the two issues were intimately linked, since the children of the poor were also the children who came from non-Anglo backgrounds" (WL 222). In short, the Putnams admire Dewey because he refused to set aside or otherwise "bracket" the ethical and political implications of his philosophy. Whether or not one is philosophizing about "ethics", all agree that philosophy itself is an ethical enterprise which must constructively engage with actual social problems.

Beyond this ethical dimension, Putnam supports Dewey's rejection of the

God's-eye point of view (the "spectator theory of knowledge"), and his recognition that the starting point of philosophy must be dynamic and agent-centered, that is, practical. Putnam defends him against critics who object that because Dewey offers no good reason to pursue one inquiry rather than another, the result will be determined by ineradicably subjective and non-rational elements:

> [Such an] objector seeks a foundation, but for Dewey there are no foundations; we can only start from where we are. Where we are includes both our sufferings and enjoyments (our valuings) and our evaluations, the latter coming both from our community and from ourselves. (WL 201)

The insight "we can only start from where we are" may strike some as unconscionably obvious. Yet it is the absence of this insight that has led many to construct elaborate systems which, in the end, bore no significant relevance to human life. About such systems Putnam writes,

> From a metaphysical realist point of view, one can never begin with an epistemological premise that *people are able to tell whether A or B;* one must first show that, in "the absolute conception," there are such possible facts as A and B. A metaphysical-reductive account of what good is must precede any discussion of what is better than what. In my view, the great contribution of Dewey was to insist that we neither have nor require a "theory of everything," and to stress that what we need instead is insight into how human beings resolve problematical situations. (RP 187)

The idea that we "start from where we are" suggests that we stop trying to move forward in philosophy by first pulling back to something certain — back to premises about the "light of nature," "impressions," or the "transcendental ego." Putnam's recent reconstructions of "natural" (or "pragmatic") realism tries to incorporate this practical starting point. In his "Dewey Lectures," Putnam states that breaking away from the realism-idealism dichotomy requires "a second naiveté" about perception and conception. He writes,

> Drawing on ideas of Austin and James, I argued that the way out requires the achievement of what I called a "second naiveté," of a standpoint which fully appreciates the deep difficulties pointed out by the seventeenth-century philosophers, but which overcomes those diffi-

> culties instead of succumbing to them; a standpoint which sees that the difficulties do not, in the end, require us to reject the idea that in perception we are in unmediated contact with our environment. We do not have to accept the interface conception. (DL III 488-89)

Putnam's project of recovering a "second naiveté" bears a striking resemblance to the way Dewey describes his metaphysical project. In *Experience and Nature* Dewey writes that

> An empirical philosophy is in any case a kind of intellectual disrobing. We cannot permanently divest ourselves of the intellectual habits we take on and wear when we assimilate the culture of our own time and place. But intelligent furthering of culture demands that we take some of them off, that we inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us. We cannot achieve recovery of primitive naïveté. But there is attainable a ***cultivated naïveté*** of eye, ear and thought. (LW 1:40, my emphasis)

Dewey, we recall, provided an alternative to the egocentric starting point (shared by realism and idealism) because it led to a radical skepticism about knowledge and, consequently, about the possibility of radical self-critique. Putnam insightfully recognizes that "the interface conception" poses the same obstacle for contemporary philosophy, only now the presuppositions have become embedded not only in perception (where Dewey had to confront them), but in the philosophy of language as well.[23] When evaluating Putnam's interpretation of the practical starting point, the main difficulty, then, is not motivation; Putnam and Dewey substantially agree there. The question, rather, is whether or not Putnam's specific interpretation of the practical starting point permits a philosopher to critically review her fundamental assumptions without also dissociating herself from ongoing life. I will argue that it does not because Putnam has paid insufficient attention to Dewey's conception of "experience."

VI. The Primacy of Practice

Putnam has recommended pragmatism not just for its various antifoundational views (e.g., anti-skepticism, fallibilism) but for its emphasis upon the "primacy of practice." From a Deweyan point of view this is laudable. Nevertheless, there is the following difficulty with Putnam's interpretation: he seems to see the pragmatists' emphasis upon the "primacy of practice" as an effective *theoretical* strategy. For example, Putnam writes,

> [T]he appeal to the primacy of practice ... in pragmatism is always accompanied by critique of those metaphysical criticisms of practice that make it look "irresponsible" to take practice as seriously as pragmatists do. (WL 177)

For Putnam, practice has value as a standpoint more for its ability to resolve philosophical puzzles than for its adequacy to lived experience. In other words, practice has primacy because it is a successful rhetorical device — a metaphilosophical rejoinder — defusing philosophies that would denigrate practice within philosophy. But the pragmatists' emphasis upon practice went deeper than this, and was a philosophical, as well as a metaphilosophical, insight. While Dewey did urge philosophers to drop the stigma traditionally assigned to practice, process, and things quotidian, he also investigated such things as he found them.

To better see the substance of this complaint against Putnam, one could recall some of the problems with Putnam's interpretation of Dewey on truth and knowledge. The fact that Putnam found fault with Dewey for not accommodating the tenselessly true, pure knowledge, or for identifying truth with verification stem from the fact that he has not adequately understood — or has not attempted to understand — Dewey's notion of experience in any detail.[24] Yet the concept of "experience" is integral to understanding how Dewey showed inquiry ("epistemology as hypothesis" in the Putnams' terms) to be inherently practical in a sense of "practical" that excludes narrow or vulgar connotations. Even a cursory look at experience would begin by distinguishing between "primary" (or "had") experience and "secondary" or ("known") experience. Early in his career, Dewey argued that neither experience nor nature could be exhaustively described by what we *know* of it. Knowing (or "inquiry") is one species of conduct which is initiated by an organism's total situation, a matrix of ongoing concerns, only some of which are related to knowledge. That which initiates inquiry (and which tests the validity of its results) is *life*. Life is the "practical starting point" of philosophy. For philosophical purposes, life might be best rephrased as "primary experience," "qualitative immediacy," or simply, "feeling" (to use Whitehead's term). Dewey introduces the distinction between "primary" and "secondary" experience in *Experience and Nature:*

> The distinction is one between what is experienced as the result of a minimum of incidental reflection and what is experienced in consequence of continued and regulated reflective inquiry. ...That the subject-matter of primary experience sets the problems and furnishes the first data of the reflection which constructs the secondary objects is evident; it is also obvious that test and verification of the latter is secured only by return to things of crude or macroscopic experience — the sun,

> earth, plants, and animals of common, every-day life. ... They *explain* the primary objects, they enable us to grasp them with *understanding*. (LW 1: 15-16)

Primary experience is had, undergone, suffered, even enjoyed but it is not "given" as knowledge in the way claimed by traditional realisms. Assuming such a conception of experience, the object of Deweyan inquiry is neither found knowledge (traditional realisms) nor knowledge didactically shaped by a radical subject (traditional idealisms). Rather, it is the resolution of a problematic situation involving a redisposition of antecedent existences. Antecedent existences include what is typically called mental (attitudes, feelings, desires, goals) and physical (objects, processes, forces, etc.), and what is had in primary experience *becomes* known through the reflective-observational-physical phases of inquiry. This had/known distinction preserves the commonsense realist notion that we both discover and control things in experience.[25] Moreover, it permits the hypothesis that while reality (or nature) extends beyond the reach of present experience, and may be causally unaffected by our thoughts and actions, it need not consist of fixed and eternal entities embedded in some perfect, rational structure.

Putnam, too, uses the term "experience," but it is difficult to see what it comes to. Though he puts the term to work in some pivotal places, there is little evidence that his use of the term resolves the sort of problems he is most concerned with — for example, problems engendered by the internal/external world dualism. About this, Putnam writes that his "natural realist"

> alternative to the early modern picture [of perception and knowledge] ... does not involve "feigning anesthesia." It does not involve denying that phenomenal consciousness, subjective experience with all its sensuous richness, exists. It involves, instead, insisting that "external" things, cabbages and kings, can be *experienced*. (And not just in the Pickwickian sense of causing "experiences," conceived of as affectations of our subjectivity, which is what "qualia" are conceived to be.) (DL 1 464-65)

Experience, as Putnam correctly notes, is *not* just an affectation of our subjectivity and yet his appeal to it for mediation of the traditional dualism between mind and world is still somewhat sheepish, from a Deweyan standpoint. It is not just that external things *can* be experienced, they *are* experienced! They are *had, suffered,* and *undergone*. And it is important to note that things (or events) are *just undergone*; they are not undergone as "external," since any determination regarding internal-external (or mind-body, substance-process, etc.) would come out of a determination made through reflective analysis. "Life," Dewey writes, "denotes

a function, a comprehensive activity, in which organism and environment are included. Only upon reflective analysis does it break up into external conditions ... and internal structures" (LW 1: 19).[26] To put the point in Ortega's somewhat less formal words, life is a "rock bottom reality," and it is that which also furnishes us with the very subject-matter of metaphysics.[27]

The fact that Putnam does not bring the had/known distinction to bear, substituting instead a theoretical (not practical) conception of experience, is evident in other places as well. For example, he describes how language sets the conditions of possibility for experience when he writes that not only "is the simplest thought altered ... by being expressed in language," but "language alters the range of *experiences* we can have." (DL III 493) In *Pragmatism* Putnam adds that "access to a common reality does not require access to something *preconceptual*. It requires, rather that we be able to form *shared* concepts" (POQ 21). Though Putnam is certainly no linguistic idealist — a label which Rorty earns when he claims (in various places) that there's nothing beyond texts to which philosophical argument can be adequate — it is hard to avoid his implication that language is the engine that drives experience. Yet this effectively controverts Dewey's notion of "primary" or "had" experience, which is irreducibly immediate and qualitative without also being cognitive.

Dewey's characterization of primary experience was a crucial move in undermining the intellectualist fallacy which underlay both the realist and idealist conceptions of reality. If Putnam is going to succeed in undermining the realist/antirealist controversy by using the pragmatist insight that practice is primary, he must not reiterate the old intellectualist fallacy by characterizing experience as somehow derivative of language. Language, on Dewey's view, arises in the course of experience and contributes to experience; it is not ontologically separable from experience and thus cannot totally predetermine the "range of *experiences* we can have."[28] Just as Dewey rejected accounts which made knowledge prior to all experience, Dewey also would have rejected an account of language which made the same move. If an account of language aims for optimal generality — which, Dewey would agree, is a perfectly acceptable goal for a metaphysics — that account should describe language, like knowledge, in terms of its functions in experience.

One final indicator of Putnam's theoretical approach to the practical starting point occurs in *Realism with a Human Face*. There Putnam contextualizes his theory of truth within his metaphilosophy:

> Let me conclude by saying a little more about my own picture, for I do have a picture. I don't think it is bad to have pictures in philosophy. What is bad is to forget they are pictures and to treat them as "the world." ... Now, the picture I have just sketched [i.e., that truth comes to *idealized rational acceptability*] *is* only a

> "picture." ...On the other hand, metaphysical realism is only a "picture." (RHF 40, 42)

This is a frustrating passage because while Putnam's caution against hypostatizing pictures into eternal "reals" is quite Deweyan, his willingness to telegraph back from his own approach — stating that his picture is only a "picture"— seems to defy the whole point of adopting the practical starting point to begin with. Let me say this another way. To hold that there is something like a "practical starting point" is just to insist that we begin — in philosophy as in life, generally — with the situation we are in, as we have it and live it. Backing away, calling our starting point "only a picture," is strictly speaking, nonsensical; there's nowhere to back away *to*. It is true that we change our minds about things, and sometimes we overhaul enormous numbers of beliefs. But this fact about change doesn't make our present standpoint ***merely relative***. Metaphysically, it is as real as any "more correct" position to which we may "evolve".[29]

VII. Conclusion

In sum, I have argued that Putnam could advance his understanding of why practice has such primacy by investigating experience, especially the distinction between experience ***had*** and experience ***known***. That distinction, duly considered, could help Putnam see (a) why Dewey's theory of truth is not so easily dismissed as a verificationism, and (b) how Dewey's "warranted assertibility" may serve both scientific and philosophical purposes without resorting to Putnamian notions such as "idealized justification," "pure knowledge" or the "tenselessly true."

The theory-laden view of experience, one which makes "language games" or "conceptual schemes" basic to inquiry rather than life or "situations," is something Putnam and Rorty share. Despite his push for realism that is "direct" and "natural" because it starts "from where we are," Putnam nevertheless resists the full consequences of Dewey's approach by retaining a theoretical take on the primacy of practice. Hence, Putnam and Rorty share a similar approach to pragmatism. Because both have found tremendous problems with representationalism, each avoids an account of reality which gives a significant place to experiences that are preconceptual. In contrast, Dewey's notion of primary or had experience allows for a type of experience that is not cognitive but, at the same time, is not "given" in any of the various traditional senses. One of the reasons his account is intellectually attractive is that it obviates the need to argue for "access" to reality by insisting that this access is something which we find we already possess.

University of Texas

NOTES

1. The following abbreviations will be used to refer to writings by Putnam:

DL Dewey Lectures 1994: "Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind" (*The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. XCI, no. 9, 1994)
POQ *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (1995)
RHF *Realism with a Human Face* (1990)
RP *Renewing Philosophy* (1992)
RR *Realism and Reason* (1983)
RTH *Reason, Truth and History* (1981)
WL *Words and Life* (1994)

2. To name just a few: *Rorty and Pragmatism : The Philosopher Responds to His Critics*, edited by Herman J. Saatkamp, (Nashville: Vanderbilt U. Press, 1995), *The Necessity of Pragmatism: John Dewey's Conception of Philosophy* by R. W. Sleeper (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1986), *Philosophy and the Reconstruction of Culture: Pragmatic Essays After Dewey*, edited by John J. Stuhr (Albany: State U. of New York Press, 1993), and *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* by Cornel West (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

3. Excellent work is being done, however. See, for example, Sami Pihlstrom's *Structuring the World: The Issue of Realism and the Nature of Ontological Problems in Classical and Contemporary Pragmatism (Acta Philosophica Fennica*, vol. 59, 1996).

4. Putnam's views on Dewey's ethics are closely related to the question of the starting point and they, too, deserve detailed consideration. Such consideration is beyond the compass of this paper.

5. It is often difficult to know which pragmatist — James, Dewey, or Peirce — Putnam takes as his model. For example, in *Pragmatism: An Open Question* Putnam writes,

> I believe that James was a powerful thinker, as powerful as any in the last century, and that his way of philosophizing contains possibilities which have been too long neglected, that it points to ways out of old philosophical "binds" that continue to afflict. In short, I believe that it is high time we paid attention to Pragmatism, the movement of which James was arguably the greatest exponent. (POQ 6)

While in another recent work, *Renewing Philosophy*, he adds,

> ... a philosopher whose work at its best so well illustrates the way in which American pragmatism (at *its* best) avoided both the illusions of metaphysics and the illusions of scepticism: John Dewey. (RP 180)

6. About the climate engendered by these debates Putnam writes,

> Today, the humanities are polarized as never before, with the majority of the "new wave" thinkers in literature departments celebrating deconstruction *cum* marxism *cum* feminism ... and the majority of the analytic philosophers celebrating materialism *cum* cognitive science *cum* the

> metaphysical mysteries just mentioned [identity across possible worlds, the absolute conception of the world, etc.]. And no issue polarizes the humanities — and, increasingly, the arts as well — as much as realism, described as "logocentrism" by one side and as the "defense of the idea of objective knowledge" by the other. (DL 1 446)

7. In *Words and Life* Putnam (along with Ruth Anna Putnam) comments that

> we stand today at a place very much like that occupied by Dewey in 1938. What corresponds to the demands of progressivists is the demand for multiculturalism. Indeed, multiculturalism is an issue with which Dewey was well acquainted, even if that issue appeared to have subsided in the 1930s. (WL 221-222)

8. See, for example, *Pragmatism: An Open Question*:

> [I]n the present lectures I stress the *pluralism* and the thoroughgoing *holism* which are ubiquitous in Pragmatist writing. If the vision of fact, theory, value and interpretation as interpenetrating undermines a certain sort of metaphysical realism, it equally, I believe, undermines fashionable versions of antirealism and "postmodernism." (POQ xii)

9. Because Putnam's views have been shifting lately it seems only fair to point out that, on this issue, his thinking is still in flux. In *Pragmatism* Putnam adds that though he does not believe that truth can be defined in terms of verification, he does "agree with the pragmatists that truth and verification are not simply independent and unrelated notions. ...Understanding what truth is in any given case and understanding what confirmation is are interwoven abilities; and this is something that the pragmatists were among the first to see, even if ... they formulated their idea too simply" (POQ 11-12).

I agree with Putnam that the notion of truth cannot be defined strictly in terms of verification. However, Putnam rarely discusses the role of experience in inquiry. Without that concept, I think that Putnam will have great difficulty, qua pragmatist, in showing how truth and verification are significantly different.

10. In *Words and Life* (1994) the Putnams retracted their charge that Dewey settled for "half-truth" by substituting warranted assertability for truth. "It is worthwhile here to point out that contrary to a widespread misapprehension, which we have shared in an earlier essay, Dewey does not substitute warranted assertability for truth; rather he quotes Peirce's well-known statement that 'the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth, and the object represented by this opinion is the real'" (WL 202).

11. "The Real William James: Response to Robert Meyers," *Transactions of The Charles S. Peirce Society,* vol. 34, no. 2 (1998), 370.

12. See, for example, Montague's extended series of articles entitled "May a Realist Be a Pragmatist?" (published as *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods,* vol. 6 [1909]: 406-13, 485- 90, 543-48, 561-71), and "The Story of American Realism" in *Sources of Contemporary Philosophical Realism in America,* edited by Herbert

W. Schneider, (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1964).

13. "Professor Dewey's View of Agreement," *The Journal of Philosophy,* vol. 4, no. 16 (1907): 432- 435. Reprinted in *Dewey and His Critics: Essays from The Journal of Philosophy,* edited by Sidney Morgenbesser (Lancaster: Lancaster Press, 1977), 223-225.

14. *Dewey and His Critics,* 225.

15. Unless otherwise noted, all references to Dewey's works will be based on the critical edition by Southern Illinois U. Press. This edition includes

MW *John Dewey: The Middle Works,* 14 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1976-88).

LW *John Dewey: The Later Works,* 17 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. Press, 1981-91).

Volumes will be referred to as "MW" or "LW" followed by the volume number, a colon, and then page number(s), where appropriate.

16. By this I believe Dewey meant that the definition of *truth* was most likely of interest for historically-minded philosophers, whereas his account of *inquiry* would have a far-reaching import for all fields of knowledge.

17. In another passage from the same article, Dewey goes ahead and defines truth as a property.

> If [my] view is entertained ... it will..be clear that according to it, truth and falsity are properties only of that subject-matter which is the end, the close, of the inquiry by means of which it is reached. The distinction between true and false conclusions is determined by the character of the operational procedures through which the propositions about data and propositions about inferential elements (meanings, ideas hypotheses) are instituted. (LW 14: 176)

What needs to be noticed, here, is that Dewey has again focused upon operational procedures, which are progressive, rather than upon a traditional conception of properties, which are static. I cannot see any way that Dewey would embrace Putnam's "tenseless truth," for insofar as truth may be considered a property, it is a property which is tied to the conclusion of particular inquiry and the operational tests which might confirm it. It would not be possible to tie tenseless truths to particular inquiries in this way.

18. In fairness, I should add that Putnam seems increasingly comfortable with the idea that he *can* leave requests for the "tenselessly true" and "idealized justification" behind, and address epistemological issues as Dewey did, relying upon terms like "inquiry" and "experience." For example, in *Words and Life* Putnam writes,

> We formulate ends-in-view on the basis of experience, and we appraise these on the basis of additional experience. For a pragmatist that suffices to establish the "existence" of warranted assertibility in this area. ***And to engage in the practice of making claims that are warrantedly assertible and of criticizing such claims is to be committed to the existence of truth.*** (WL 218, emphasis mine)

19. This dual threat points toward the main strength that "pure knowledge" has for Putnam, its rhetorical force. For based on other writings it seems clear that Putnam would rule out "abstract," "theoretical," or "referring to things transcendent" as

plausible synonyms for "pure" knowledge. What remains? I cannot discern what positive meaning "pure knowledge" has for Putnam except, perhaps, "something that we seek for curiosity's sake alone." But then one must ask, is it so easy to prescind "pure curiosity" from one's complex and ongoing interests?

20. This observation, that "pure knowledge" is problematic because it disconnects knowledge from inquiry, helps to show why Putnam at first misinterpreted Dewey's notion of "warranted assertability." Earlier, Putnam stated that he believed that Dewey's phrase, "warranted assertability," was an attempt to resolve a tension between "half-truths" (James), which were regulative but tentative, and "absolute truth" (derived from Peirce), which was definite but inapplicable to experience. "Dewey", Putnam said, "proposes to remove the difficulty: he jettisons the notion of 'absolute truth' and settles for half-truth (renamed 'warranted assertibility')." What should be clear now is that "warranted assertability" is *not* an ad-hoc solution to the logical difficulties of earlier pragmatists but a natural development within Dewey's general theory of inquiry.

21. Early uncharitable construals of pragmatism's emphasis on the "practical" can be found in the criticisms of R.B. Perry, C.I. Lewis, George Santayana, and F. J. E. Woodbridge.

22. See for example, Santayana's criticisms of Dewey as an apologist for capitalism ("Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," *The Journal of Philosophy,* vol. 22, no. 25 (1925): 673-688. Reprinted in *Dewey and His Critics,* 343-358) or Cornel West's disappointment at Dewey for failing to oppose the bourgeois professionalization of philosophy *(The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*, 199).

23. About the similarity between nineteenth century problems about perception and twentieth century problems about language Putnam writes,

> The "how does language hook on to the world" issue is, at bottom, a replay of the old "how does perception hook on to the world" issue. ...Is it any wonder that one cannot see how thought and language hook on to the world if no one never mentions perception? (DL I 456)

24. This is puzzling, given how easy it is to find resources on this issue. Putnam rarely makes reference to the work done by Dewey scholars, nor does he draw upon an ample reservoir of critical books, articles, and scholarly journals devoted to Dewey's works.

25. And if one were to pose the question, Is x *really* had or known?, Dewey would reply that it depends on the particularities of the context of the inquiry. Whether x is categorized as "had" or "known" would depend, primarily, upon functional grounds.

26. It should perhaps also be noted that while primary experience possesses immediacy, that immediacy is qualitative but not cognitive. Things experienced may be, for example, scary, sweet, or familiar, but they are not examples of immediate knowledge, nor are such primary experiences some occult-like stuff out of which everything else unfolds. As Dewey noted in "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," "I do not mean by 'immediate experience' any aboriginal stuff out of which things are evolved, but I use the term to indicate the necessity of employing in philosophy the direct descriptive method that has now made its way in all the natural sciences..." (MW 3:167n). My appreciation to Frank X. Ryan for helping me see the relevance of this point.

27. On this point, see José Ortega y Gassett's *Some Lessons in Metaphysics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969): "Metaphysics is not a science; it is a construction of the

world, and this making a world out of what surrounds you is human life. The world, the universe, is not given to man; what is given to him is his circumstances, his surroundings, with their numberless contents" (121).

28. Dewey writes that "Experience occurs continuously, because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living" (LW 10: 42). Dewey adds that language "is specifically a mode of interaction of at least two beings, a speaker and a hearer; it presupposes an organized group to which these creatures belong, and from whom they have acquired their habits of speech" (LW 1: 145). On this view, meaning is explicable in fully pragmatic terms:

> For a meaning is a method of action, a way of using things as means to a shared consummation, and method is general, though the things to which it is applied is particular. ...Originating as a concerted or combined method of using or enjoying things, it indicates a possible interaction, not a thing in separate singleness. (LW 1: 147-48)

29. In other words, our present standpoint is as serious and real as our future standpoints. This is essentially the point James made about taking other people's standpoints seriously in "What Makes A Life Significant":

> Every Jack sees in his own particular Jill charms and perfections to the enchantment of which we stolid onlookers are stone cold. ...Surely to Jack are the profounder truths revealed. ... For Jack realizes Jill concretely, and we do not. ...We ought, all of us, to realize each other in this intense, pathetic, and important way. (*The Theory of Truth*, 265)