ESSAYS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMANISM

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Contents

Mind-Independent Values Don't Exist,
But Moral Truth Does

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Abstract

The falsity of moral claims is commonly deduced from two tenets: that they presuppose the existence of objective values and that these values don't exist. Hence, the error theory concludes, moral claims are false. In this article, I put pressure on the image of human morality that is presupposed in moving from the non-existence of objective values to the falsity of moral claims. I argue that, while, understood in a certain way, the two premises of the error theory are correct, this does not render moral discourse false, because moral objectivity is disanalogous to objectivity in empirical sciences and as such need not be characterized in terms of mind-independency. Using Dewey, I illuminate the possibility of accommodating the guiding intuitions of the error theory in a first-order account of morality.

Keywords
John Dewey, moral abolitionism, moral fictionalism,
moral error theory, moral truth, moral objectivity

Introduction

The moral error theorist holds that moral discourse is essentially committed to the claim that objective values exist and that this claim is false (Joyce and Kirchin 2010, xvi). A discourse being centrally committed to something means that this particular commitment is non-negotiable in the sense that denying the commitment amounts to changing the subject (the standard example being discourse about witches: we deny that this discourse is still discourse about witches if we no longer grant witches supernatural powers; Joyce 2001, 5). Applied to morality, this means that taking the element of objectivity out of moral discourse would result in the discourse not being a moral one anymore (Joyce 2008, 52). Moral discourse, this argument supposes, is moral in virtue of the fact that statements that we label 'moral' rest on some kind of objective backing and are not merely a matter of personal preference. This special status of moral discourse rests on the claim to objectivity that moral statements include.

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Clearly, to be able to grasp the upshot of this stance, it is crucially important the we understand with what kind of notion of 'objectivity' it works. It seems that what John Mackie had in mind when he speaks of objective values in putting forward the error theory were mind-independent entities that are "part of the fabric of the world" (Mackie 1977, 23). He says that if there were any objective values, they would back up and validate subjective concerns and, secondly, that it would be possible to acquire subjective concerns merely by finding something out (Mackie 1977, 22). Regarding the first point: Mackie takes it to be the case that the non-existence of objective values disallows for the possibility of validating subjective concerns because the non-existence of objective values makes it impossible for subjective concerns to be true. This firm conjugation in which objective values function as the only possible truthmakers for subjective concerns supports the reading according to which Mackie understands 'objective' as 'mind-independent'. The same goes for the second point, since it is unlikely that 'finding something out' here does not refer to finding something out that is external to oneself. On these grounds, it seems justified to say that Mackie takes 'objective' to mean 'mind-independent'.[1]

If agree to employ *this* notion of objectivity across the board, falsity of morality indeed seems an inevitable conclusion when you accept the two tenets of the error theory.[2] My quibble in this article will not be with those who feel that mind-independent values are not an actual thing. It will be with those who feel that those are the things that morality is about. It is that picture of morality that I aim to criticize. One reason to be skeptical of its correctness is its practical import.

Fictionalism and abolitionism

Falsity renders first-order ethical talk foolish. As such, the error theorists have given us a number of advices of how to continue with ethics on a prudential basis. Two of the most prominent are moral fictionalism and abolitionism.[3]

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1. I have pushed this point quickly. That is because I take it to be a rather uncontroversial one. It is not uncommon to paraphrase Mackie's understanding of objectivity as mind-independency without further elaboration (for example Lillehammer 2004). Kirchin writes (not as a conclusion but as an opening statement): "It is clear that by saying of something that it is "objective" Mackie means to say that it is independent of people's responses, desires and commitments" (2010, 175).

2. Henceforth, "error theory" denotes "moral error theory" (as opposed to other error theories about, for instance, aesthetic discourse).

3. This is not to deny that other, more novel "advices" have been formulated. These include conservationism (Olson 2014), revisionary naturalism (Husi 2014; Lutz 2014) and revisionary expressivism (Svoboda 2015). Because I lack the space to discuss them all, I focus on abolitionism and fictionalism because they figure largest in the literature. For

Moral abolitionism is the idea that since moral discourse contains an error, the rational thing to do is to stop using it and give up moral language (Garner 2010). It is not clear how viable this alternative is, since, one way or another, we still have to settle on a way living with each other. We cannot do this if we forego moral discourse altogether. Therefore, it seems that there is no way to get around ethics (Blackburn 1998, 14-23; Dewey 1923, 57-58, 326). Abolitionists, though, still content that morality has more downsides than it has upsides. By contrast, it is widely noted that morality has large benefits in regulating how we live together. While morality sometimes has unwished consequences, it is a mistake to base on this a general doing away of moral discourse (Warnock 1971, 156).

Moral fictionalism suggests that, even though it's false, moral discourse has practical advantages and therefore moral language should be retained (Nolan, Restall, and West 2005, 308; Joyce 2001, 173). Moral statements would purely be made for the beneficial effects of the moral element, but not as an expression of moral beliefs. It requires a "shift from belief to make-belief and from assertion to fictive-utterance" (West 2010, 196). By going this route, moral fictionalists aim to retain the benefits of moral discourse without paying a high price. However, going the fictionalist route does not enable one to reap all the benefits of moral discourse and has higher costs than the fictionalist assumes.

The benefits are smaller because it is not likely that the useful consequences that flow from people making moral statements and thinking that they are true are preserved when people go on to make such moral statements and only merely pretend to think that they are true. It might very well be the case that the reason why beneficial consequences have flowed from people using moral language and insisting on the truth of their moral statements is that their insistence was real and did not look to the consequences but rather toward the truth and that without insistence on truth the beneficial consequences may fade (in stating this, I'm looking to Williams 2004, especially 12–19, 57–62).

Also, being a fictionalist has significant costs which diminish the attractiveness of the option even more. It requires significant mental effort not to slip into actually believing the moral propositions one accepts and fictively utters. One should constantly be on alert not to accidently slip into moral belief. This reveals a deep practical tension in moral fictionalism, for it seems that for the moral make-belief to have the desired effects (of a real morality), the

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instance, Joyce and Kirchin write that It is commonly assumed that the error theorist has two options to choose from regarding his preferred first-order ethical theory (2010, xxiii) and Joyce speaks of a "two horse race" between moral fictionalism and moral abolitionism (2005, 209).

belief that morality is actually a fiction should be suppressed (Olson 2014, 189).

Fictionalism, furthermore, implies a "twisted allegiance" (Huti 2014, 81) with the original discourse already recognized as flawed. It has something unnatural to (after having diagnosed falsity) simply go on to make-believe and utter fictively. Moreover, this entails practical issues: the cost of adopting fictionalism are raised because communication becomes difficult. Given that not everyone will become an error theorist miscommunications are bound to happen. In sum, fictionalism is an unattractive alternative since it has limited advantages and significant costs.

After this short review, I contend that both positions have problems as a first-order ethical system. Can we construct a better alternative, given the premises of the error theory? I believe we can. Fictionalism and abolitionism presuppose that moral discourse is false. This underlying assumption is what forces them to an unsatisfactory, estranging "twisted allegiance" or to an unrealistic, untenable position "against ethics" (Burgess 2010). Without the assumption of falsity, this can be avoided. But isn't the falsity of moral discourse a matter of logic when we accept the tenets of the error theory?

Conceptual space

Not necessarily, or so I argue. The nature of moral discourse provides conceptual space for a redefinition of truth and objectivity in the moral domain. This in turn allows us to reconstruct the error theoretic argument so that it does not lead to falsity. I will argue that moral discourse is only committed to *moral* objectivity, so that the non-existence of mind-independent values does not entail falsity of moral discourse, because mind-independent values are not the only available objective truthmakers for moral claims (because moral beliefs are not descriptive). Moral objectivity is not in the same ballpark as the notion of objectivity that we use in the natural sciences; it is a mistake to assume that objectivity in morals must be analogous to objectivity in empirical science. Therefore, morality's commitment to objectivity can be vindicated in the absence of mind-independent values.

Moral objectivity does not depend on the existence of mind-independent values because moral discourse is not in the business of describing or representing the world. Blackburn takes morality to be "defined by its practical role" (1998, 1). As such, moral beliefs are not descriptive. This, in turn, entails that they are not necessarily true due to correspondence with a mind-independent reality. Moral discourse cannot make knowledge claims of that kind, as the error theorist rightly observes. It is, however, a mistake to put that epistemological activity at the center of morality, because morality is not about representing or describing the world. It is no wonder, then, that it

fails at making knowledge claims that are descriptive of a mind-independent reality. The error theory thus correctly concludes that morality cannot make absolute knowledge claims, that projects to find independent moral truths are doomed and that strictly speaking categorical reasons don't exist. I believe that these are the actual lessons we should take away from the error theory. Considered like this, the intuitions guiding the error theory are, in my opinion, correct. The route that error theorists take from there, on the other hand, is suboptimal.

That is because, contrary to what abolitionism and fictionalism assume, the non-existence of mind-independent values and morality's commitment to objectivity together simply don't entail the falsity of moral discourse. It is a mistake to conceive of morality as a primarily epistemic undertaking. Since moral knowledge is not descriptive and is of pragmatic nature, moral beliefs can be true in virtue of a mind-dependent reality. Morality is not in the business of representing the world, so moral claims can be true in virtue of other things than mind-independent facts. Because the subject matter is different, truthmaking functions differently when morality is concerned. Therefore, falsity of moral discourse does not follow from the non-existence of objective moral values.

The guiding intuitions of the error theory could then roughly be redefined as follows. The conceptual claim will read that "morality is centrally committed to the existence of moral objectivity" and the ontological claim will postulate that "mind-independent values don't exist." But the conjunction of these premises does not entail falsity of moral discourse, as made clear by the third premise, which states that "moral objectivity does not depend on the existence of mind-independent objective values." This way, we can maintain the metaphysical intuition of the error theory about what the world is like (it does not contain mind-independent values), while at the same time accommodating the strong human intuition that many of our moral judgments are true.

Morality as social knowledge

The error theorist might object that this non-objectivistic[4] picture of morality is not feasible or realistic. To counter this I will now briefly sketch the kind of morality that emerges from it.

Pragmatism urges that we should not make epistemology primus when trying to understand human morality. Like me, it rejects the assumption that the possibility of moral judgments obtaining a positive truth value depends on the existence of mind-independent truthmakers. Like the error theory, it

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4. Here I understand the label "objectivistic" to mean that objectivistic proposition X has truth-conditions that obtain independent of attitudes (Kahane 2011, 121n1).

eschews appeal to a priori moral knowledge but also dismisses the naturalist claim that moral properties are part of the fabric of the world (Campbell 2015, 22). Pragmatism rejects the picture of morality in which the truth value of moral judgments is determined by inspecting their correspondence to mind-independent values, rules or criteria (and in which the absence of such things would thus make it impossible for moral judgments to be true), because it rejects the notion of rationality undergirding that view (LaFolette 2000, 401). The idea that adherence to a prior, mind-independent realm is at the heart of morality overrationalizes human beings. In practice, morality is not the product of conscious deliberation. Hence, it is a mistake to give such a central role to possible correspondence to a mind-independent realm when espousing one's theory of human morality.

In line with this, Dewey's ethics replaces the goal of identifying an ultimate end or supreme principle that can serve as a criterion of ethical evaluation with the goal of identifying a method for improving our value judgments (Anderson 2014, 1). In his view, the standards of correctness of value judgments are devised internal to practice. This is compatible with the error theorist's contention that mind-independent moral values don't exist. But as morality is primarily a practice and not an epistemic undertaking, moral judgments can be true in virtue of a mind-dependent reality. We can acknowledge the existence of moral truths without being committed to moral realism.

On this approach, moral facts are truths rather than truthmakers. Moral truths are "ratified conjectures" (Wilson 2010, 111). It is this ratification, and not correspondence to something mind-independent, that gives certain conjectures their status of truths. When this happens, these conjectures are *deemed to* correspond to moral facts, which are *envisioned as* existing mind-independently (Wilson 2010, 112, emphasis added). If these ratified conjectures are the moral truths—the moral commitments adopted or the moral beliefs maintained by individuals or larger social groups—they fix the (locally valid) extensions of "moral goodness" and "moral badness." It follows that they must have some bearing on what things in the world are morally good and bad. As Faraci (2015, 2061) points out, an account of moral knowledge can't be fully perceptual because moral perception is always mediated by "moral bridge principles": to know when a moral property is instantiated, we need background knowledge of relations between moral and non-moral properties. Moral truths as ratified conjectures provide such background knowledge.

This account is compatible with how children actually acquire moral knowledge. Haidt and Joseph (2008) explain that this more a process of socialization than a process of finding out about the contents of a mind-independent realm. It consists in getting acquainted with the ratified conjectures that are

moral truths in one's environment; gaining moral knowledge is "discovering" this mind-dependent reality rather than trying to figure out mind-independent moral truthmakers of whatever form. Research from developmental psychology suggests that children construct their moral knowledge in a cultural context and that we make certain moral judgments rather than others because of the way certain native intuitions (that are the product of evolution) develop relative to our "sphere of existence" (Haidt and Joseph 2008, 388, 393; see also Haidt 2001 828–832; Haidt and Bjorklund 2007, 203–206). As such, good moral judgments are considered as 'good' because they align with mind-dependent standards, rather than their alleged correspondence to mind-independent moral facts (see Narvaez 2010, 165–166 who points out this "virtue-as-enculturation" implication, and see reply by Haidt 2010).

To give an example: when I exclaim that "kicking dogs for fun is wrong" I am not pretending to have discovered something. The point of this speech-act will not be to make a knowledge claim. Moral knowledge does not come in Eureka-moments. The point of my utterance will be to voice a moral truth. Moral facts are moral truths that are true in virtue of a certain mind-dependent reality. Moral knowledge always requires bridge principles to link natural facts (for example the pain of the dog and the reason for inflicting it) to moral facts (that it is wrong) and these bridge principles we know because of our culture-relative upbringing. Moral knowledge means knowing these ratified conjectures.

The challenge for the person who denies realism, is to give an account of what makes moral judgments true. The way to prevent falling back into the kind of realism that is sensitive to the error theory's arguments is insisting that what accounts for the truthmaking relationship is not the naturalistic essence of moral properties that can be discovered, but human mediation. Moral properties are not antecedently 'out there' awaiting our discovery (cf. Kitcher 2011, 285). As a result, the reason why certain natural facts stand in the truthmaking relation to moral facts is due to human mediation, and not to any a posteriori identity or reduction relation between moral and natural properties (Asay 2013, 228). This "human mediation" is the role that ratified conjectures as moral bridge principles play. Hence, the truthmakers for moral claims remain natural phenomena, but we cannot explain why they make moral judgments true without invoking moral agents who make moral evaluations (see also Asay 2012, 383). There can be no understanding of the relation between the natural world and moral judgments without fully appreciating the mediating role played by moral agents (see also Williams 2004, 203–205, 237).

This all sounds wonderful, one might think, but can we realistically conceive such an account of morality? That is, can we actually work such notions

of moral truth and objectivity into a coherent theory of morality and how would that work? Using Dewey, I illustrate that this is in fact possible. In his philosophy we find an image of morality that accommodates moral objectivity without relying on mind-independent values. The desiderata of the error theorist can be fulfilled while recognizing the reality of moral truth.

The Deweyan alternative

Dewey's philosophy is generally well-known, as are its shortcomings. One could say that his writings are not without ambiguities, which have prompted multiple, and sometimes conflicting, interpretations. To acknowledge this, I will proceed by offering two interpretations of Dewey's pragmatism: one that is crudely instrumentalist, which I will criticize, followed by a more sophisticated reading of Dewey that will provide the building blocks for a theory of moral truth that can meet the error theorist's concerns. To set the stage, I begin with reiterating a few of Dewey's remarks about the general nature of morality.

According to Dewey, moral statements do not concern a theoretical order and ethical knowledge is not a matter of "recognition" (Dewey 2004, 234). A moral judgment, for Dewey, is not a theoretical but a practical judgment (McCarthy 1999, 348; Anderson 2014, 5). In other words, it does not concern the "state of things", but "something to be done" (Dewey 1975, 108; 2004, 214). This is an important conceptual distinction, because an epistemological understanding of ethics, according to which its statements primarily have a descriptive function and its aim is to discover mind-independent moral facts or moral properties of objects that we can recognize, gives the game away to an error theory according to which moral discourse is false.

Moral discourse need not make correct claims about mind-independent facts or properties to be true. Rather, its business is achieving "adequate coordination" (Dewey 1988, 234). Ethical inquiry yields prescriptive norms, rather than descriptive statements. In its broadest sense, morality concerns our living together (see also Blackburn 1998, 39; Morton 2003). If moral statements aren't true in virtue of giving an adequate description of detached entities, in virtue of what, then, can we say that statements uttered in moral discourse are true? For Dewey, on the instrumentalist interpretation, practical judgments are a means to reach a certain end. Whether or not this end is reached, determines the truth of the judgment. Consider the following statement:

> [Negative moral propositions are] propositions assigning a relative negative to existing conditions; a comparatively positive value to a prospective set of conditions; and intermediate propositions intended to evoke activities that will bring about a transformation from one state of affairs to the other. There are thus involved (i) aversion to an existing situation and attraction toward

a prospective possible situation and (ii) a specifiable and testable relation between the latter as an end and certain activities as means for accomplishing it. (Dewey 1988, 202, original emphasis)

The truth value of such a proposition consists in its adequacy as means (Dewey 1988, 205, 211; 2004, 221). The worth of a moral judgment supervenes on its ability to solve the problem presented by the conditions under investigation (Dewey 1988, 232). Hence, a moral law is (merely, I would add) a formula of the way to respond when specified conditions present themselves (Dewey 1929, 278).

There is something that feels off about this conception of a moral statement. Something seems to be missing in such crude instrumentalism, for an important element of making a moral judgment is that you want to do more than just achieve a certain state of the world, because the act of expressing a moral judgment has itself an internal value to a moral agent. When someone is trying to convince others of a certain moral belief he has, he wants them to change their minds, "without their needs figuring as a premiss in an argument" (Williams 2004, 262). Expressing one's disapproval is often a goal as such; something one feels one should do, regardless of the efficacy of the judgment uttered. The voicing of one's moral opinion has more to it than just being a means to a certain end that could in principle also be reached in different ways. On the Dewey-as-instrumentalist reading of moral truth, however, the reaching of such ends seems to be all that matters in making moral claims. If those ends are not reached, the moral judgment was in error. This paints an unrealistic view of moral deliberation: failing to reach world peace does not mean that my judgment that world peace is a good thing is incorrect (given the current specific conditions). Ethical commitments, thus, are different from 'mere' desires to reach a certain end. Moral judgments hold sway over our wants and preferences. Consequentially, moral discourse is not on equal footing with any other normative framework, as the instrumentalist Dewey would have it (or so it seems). As such, this position does not seem to fit well with the standpoint of the morally deliberating agent, who feels that he simply cannot do this or must do that.

In essence, in making moral statements, more seems to be going on than this Dewey allows. For instance, he thought of moral judgments as tools for discovering how to live a better life (Anderson 2014, 7; Dewey 1983, 19–26; 1984, 88–89). I hold that the correspondence between reaching a certain end and being morally true is misplaced. That beliefs are necessary to reach certain ends does not show them to be true; value judgments are considerably more than that. When we say "stealing money is wrong" we are not only aiming to achieve certain ends but we are "both asserting something about stealing money and expressing a conative acceptance of a standard that condemns

the activity" (Joyce 2006, 54). This "conative acceptance of a standard" captures what Dewey's instrumentalist analysis of morality seems to be missing: moral statements are not intrinsically neutral, but communicate active approval or disapproval. That makes it clear that their meaning is not exhausted in dubbing them tools to live a better life. People do not simply change their moral ideas when other ideas turn out to suit them better. It is precisely when this happens that we feel that the person who shows this mental flexibility did not grasp the moral gist of the issue at hand.

A view like the technocrat interpretation of Dewey severally devalues the personal element that is involved in making moral claims. We now know from empirical research that moral convictions are to a large extent based on emotion (see Haidt 2013; Prinz 2006, 29–37; Nichols 2004). Moreover, making a moral judgment says something about the agent in the extent to which he identifies with it; it says something more than having decided upon the best means to reach a certain end. The meaning of moral judgments is to a large extent intrinsic (in that it does not lay in achieving ends, but they are often uttered for the sake of a principle), rather than instrumental. Exhausting the relevance of moral judgments in an instrumentalist way, like this Dewey does, is certainly having "one thought too many" (Williams 1981, 18). Such an approach almost by definition misses the essence of moral life.

To conclude, I have argued that the attainment of the desired consequences is an unsatisfactory truth condition for moral judgments. For what makes a consequence desirable? Dewey owes us a genuine moral criterion rather here, rather than employing efficacy as the evaluation standard. Yet he is evasive about this deliberation about final ends[5] and gives different definitions regarding the standard of practical judgment. He (1923, 211), for example, says that "in quality, the good is never twice alike." He attempts to give different formulations in several places, but the air of evasion remains. Accordingly, I agree with Richardson (1998, 113) that Dewey's formulations for the standard of practical judgment "represent a merely verbal achievement".

As mentioned, there is another possible interpretation of Dewey's writings. In particular, I will focus on an alternative Deweyian conception of truth, because I owe the reader an explanation of how moral claims can obtain a truth value after having rejected Dewey's instrumentalism. That is, a gap in Dewey's ethics should be closed by providing a criterion for practical judgments that goes beyond Dewey's own rather half-baked sug-

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5.   It has been suggested that Dewey regarded ends as given (Diggins 1994, 242).

gestions for such a standard. In what follows, I depict an alternative Deweyian theory of truth, proposed by Richardson (1998), which presents a conception of truth that fits this bill. It gives a formal characterization to the mind-dependent truth I invoked when laying out the idea of morality as social knowledge.

Deweyian moral truth

That there is no such thing as *the* truth about morality (i.e., moral claims do not correspond to something mind-independent) means that while we must demand that ethical statements tell us the truth, in the sense that they should not lie or mislead, what we need them for is not to tell something that is called *the* truth about morality. Nevertheless, the value of inquiry should be explained in terms of truth (Williams 2004; Richardson 1998, 130). The pragmatist accordingly should insist that there is room to deliberatively specify the end of truth by reference to desiderata (i.e. when do we say of something that it is "true") and that we must remain open to doing so anew (Richardson 1998, 130). This indicates that moral truths on this account are a matter of social knowledge, since specifying these ends in the absence of an available mind-independent truth is a social matter which outcome will be relative to the "sphere of existence."

Next, Richardson wonders how truth is to function as the end of inquiry; how may we conceive of truth, such that it could function as the end of the practical activity of inquiry? (1998, 134). He dismisses correspondence theories of truth: "it is on its way to answering this question, as Dewey rightly perceived, that the traditional conception of truth as correspondence falls flat on its face: perhaps [...] we can meaningfully conceive of an object, the True, to which successful belief corresponds. We cannot, however, meaningfully construct a relationship between any particular truth and any part of that object." He goes on to argue that coherence theories of truth fare no better. Truth-as-coherence cannot serve as the final end that differentiates inquiry from other forms of activity, because its characterization depends upon a prior understanding of inquiry. His pragmatist theory of truth, which he takes to be suggested by Dewey's understanding of practical reasoning, avoids these problems because it does not propose a final epistemic ideal nor postulates something to which truths somehow correspond:

> Instead, the pragmatist inquirer seeks (1) to get things right, but recognizes that to reduce the indeterminacy of this aim, she must also (2) be open to specifying the aim of truth by reference to epistemic or coherence desiderata. In order not to fall back into the coherentist camp, however, she must insist on her fallibility with regard to her specification of the end of truth. That is, she must also aim (3) to get the specification of the aim of truth right.
>
> (Richardson 1998, 135)

In other words, for a statement to be true is for a statement to fulfill certain desiderata (the specification of the aim of truth), which are themselves open to revision.

The desiderata exhaust what it means to be true. Consequentially, as Dewey notes: "The abstract meaning of truth, of being true, for example, has changed with the development of experimental inquiry [since that meant a different specification of the aim of truth came into being]" (1982, 179). An illustration of how different specifications of moral truths can come into being (i.e., how moral progress can occur) without moral realism (i.e. moral progress is not explained by gaining more accurate knowledge of mind-independent entities) is offered by Wilson. According to her, we can speak of moral progress when the betterness of a new moral theory can be grasped through "unidirectional narratives" of progress. This is the case when for a shift from one moral belief to another a narrative of belief change is constructed that is considered progressive. Wilson explains:

> [m]oral truths are the possible endpoints of progressive episodes of theory-change, the termini of unidirectionally-related belief-pairs, and to believe that it will someday be known whether P, where P is some currently controversial moral proposition, is to be committed to the proposition that either a narrative will someday exist that can represent—P to P irreversibly as progress, or else a narrative will exist that can represent P to—P irreversibly as progress. (2010, 112)

It is by such procedures, outlined by Richardson, that ratified conjectures become moral truths. Wilson and Richardson show that there is a way to determine the truth of moral statements, without the need for a mind-independent realm. This being the case, one can sense that this might provide a starting point for meeting the error theorist's concerns, because a part of the reason for the error theorist's diagnosis of the falsity of moral discourse is that Mackie's queer entities did not turn out to be around to make moral judgments true. On this pragmatist understanding of truth, by contrast, that need not necessarily be a problem.

Deweyian moral objectivity

Recasting moral truth and morality as social knowledge in the way I have done, with a central role for human mediation, might seem to give up on the conceptual claim of the error theory. Having rejected the possibility that natural facts alone serve as a sufficient ground for moral judgments, the question is raised in virtue of what moral judgments can be judged to be *objectively* true. To meet this concern, I will augment the Deweyian alternative by contending that not all episodes of mediation are created equal: what makes moral statements objectively true or false is the quality of the inquiry from which the moral judgment results.

This may raise some skepticism. But why should it be assumed that moral judgments cannot be objective unless such judgments are true or false statements about some mind-independent reality? At any rate, not making this assumption does not at all entail moral subjectivism. As is hopefully clear from the discussion of the notion moral truth I have put forward, subjectivistic approaches to morality don't yield moral truths—so never mind their status with regard to being "objective" moral truths. The same goes for other things usually meant when an opinion is confronted with the charge of being 'subjective', such as hidden bias or lack of knowledge. Moral judgments infused with such flaws do not become "ratified"—the principle of objectivity when relating to non-representative statements such as ethical ones is primarily a principle of falsification: it's a normative concept.

After this preceding remark, let's get concrete. For the necessity of human mediation, in morals, and the fact that ethical statements are not in the business of representing the world, which enables them to be true in virtue of a mind-dependent reality, does call for a substantial fleshing out of "objectivity." Since, obviously, the previously discussed notion of "mind-independence" is off the table for the moral anti-realist.

As mentioned, moral judgments are the result of Deweyian practical inquiry and necessarily involve human mediation. And these processes do not occur in a black box. Dewey already pointed out that inquiry itself involves conditions to be satisfied (1988, 71). He holds that the objectivity of a judgment supervenes on the quality of the inquiry from which it results (Dewey 1989, 63), speaks of the "supremacy of method" (1929, 223–253; 1988, 62–80) and maintains that conclusions resulting from inquiry owe their worth to the method employed (1988, 65). This kind of objectivity is not an objectivity *sub specie aeternitaties*, but the objectivity of a critical distance, of a point of view that allows for some intersubjective validity and for the correcting of personal biases and the like. What matters is that we do not make our moral judgments from a "personal slant" (Rawls 1971, 517). On this reading of objectivity, a view is more objective if it depends less on idiosyncrasies (cf. Nagel 1986, 5). Blackburn similarly puts forward that to be objective a view has to "take enough into consideration. It has to be sensitive to what matters" (1999, 221). When one is sensitive to the wrong considerations, the quality of inquiry is low to the extent that the episode of mediation that takes place yields incorrect moral judgments (see also Dewey 1988, 354). Basing educational policies on gender is an example that Blackburn gives of a moral judgment ("women should not be educated") where the determination of a moral property based on a natural object is wrong, because it is sensitive to the wrong considerations (gender, in this case). This makes the moral judgment objectively wrong. Objectivity is possible when practices of mediation

go beyond personal biases (cf. Dewey 1989, 68). It requires reassessment of whether a moral judgment can be upheld in light of other moral considerations that might be thought to defeat it. When a certain practice of mediation, or an episode of inquiry, is of high quality in this sense and yields moral judgments which consistently pass the scrutiny they demand, we can say the inquiry genuinely aims at the truth. It can then yield objective moral truths.

What is the connection, on this account, between moral truth and moral objectivity? Objectivity is logically more primitive. The verification of a moral proposition occurs when, and only when, we judge objectively that it survives scrutiny. Moral truths as ratified conjectures are thus in a way *second* to a falsification-test which, if passed, makes a moral proposition be accepted as objective, for now. Thus: "Truth, as Peirce first proposed, is opinion that is the outcome of certain definite procedures and that has survived certain definite tests" (Wilson 2010, 112).

Two objections

I explicitly couched the Deweyan alternative as compatible with the guiding intuitions of the error theory. However, error theorists may object to this intellectual snuggling because in the Deweyan alternative moral truths are true in virtue of a mind-dependent reality, while it is precisely the rejection of moral truth that prompted the error theory in the first place. Doesn't the Deweyan alternative (by denying the existence of mind-independent values) simply deny that the conceptual claim made by the error theory is true?

It seems myopic to uphold mind-independency as an ultimate end—no questions asked. One may rightly wonder *what for* mind-independency is needed in the conceptual claim. Mackie's writings make clear that he considers mind-independency to be constitutive of objectivity. Hence, the demand for mind-independency in essence posits that morality is centrally committed to a positive claim about the existence of *objective truthmakers* for moral claims. If not this (objective truthmakers), then what is the fuss about mind-independent values? Allowing a mind-dependent moral truth does not entail maintaining that the error-theoretical conceptual claim is false, because it can accommodate objective truthmakers for moral claims. As argued, moral objectivity is not the same kind of objectivity that we demand in discourses that are primarily epistemological. As such, the conceptual tenet of the error theory can be reconciled with allowing for a mind-dependent objective moral truth, because mind-independent values are not the only possible objective truthmakers for moral claims.

Stated somewhat differently, this objection fails because it confuses mind-dependency with subjectivism. In moral discourse, mind-independency is not necessary for objectivity. Since morality is not a descriptive dis-

course, the isomorphism between objectivity and mind-independency that Mackie signals does not apply. This is so because (as I have advertised) morality is not a matter of discovering mind-independent facts.[6]

The unique nature of ethical knowledge and ethical truthmaking allows objective statements in moral discourse without mind-independent truthmakers. Thus, morality can be objective without moral statements being statements about something called 'objective reality'.[7] Hence, this objection turns on an incorrect idea about the general nature of ethics. Since practice defines ethics (Blackburn 1998, 1), it cannot be regarded as a positive science (see the discussion and rejection of Dewey's instrumentalist views) and "traditional" philosophical notions regarding the meaning of the terms "subjective" and "objective" should be abandoned so far as ethics is concerned.

Perhaps so, one might reply, but in that case, what is left of moral truth? The price of sidestepping mind-independency is too high to pay, because the resulting moral truth is not substantive enough to do the job. Moral truth cannot be maintained; fictionalism and abolitionism were on the right track after all.

In responding to this, I want to begin with saying that it is not clear to me why, given the qualifications I have given to moral truth on the Deweyian account on the one hand, and the disanalogy between natural facts and truthmaking and ethical facts and truthmaking on the other, there is sufficient ground to be unhappy with the pragmatic notion of moral truth I have defended or to maintain that it is not substantive enough. Nonetheless, the intuition that the pragmatic truth I defended is somehow inferior, which seems to underlie this opposition, is imaginable. Accordingly, I will try to characterize it a bit further before giving my reply.

Someone who puts forward this "inferior truth-objection" is concerned with the mind-dependency of the Deweyian moral truth, since, I assume, it differs from her intuitions about what the truth ("TRUTH") means. Maintaining talk about genuine truth and foregoing mind-independency don't go together, since because mind-independency is dropped on this account, it

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6. Three "novel" arguments against moral realism also point towards moral facts being of a different nature. The immunity argument shows that moral facts function disanalogously to scientific facts when functioning as possible evidence (Barber 2013). McGrath (2011), secondly, makes clear that skepticism about moral expertise and moral deference indicates a disanalogy between moral knowledge and empirical knowledge. Sauer, thirdly, points out that the difference in exculpatory power between factual ignorance and moral ignorance similarly hints at such a disanalogy (forthcoming).

7. An example of this is given by Campbell and Kumar (2013) who aim to show that a mind-dependent conception of moral truth can be robustly objective in the sense that it allows for the possibility of moral error among would-be knowers despite all efforts to know the truth.

cannot yield "real" (not-inferior) truth. She holds that the pragmatic truth I presented is too concessive to, at the end of the day, count for anything, so there is no real difference between this Deweyian account, fictionalism and abolitionism. 'TRUTH', for her, has to be something "more." Stated differently, the Deweyian alternative is not capable of delivering truth, but merely, when specifying the end of truth as Richardson suggested, truthfulness. This accusation of merely having saved truthfulness, however, need not worry proponents of the Deweyian alternative, because there is nothing 'mere' about truthfulness in moral discourse.

That is because "the truth about morality" simply doesn't exist. There is no ultimate big question the answer to which delivers the truth about morality. It is therefore not at all clear to what the pragmatic notion of truth is taken to be inferior when applied to moral discourse. This critique assumes "TRUTH" to be an identifiable, robust property. The person advancing it must take herself to have some more metaphysically heavyweight conception of what it is for there to be moral truths really and compared with this genuine article, the pragmatic truth only allows talk as if there are moral truths (cf. Blackburn 1998, 319). In ethical matters, it seems unlikely to me that any such coherent conception of TRUTH is out there.

Consequently, what Williams echoes with his notion of "truthfulness" approximately captures what it means for a statement uttered in moral discourse to be true. Truthfulness implies respect for the truth, it entails that an agent wants to go beyond deceiving and is actively concerned to tell the truth. When there is no ultimate truth about morality to track, that seems all there is to go on. This entails that ethical knowledge has a different nature than natural knowledge (because we do suppose that we can find out "the truth" about, for example, the laws of gravity). When the knowledge you're after necessarily involves an agent's participation in the determination of the answer, the logical mind-dependency of the truth you end up with does not render it inferior to some kind of heavy-weight transcendental notion of truth that does not exist for morality in the first place. The accusation of inferiority, I conclude, is misplaced.

The Deweyian alternative can meet two objections that I would think are among the most pressing ones. Apart from that, its core strength resides in providing a metaethical account that rejects an unfitting epistemological understanding of morality without being naively instrumentalist. At the same time, it upholds moral objectivity and moral truth without taking recourse to an improbable moral realism. Therefore, the Deweyian alternative is a metaethical option that is worth to be taken seriously.[8]

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Understanding Kant's Ethics:
From the Antinomy of Practical Reason to a Comparison with Kierkegaard's Spheres of Existence

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Abstract

The paper discusses Kant's view concerning the nature of human existence. Its point of departure is Kant's "Antinomy of practical reason," where Kant confronts between the metaphysical and empirical aspects of human existence. Kant's discussion of this issue continues in "Critique of the aesthetical judgment," where he considers the aesthetic experience as a synthesis between these two aspects of human existence. At the end, the paper compares between Kant's view and Kierkegaard's idea of the different spheres of human existence for clarifying Kant's existential view, which is implied in his texts but does not appear as an explicit thesis in his writings.

Keywords
Antinomy, aesthetic, ethics, existence, Kant, Kierkegaard

> [I]n regard to the essential ends of human nature
> the highest philosophy cannot advance further than
> is possible under the guidance which nature has bestowed
> even upon the most ordinary understanding.
>
> (Kant 1992, 652)

In his book *Critique of Judgment*, Kant deals with the unification of the two worlds in which he had placed Man in his previous *Critiques*. In these earlier *Critiques*, he argued that Man lives in both empirical world and metaphysical world. The first world is known by our theoretical reason and the second by our practical reason. The explicit goal of the third *Critique* is to analyze the unification of these two reasons, yet it directs Kant to the esthetic dimension of human existence and by this to new insights concerning human existence.

Kant already deals with this double existence of Man in the dialectics of *Critique of Practical Reason*, when he has to explain the causal relation

between the moral law, which is a metaphysical law, and Mam's happiness, which is a feeling and therefore empirical, within the concept of *the supreme good* (*summum bonum*). Kant maintains that every ethical stance commits to the connection between morality and happiness, and is aware that his stance makes it particularly difficult to explain this connection. This is the antinomy of *Critique of Practical Reason*, and Kant explicitly states that the validity of his moral philosophy depends on resolving it:

> If then the supreme good is not possible by practical rules, then the moral law also which commands us to promote it is directed to vain imaginary ends, and must consequently be false. (Kant 2004, 122)

Kant's discussion of this antinomy throws light on his perception of Man and the meaning of his existence in the two worlds. The solution he proposes for this antinomy contains significant claims concerning the connection he sees between these two worlds. Therefore, I will begin this paper with Kant's discussion of "The antinomy of practical reason."

The issue of the two worlds is the focal issue in the *Critique of Judgment*. In his introduction to this book Kant states that he aims to reveal the faculty that bridges the gap between theoretical and practical reason. He claims that this faculty is the power of judgement (*Urteilskraft*). Kant distinguishes between determinant judgement, which merely stands for the application of a general law to a particular case, and reflective judgement, which is a more interesting phenomenon in this context as well as in the larger context of human existence. Reflective judgement is the ability to reach general judgement by observing a particular instance. Kant argues that this requires the involvement of a-priori principle in this judgement which he introduces already in the introduction: "the *purposiveness of nature* in its manifoldness." (Kant 2005, 68) This means that reflective judgement is made as if this purposiveness exists in nature, but actually reflects Man's relation to nature. In the first part of the book, Kant discusses the aesthetic experience (the beautiful and the sublime) as a manifestation of this capability and as a point of meeting between the empirical and the metaphysical aspects of human existence.[1] My claim is that this makes Kant's discussion of aesthetic judgement especially important for understanding his view concerning human existence.

Kant introduces three spheres of human existence: empirical, metaphysical and aesthetic. The metaphysical sphere is, for Kant, the highest one, because it is a manifestation of pure reason. Much like Plato, Kant places on this existential sphere Man's freedom and other ideas. However, Kant also sees Man as part of the empirical world, whose laws determine his existence as that of

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1.   Schiller will base his idea of aesthetic education on Kant's insight in this discussion; see Schiller 1965..

any other object in this sphere. In Kant's thought, the conflict between these two spheres lies in the very foundation of human existence. Human sensual desires, determined by empirical laws, on the one hand, and human will, determined by reason, on the other hand, give rise to the conflict between human beings' empirical and metaphysical existence. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant suggests that the aesthetical sphere is an intermediary sphere that helps man rise above his sensual (empirical) existence on the way to his rational (metaphysical) existence. Therefore, he considers the aesthetic experience as having a special existential value for human beings. Since it is an experience and not a pure recognition, Kant needs to analyze in this discussion the way human beings experience reality and not only the way they think on it; this enables us to learn more about Kant's perception of human existence.

The Antinomy of the *Critique of Practical Reason*

The Antinomy of the *Critique of Practical Reason* springs from the concept of *the supreme good*. This concept, claims Kant, defines the goal of practical reason. Kant maintains that this goal is identical with the original purpose of philosophical thinking. Philosophy, being the love of wisdom, is an intellectual activity which has a practical goal: living in the light of the supreme good. Therefore, only one who succeeds in living such a life may be regarded as a philosopher. This point is extremely important for the present discussion, because it takes Kant back to the existential meaning of Greek philosophy, specifically that of Socrates, and enables connecting it convincingly with later existentialist philosophy. Further in this article, I compare Kant's existential stance with that of Kierkegaard, in order to summarize the conclusions that emerge from the discussion of Kant's existential stance.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant maintains that philosophy aspires for a worthy human existence, which can only be realized through reason. Kant, much like Socrates, considers this a lifelong task that is fulfilled rarely and only with much effort:

> Thus philosophy as well as wisdom would always remain an ideal, which objectively is presented complete in reason alone, while subjectively for the person it is only the goal of his unceasing endeavors, and no one would be justified in professing to be in passion of it so as to assume the name of a philosopher, who could not also show its infallible effects in his own person as an example […] and this the ancients also required as a condition of deserving that honorable title. (Kant 2004, 116)

The discussion in "The analytics of pure practical reason" teaches that morality stands for will insofar as will is determined by reason and not by experience. In this discussion, Kant rejects the option of establishing morality

on the basis of empirical principles, including the concept of happiness. Moreover, he distinguishes between a doctrine of morality (*Sittenlehre*), which is not at all based on experience, and a doctrine of happiness, which is based exclusively on experience, and harshly attacks any attempt to formulate an empirical doctrine of morality:

> However, there are still many who think that they can explain this freedom on empirical principles, like any other physical faculty, and treat it as a *psychological* property, the explanation of which only requires a more exact study of the *nature of the soul* and of the motives of the will, and not as a *transcendental* predicate of the causality of a being that belongs to the world of sense […] They thus deprive us of the grand revelation which we obtain through practical reason by means of the moral law, the revelation, namely, of a supersensible world by the realization of the otherwise transcendent concept of freedom, and by this deprive us also of the moral law itself, which admits no empirical principle of determination. Therefore, it will be necessary to add something here as a protection against this delusion, and to exhibit *empiricism* in its naked superficiality. (Kant 2004, 99–100)

Therefore, when he is faced with the need to discuss the issue of the supreme good, which requires a connection between morality and happiness, he must be careful not to fall into the pit which, he thinks, many fall into, by claiming that morality is determined by happiness.

Kant sees two possible forms of relations between concepts: analytic and synthetic. He examines the possible connection between virtue and happiness accordingly. He argues that the Epicureans and the Stoics were both wrong, each in their own way, in regarding this connection as an analytic one. The Epicureans were wrong in seeing virtue as part of happiness (i.e., being happy means being moral), while the stoics were wrong in seeing happiness as part of virtue (being moral means being happy). This error, Kant claims, should be clear to anyone who understands that these are two concepts that belong to two different realities, and, therefore, cannot be analytically connected. While the concept of virtue originates in pure reason, the concept of happiness stems from experience. Consequently, any connection between them, if at all possible, can only be synthetic.

Synthetic connection, according to Kant, may be either a-priori or a-posteriori. In the present case, he says, the claim is for a-priori connection, because the connection is not based on experience but is required by practical reason. The supreme good is a concept of reason (idea) that expresses the demand of practical reason for correspondence between virtue and happiness, and is not learned from experience. Hence, in Kant's terms, this is a transcendental investigation of the question: "How is the *summum bonum* practically possible?" (Kant 2004, 120).

This demand of reason leads to "The antinomy of practical reason":

> [C]onsequently either the desire of happiness must be the motive to maxim of virtue, or the maxim of virtue must be the efficient cause of happiness. The first is absolutely impossible, because (as we proved in the analytics) maxims which place the determining principle of the will in the desire of happiness are not moral at all, and no virtue can be founded on them. But the second is *also impossible*, because the practical connection of causes and effects in the world, as the result of determining the will, does not depend on the moral disposition of the will, but on the knowledge of the laws of nature and the physical power to use them in purpose; consequently, we cannot expect in the world of the most punctilious observance of the moral law any necessary connection of happiness with virtue adequate to the *summum bonum*. (Kant 2004, 121–122)

It appears that no causal connection is possible between the two, while the concept of the supreme good stands exactly for this kind of causal connection. Hence it is an antinomy that lies at the core of ethical thought. If it cannot be solved, claims Kant, it would undermine the foundations of moral thought. It completely negates any expectation for a possible connection between virtue and happiness, and could thus lead to moral tyranny (morality without happiness), or to complete rejection of morality (happiness without morality). These views actually destroy the ethical sphere of human existence, which is grounded in the idea of the supreme good. Kant's antinomy confronts us with the existential meaning of human ethics. This is not Kant the formalist, as depicted by those who reduce his moral philosophy to his categorical imperative but Kant who makes an attempt to understand the core of human existence by investigating the ethical horizons of this existence.[2]

Kant's critical solution of the antinomy takes us back to "The antinomy of pure reason," which is actually comprised of four antinomies. The third antinomy, concerning the contradiction between determinism and free will, is relevant to the present discussion. Based on the thesis of transcendental idealism, this contradiction is proven to be an apparent one, since it springs from disregard of the distinction between the phenomenal world and the world in itself. This distinction, Kant argues, explains why determinism and freedom are able to coexist: empirical determinism (in the world of phenomena) cannot exclude the possibility of metaphysical freedom (in the world of itself).

By applying this solution to the present discussion, Kant could argue that Man may consider his existence as a phenomenon among phenomena, that

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2. Allen W. Wood challenges the reader with this point at the beginning of his book *Kant's Ethical Thought*: "Kant's position is grounded on a distinctive theory of human nature and history, whose importance for Kant's ethics has seldom been appreciated" (1999, xiii).

is, as subjected to the determinism of nature (the phenomenal world); but as a thinking being, he can also consider his existence as not altogether subjected to this determinism. The duality of the world reflects, in fact, the duality of Man's existence in the world: as a fact and as a reason. This recognition is the key to Kant's solution of the antinomy of practical reason:

> The first of the two propositions—that the endeavor after happiness produces a virtuous mind, is *absolutely false*; but the second, that a virtuous mind necessarily produces happiness, is *not absolutely* false, but only so far as virtue is considered as a form of causality in the sensible world, and consequently only if I suppose existence in it to be the only sort of existence of a rational being, it is then only conditionally false. (Kant 2004, 122–123)

It would be false to argue that happiness is the cause of virtue, because according to Kant's analytics, the only imperative that makes an action moral is that which originates in pure reason and determines one's will. Therefore, happiness, which belongs in the empirical world, cannot determine moral judgement. In contrast, there is no conceptual problem in the opposite claim, namely, that virtue leads to happiness, and it is therefore not impossible. This claim maintains the unconditional status of moral law, and gives precedence to reason (*a priori*) over experience (*a posteriori*). Nevertheless, demonstrating that this connection is possible is not a proof of its reality. In order to prove that this connection is real, Kant will argue that the ideas of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God are postulates of practical reason.

Yet, before proving that these ideas are postulates of reason, Kant proves that practical reason has precedence over speculative reason. This is a highly significant step in Kant's critique of reason, but no less so in his account of human existence. At the end of this discussion, Kant states unequivocally that not only is speculative reason unable to negate the conclusions of practical reason, but that "since all interest is ultimately practical, and even that of speculative reason is conditional, and it is only in the practical employment of reason that it is complete" (Kant 2004, 130).

This claim takes us back to Kant's statements about philosophy at the beginning of "The dialectics of practical reason." The goal of philosophy and human existence, he argues, is practical accomplishment, a life guided by the idea of the supreme good, and not theoretical knowledge. Since Kant considers philosophy as the science of reason, his view regarding philosophy in general settles well with his view regarding human reason. Theoretical knowledge, being an outcome of reason in its limited form (understanding), is subjected to reason in its pure form (practical reason). This is a far-reaching claim that determines in fact that our understanding of our existence in the world can be completed only by practical reason. Hence, because human existence is a manifestation of Man's reason, a man who gives precedence to theoretical

knowledge over practical knowledge understands his existence wrongly. This is the mistake that Kant attributes to empirical views of morality, because they try to explain human morality according to empirical knowledge.

Kant sees human existence as an existence in two worlds, but claims that a worthy human existence is only one where the empirical existence (as a phenomenon in nature) is subjected to the metaphysical one (as a rational being); and this is manifested by the precedence of practical reason (will) over theoretical reason (knowledge). This idea is expressed clearly in the poetic conclusion (*Beschluss*) of the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

> Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe […] *the starry heavens above and the moral law within*. I have not to search for them and conjecture them as though they were veiled in darkness or were in the transcendent region beyond the horizon; I see them before me and connect them directly with the consciousness of my existence. (Kant 2004, 170)

This awe-inspiring double observation is the motive of philosophical contemplation of human existence, but, Kant cautions, it is only its starting point. In his *Critique of Practical Reason* he takes a significant step forward in his investigation of human existence. He argues that the ideal of human existence is life in light of the supreme good, which he identifies with philosophical life. As already mentioned, this important Kantian statement—that the goal of philosophy is practical rather than theoretical—tends to be missed if the study of Kant's critical philosophy focuses exclusively on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and his categorical imperative. The present discussion is mainly intended to draw attention to what can be learned about Kant's view on human existence, beyond his epistemological and moral formalism. Kant's discussion in "Critique of aesthetic judgment" is another important step in this direction.

Yet, before entering a discussion of "critique of aesthetic judgment," it is worth to take a closer look at the special place Kant ascribes to the ideas of immortality of the soul and God in human existence. As mentioned, he sees these ideas as postulates of practical reason, which is the source of the concept of the supreme good. That is, since the concept of the supreme good originates in reason, reason is also the origin of its underlying premises. This means that reason assumes these premises to be true as long it validates the concept of the supreme good. The immortality of the soul is a postulate of reason, since without this assumption it is impossible to explain the never ending progress a rational being is required to make in order to attain the supreme good. Man, being a rational being but also having an empirical existence, would not be able, as such, to reach the affinity required between virtue, whose origin is completely rational, and its resulting happiness. Therefore, the only way to validate the concept of the supreme good, which stands,

according to Kant, at the basis of human ethics, is by assuming the continuity of Man's existence after his material death:

> Now, this endless progress is only possible on the supposition of an *endless* duration of the *existence* and personality of the same rational being (which is called the immortality of the soul). The *summum bonum*, then, practically is only possible on the supposition of the immortality of the soul; consequently, this immortality, being inseparably connected with the moral law, is a postulate of pure practical reason (by which I mean a theoretical proposition, not demonstrable as such, but which is an inseparable result of an unconditional *a priori practical* law). (Kant 2004, 130−131)

Kant does not claim to have proven theoretically the immortality of the soul. Had this been the case, he would have contradicted his claim that it is impossible to have theoretical knowledge of a non-empirical object. However, he definitely argues that it is impossible to hold the concept of the supreme good without presupposing the immortality of the soul. Since the origin of the concept is in reason, the premise which validates it is a postulate of reason. By this Kant proves that the concept of the supreme good is logically grounded in the idea of the immortality of the soul. This is the rationalistic facet of Kant's thought, which characterizes his ethical thinking. Kant rejects the possibility of metaphysical knowledge (ontology) but insists that ethics is necessarily metaphysical, which means, in his terms, that it originates in pure reason. Similar to his rationalist predecessors, he thus maintains that reason alone can teach us about our real existence. In this case, the idea of immortality of the soul extends man's existential horizons beyond his empirical reality, actually beyond his death.

Kant takes a similar path towards proving the idea of God. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, he had already rejected the possibility of a theoretical proof of God's existence. Yet, In *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant argues for a practical proof of God's existence. Similar to his proof of the immortality of the soul, this proof demonstrates that a logical analysis of the concept of the supreme good necessarily brings us to the postulate of God's existence. Only the existence of God can justify the affinity between virtue and happiness, which the concept of the supreme good assumes:

> Therefore, the *summum bonum* is possible in the world only on the supposition of a supreme being having a causality corresponding to moral character […] Therefore, the supreme cause of nature, which must be presupposed as a condition of the *summum bonum* is a being which is the cause of nature by intelligence and will, consequently its author, that is God. It follows that the postulate of the possibility of the *highest derived good* (the best world) is likewise the postulate of the reality of a *highest original good*, that is to say, of the existence of God. (Kant 2004, 133−134)

Kant's God is a rational entity, revealed through Man's ethical thinking, which has the concept of the supreme good at its core. Thus, although God's

existence cannot be proved theoretically, our moral thinking necessarily assumes God as a rational cause of reality; this premise is necessary if a correlation is to be found between the laws of reason and the laws of empirical reality. Reality is no longer exclusively empirical, namely, revealed within the limits of theoretical knowledge; it is also metaphysical, as proven by practical reason. This metaphysical reality stands higher in human existence than empirical reality, since it is the reality of reason.

The immortality of the soul and God are proved, then, to be necessary premises (postulates of reason) toward claiming that there is a causal connection between virtue and happiness. Kant cautions that this proof is subjective and not objective, but one should not be misled by this qualification. It should be kept in mind that in transcendental philosophy, a priori conditions originate in the subject, meaning that necessity is necessarily subjective. In the present discussion this is manifested in Kant's argument that practical knowledge has precedence over theoretical knowledge, and that metaphysical existence is higher than empirical one. In this respect, Kant is very consistent and therefore his conclusions could surprise only those who have not been fully aware of the meaning of his "Copernican Revolution." This revolution argues that whatever necessity we attribute to reality originates in the subject's forms of consciousness and thinking. According to this view, the necessity of an objective knowledge of nature is no greater than its a priori component, which is in the subject. This necessity can never be equal to that of moral law, which is an a priori law of itself. The "Copernican logic" explains why Kant sees practical knowledge, which originates exclusively in the subject's reason, as having precedence over theoretical knowledge, which depends on experience as well.

Reason, judgment and pleasure

Kant's discussion of aesthetic experience in *Critique of Judgment* exposes us to a third and unique dimension of human existence. Whereas the earlier *Critiques* introduce us to the empirical and metaphysical dimensions of human existence, the present discussion reveals the aesthetic dimension of human existence. The discussion is more psychological in nature, because Kant analyzes in it human experience rather than human recognition. Therefore, it contributes much to the understanding of Kant's perception of human existence.

The explicit goal of *Critique of Judgment* is to complete the investigation of human reason, but because Kant realizes that this can be done only by investigating the power of judgement it is devoted to this faculty. The first part of the book analyses our aesthetic experience. Interestingly and ironically, Kant finds himself analyzing a special kind of human experience, i.e. aesthetic experience, in order to complete his critique of reason.

In the introduction to *Critique of Judgment*, Kant lists three faculties of the soul (*Seele*):

The faculty of cognition—the ability to formulate laws (understanding and reason)

The faculty of desire (*Begehr*)—the will

The faculty of pleasure (*Lust*) and displeasure.

Kant argues that the faculty of pleasure stands between the faculties of cognition and desire. Pleasure is the cause of our lower desires and the result of our higher desires, which are determined by reason. Kant actually returns here to his analysis of the relation between pleasure and happiness in *Critique of Practical Reason*.[3] However, in the present discussion, a new element enters into the picture—the faculty of judgement. The faculty of judgement determines our attitude towards reality, whether based on experience or on reason. Therefore, Kant argues, it is reasonable to suppose that an analysis of this faculty can explain the relation between our empirical judgements (theoretical reason) and our ethical judgements (practical reason). This brings Kant to a third kind of judgement: aesthetic judgement. Kant shows how the aesthetic experience, being a particular kind of pleasure, creates a shift in Man's judgement of the world, from judgement in terms of nature to judgement in terms of freedom. Kant argues for three kinds of pleasure:

Sensual pleasure—result from sensations.

Rational pleasure—result from reason.

Aesthetic pleasure—result from both sensations and reason.

The discussion of the third pleasure stands at the focus of "Critique of aesthetic judgment," and begins by contrasting it with the other two pleasures.

Aesthetic judgment: The beautiful and the sublime

Aesthetic judgement, according to Kant, is not the judgement of an object but of the affect that the image of the object awakens in the subject. Therefore, this judgement is necessarily subjective and non-provable (as is the case of knowledge). However, Kant claims that this subjective experience is unique, because although it is subjective it is experienced as objective. An indication to this is our tendency to apply the judgement to the object, as if it were a judgement about the object and not about our feeling. This confusion, argues Kant, is an indication that our faculty of knowledge involves in this experience.

Kant defines the beautiful as special mode of satisfaction. This is the first principle of the judgement of taste: "only that of the taste for the beautiful is a disinterested and free satisfaction" (2005, 94). Unlike other feelings of sat-

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3.   See: Kant 2004, 124-125.

isfaction (sensual pleasure or rational pleasure), it does not depend on interest in the existence or non-existence of the object. That is to say, it is not satisfaction which relates to certain interest but a pure one. Therefore, it liberates Man from his wills and desires (rational or sensual interests) with regard to reality, leading him to a completely contemplative state of mind.

Kant argues that although we tend to see satisfaction (*Wohlgefallen*) as identical to the pleasant (*Angenehm*), this is wrong and makes us ignore higher mental states.[4] The pleasant is a very personal satisfaction. A person is satisfied by obtaining a sensual object of desire. Therefore, claims Kant, whenever a person is moved by the pleasant he is attracted by the object of his personal desires and experiences it as such. This, to Kant, is the lowest plane of human existence, and therefore the origin of our lowest satisfactions. In this respect, Kant will later claim, Man is not different from any other animal.

The satisfaction derived from the good is entirely different, as Kant already shows in *Critique of Practical Reason*. Although this satisfaction also involves an interest in the existence or nonexistence of a certain object, in this case it is an interest of reason and not a personal interest. This satisfaction is derived from the existence or nonexistence of an object that is determined by the concept of the good.

The satisfaction derived from the beautiful is different from both other kinds of satisfaction by not being a product of an interest. It is different from the satisfaction derived from the good, which is the interest of reason, but also from the satisfaction derived from the pleasant, which is a personal interest. That is to say, it is neither the product of our reason nor the product of our personal sensations. Thus, a new sphere of human existence is revealed between the empirical and particular one and the metaphysical and general one.

Kant characterizes aesthetic judgements as having a subjectively universal validity, and by this he emphasizes a very important point of his philosophy:

Now an *objectively universally valid* judgment is also always subjectively so, i.e., if the judgment is valid for everything that is contained under a given concept then it is also valid for everyone who represents an object through this concept. But from a *subjectively universal validity*, i.e., from aesthetic universal validity, which does not rest on any concept, there can be no inference at all to logical universal validity; because the first kind of judgment does not pertain to the object at all. For that very reason, however, the aesthetic universality that is ascribe to a judgment must also be of a special kind, since the predicate of beauty is not connected with the concept of the *object* considered

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4. Kant sees this distinction as important, not only because it describes more accurately the different existential horizons of man, but also because it can prevent formulating erroneous empirical moral ethics. The present discussion may be regarded as completing the one in the *Critique of Practical Reason* from this aspect as well.

in its entire logical sphere, and yet it extends it over the whole sphere of *those who judge* (Kant 2005, 100).

The objectivity of judgement, whether this judgement is theoretical or practical, means that it is valid for every subject. That is to say, the validity of judgements, whether subjective or objective ones, refers to subjects, and we should not be misled by the term objectivity. Judgements can be proven to be objective (i.e. true for every subject) only when their validity is grounded in a concept, yet this does not mean that their validity exceeds the judgement of subjects. However, aesthetic judgement, in spite of its objective form ("the object is beautiful"), is not based on a concept but on an experience. It is therefore not a provable objective judgement (knowledge), yet it reflects the sense of objectivity that involves in this experience. How can this confusion be explained?

Kant analyses aesthetic satisfaction to find out whether it precedes or follows aesthetic judgement; whether aesthetic judgement is the cause of aesthetic satisfaction or aesthetic satisfaction is the cause of aesthetic judgement. Had satisfaction preceded aesthetic judgement, he claims, aesthetic experience would not have been experienced as objective but merely as subjective pleasure. This leads him to the conclusion that aesthetic satisfaction is a product of aesthetic judgement, which is responsible to the sense of objectivity of this experience. Thus, when we experience something as beautiful it is because we already judged it to be beautiful. It is a kind of unconscious reflective judgment of an object as if it expresses internal purposefulness, yet not a defined one. Hence, this aesthetic experience can be experienced only by beings that are rational, yet not exclusively rational. This makes the experience of the beautiful a unique human experience. Any sensual being is able to experience the pleasant and any rational being is able to experience happiness (a satisfaction resulting from the good), but only a being that is both sensual and rational is able to experience beauty.

The sublime (*Erhabener*) is also an aesthetic experience, and much like the beautiful, it involves both the rational and the sensual aspects of human existence. But while the beautiful emerges from an encounter with a specific object, the sublime emerges from an encounter with a phenomenon of boundless size (the mathematical sublime) or power (the dynamic sublime). Thus, the beautiful reflects an involvement of understanding, which means thinking within the limits of a given empirical object, while the sublime reflects an involvement of reason, which means thinking beyond the realm of given objects.

Kant maintains that in the experience of the beautiful our imagination is in harmony with the understanding. But differently from the case of knowledge, the imagination is not subjected to understanding; the two faculties act freely

but in harmony. This means that Man experiences the regularity he expects to find in nature, but not under a defined concept. This harmony, which reflects, in fact, a congruity between imagination and understanding, explains the special sense of satisfaction derived from this experience. It enhances our vitality because the world is experienced as congruous with our cognition. The experience of the sublime, in contrast, is an experience of conflict:

> Natural beauty (the self-sufficient kind) carries with it a purposiveness in its form, through which the object seems as it were to be predetermined for our power of judgment, and thus constitutes an object of satisfaction in itself, whereas that which, without any rationalizing, merely in apprehension, excites in us the feeling of the sublime, may to be sure appear in its form to be contra purposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of representation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination, but is nevertheless judged all the more sublime for that. (Kant 2005, 129)

The boundlessness that Man encounters in nature demonstrates that nature surpasses Man's cognition, and is consequently out of Man's control. This magnitude or power threatens Man's existence, and awakens in us nothing but fear when we are too close to it. But when we are in the right distance, fear may encounter Man's reason, and create an experience of the sublime. Kant describes this experience as one that begins with a momentary arrest of Man's living powers followed by a strong flow of these powers. This is not merely a feeling of satisfaction, because it involves a clash between Man and Nature. Not surprisingly, given his ethical stance, Kant describes this experience as a feeling of reverence. In Kantian view, reverence is the highest feeling of satisfaction a Man can have. This reverence, explains Kant, is actually directed at Man himself as a being of reason that overcomes even the mighty powers of nature. These powers, which can wipe off his physical existence in one stroke, are in no way able to deprive him of his metaphysical existence, which, in this experience, surpasses nature. Therefore, claims Kant, only one who adheres to the ideas of reason can experience the sublime.

Based on this analysis, Kant maintains that no other experience draws Man closer to a moral existence than the experience of the sublime, although the experience of the beautiful also draws us closer to it. Yet, while the experience of the beautiful only improves our capability to relate to reality without interest, thus assisting in our liberation from the enslavement to sensual existence, the experience of the sublime is established upon moral ideas. Therefore, it generates in Man reverence for those ideas that originate in his reason, and actually makes him respect his own existence.

The spheres of human existence: Kant and Kierkegaard

For concluding the discussion concerning Kant's view on human existences, the last part of the paper compares it to Kierkegaard's view. While to Kant

this issue is secondary and surely not the explicit target of his *Critiques,* Kierkegaard sees it as the central issue of philosophic thought.[5]

Kierkegaard is considered one of the first philosophers—at least in the modern era—who propose exchanging the philosophical search for a universal truth with the search for a personal meaning of life. One of his main efforts is to expose the existential dissatisfaction of an individual who refers to his existence exclusively through general ideas (reason). Kierkegaard names this kind of existence an ethical existence. It is an existence in which Man finds meaning to his life in the ideas of reason. However, because ideas are necessarily universal, and Man's existence is necessarily particular, there can never be a complete correspondence between these ideas and Man's existence. Therefore, Man's satisfaction from this kind of existence will always be partial. Kant, as was shown, thinks that this is unavoidable. Yet, although Kant recognizes it, he does not think, like Kierkegaard, that there is a higher sphere of human existence beyond the ethical one. That is to say, Kant and Kierkegaard do not disagree about the meaning of ethical existence and the extent of satisfaction it may give Man in this world, but about whether there is a higher level of human existence. Kierkegaard argues that there is a higher sphere of human existence beyond the ethical one, namely, the religious existence. This sphere of existence does not only exceed ethical existence but is based on its negation. Kant, for his part, regards religious existence as a supreme realization of ethical existence (Kant's God is a moral entity), and therefore sees ethical and religious existence as one and the same.[6]

Kierkegaard names the lowest sphere of human existence "aesthetic existence." According to Kierkegaard, in this sphere of existence man is enslaved to his sensual drives. This matches Kant's discussion of the pleasant as the lowest human satisfaction. Yet, Kant, apparently in contrast to Kierkegaard, suggests that aesthetic existence exceeds sensuality and is related to Man's reason. However, there is actually no disagreement about this point. Both see the origin of aesthetic experience in Man's sensuality, and Kierkegaard also argues, like Kant, that aesthetic judgement involves reflective judgement. In other words, although the views of Kant and Kierkegaard on aesthetic evaluation are not exactly the same, both of them maintain that aesthetic judgement involves Man's thinking. Therefore, in discussing their views regarding the various spheres of human existence, it would seem wrong to contrast

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5. Wood notes that although Kant often regards the question of human being as a central philosophical issue, he never attempts to resolve it methodically (1999, 198).

6. R.Z. Friedman (2000) proposes in this connection an interesting conceptualization that differentiates between "horizontal religion"—Kant's view of religious existence as full realization of ethical existence, and "vertical religion"—Kierkegaard's view of religious existence as exceeding ethical existence.

what Kierkegaard describes as the aesthetic sphere of existence and what Kant describes as the aesthetic experience (the beautiful and the sublime). It may agree that they share the view that Man gets his lowest satisfactions on the sensual plane, and that aesthetic judgement (the beautiful and the sublime) exceeds this sensual plane, and advances towards an ethical existence.

Kant and Kierkegaard share, then, the view that Man's existence is both sensual and rational. At times these two facets are in harmony, while at other times they clash and bring about severe existential crises or outstanding mental elevation. They agree that the lowest plane of existence is the one where sensuality dominates Man's existence. It is a restless existence made of chases after temporary and partial satisfactions. At this existential sphere, Man attributes no meaning to his life and lives as a slave to his desires. Man's reason opens for him a higher sphere of existence in which he becomes a master of his life and can attribute meaning to it.

Kierkegaard describes the shift from aesthetical to ethical existence as a dialectical process, in which reason negates and overcomes our spontaneous impulses. By this we gain control over our life, and are able to cooperate with other people according to laws and ideas. On this sphere of existence, the life of an individual is subjected to these common laws and ideas. Kant does not describe this process in dialectical terms but also sees the key to a higher existence in Man's capability to overcome his personal and spontaneous tendencies by his reason. Furthermore, Kant also sees this existential sphere as the one where humans cooperate with each other, and no longer exist as individuals enslaved to natural causes but exist as a community guided by common reason ("kingdom of ends").

Their views concerning human existence cease to be similar once the focus of the comparison moves to a religious existence. Kierkegaard considers religious existence as more elevated than ethical existence, and as such a source of more authentic satisfaction and meaningful life. This elevation is achieved, claims Kierkegaard, by overcoming ethical existence thanks to religious faith. This is, according to Kierkegaard, the greatest discovery of monotheistic religion, and this is where it exceeds Greek philosophy. Therefore, it is not accidental that the constitutive story of this existential view is the story of the binding of Isaac. In contrast, Kant sees ethical existence and religious existence as equal. Although Kant insists that no theoretical proof can be provided to God's existence, he argues that the idea of God lies within Man's moral thought, together with the ideas of freedom and the immortality of the soul. This is a far-reaching claim according to which any moral judgement in fact gains its validity from the belief in God; according to this logic, the more moral a person is, the more religious is his existence, whether that person sees

himself as a believer in God or not.[7]

Kierkegaard sees religious existence as more elevated than ethical existence. In this existence, the individual rises above the existence he shares with other humans (ethical existence) thanks to reason, for achieving a more authentic and meaningful life.[8] This is also dialectic move, and therefore it demands the individual overcoming his ethical attitude to life. Kierkegaard sees the ethical problem of this move but insists that religious existence is different and more elevated from ethical existence. Ethical existence could not be the highest existential sphere of the individual since it is common to all human beings and therefore ignore their individuality. Only religious faith, he argues, attributes meaning to the individuality of the individual. At this existential sphere, the individual is in immediate relation with the eternal existence, with God. This relation with the Eternal does not reject the individual's historical and particular existence, as in the case of ethical existence, but creates, in Kierkegaard's terms, the paradox of faith. The individual paradoxically experiences the relation between his particular and historical existence and eternity. Before this religious revelation, the individual can be only a slave of his desires or an anonymous person with a collective identity. But once he achieves this sphere of existence, he becomes a distinct individual with a particular existence. Kierkegaard tries to analyze the promise and the danger of this existence by interpreting the Binding of Isaac, the paradigmatic story of the monotheistic faith. Kant directs us to God himself.

In Kantian thought God dwells in the sphere of ethical existence. In this existence, argues Kant, Man's actions can have a meaning only on the assumption that God exists ("The antinomy of practical reason"). Because moral law originates in reason, the existence of God is not only a matter of

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7. Gordon E. Michalson argues that this is Kant's response to Plato's question about the connection between ethics and holiness in the dialogue "Euthyphro." To Kant, an action becomes divine when it springs from moral commitment and not the other way round (Michalson 1999, 35–36). Indeed, Kant maintains that an action has religious meaning only if it originates in moral commitment and not in a desire to gratify God. Moreover, says Michalson, because Kant determines that there is a necessary link between moral thinking and the assumed existence of God, the only way to deny the existence of God is by denying the validity of ethical law (Michalson 1999, 41). This important point is essential because it highlights the fact that Kant regards this as a postulate, and enables rejecting interpretations according to which Kant's ethics represents a formal concept that is summarized in the categorical imperative. That is why C. Stephen Evans argues that regarding the ideas of reason merely as useful fictions means undermining the significance an action may be given as a moral one (Evans 2000, 10)

8. Friedman sees this as the exact point where Kierkegaard's concept of the individual differs from that of Kant. While Kant's individual, whose relation to God is defined by ethical law, gains existential security, Kierkegaard's individual relates to God by obeying an imperative that contradicts ethical law (Friedman 2000, 95).

revelation but also a postulate of reason (a necessary assumption of reason). If so, according to Kant, not only does religious existence not contradict ethical existence, but every ethical existence is in fact a religious one, because it manifests Man's belief in the existence of God. Indeed, this also holds true when considered from the opposite perspective: An individual who is not guided by moral thinking does not have a religious existence, even if he has an image of God before his eyes. Jesus Christ is Kant's ultimate model of the ethical-religious existence.[9]

Kierkegaard confronts, then, the traditional philosophical views that see ethical existence as the highest human existence, especially philosophical views such as those of Kant, which argue that ethical existence is equal to religious existence. Religious existence, argues Kierkegaard, is not guided by reason but by faith, yet it is a higher existence than ethical existence, which is guided by reason. Indeed, religious existence threatens ethical existence, but this must be acknowledged and not be denied. From the perspective of Kierkegaard's thought, Kant, who argues that he criticizes human reason in order to leave room for faith, actually reduces faith into the boundaries of reason. He does it in *Critique of practical reason* when he argues that the existence of God is a postulate of reason. Kant even uses the term "faith of reason" (*Vernunftglaube*) in this context.

This conflict concerning religious existence and its relation to ethical existence is troubling and thought provoking. If Kierkegaard is right in his conclusions, he not only exposes essential errors in Kant's critical thought concerning practical reason, but also directs us towards a hidden moral threat that lies within religious existence. If Kant is right, then Kierkegaard's is wrong and religious existence is grounded in ethics.

The comparison with Kierkegaard's view emphasizes that to Kant human existence lies within the *boundaries* of reason. Although he does not ignore our sensual and aesthetic existence, he has no doubt that reason is the only source of higher existence and he even places God within these boundaries. According to this view, each individual human being has autonomic thought and moral value but not a particular meaning to his life.

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9. In his *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason* Kant claims:

   However, in the appearance of the God-man, the true object of the saving faith is not what in the God-man falls to the senses, or can be cognized through experience, but the prototype lying in our reason which we put in him […]and such a faith is all the same as the principle of a good life conduct (1996, 149).

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Pragmatic Social Justice:
A Conceptual Framework for Practitioners

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Abstract

To better understand engagement, I offer a perspective of social justice that understands context and history. Tying in pragmatism into social justice is a foundational step to better understand the inner working of a community. We must acknowledge we can change the environment, have dialogue and actively reflect, and understand what works one place might not work somewhere else. In this article, the notions of pragmatism and social justice are discussed. Following is a building of a pragmatic social justice framework. This notion is in support to how practitioners can potentially engage in pragmatic social justice.

Keywords
Pragmatism, social Justice, participatory democracy

Situated between idealistic and realistic, we as practitioners need to reflect on how to engage with community. Many talk about being fighters for social justice. In this discussion, I offer an insight on how to further appreciate being a social justice advocate. I formally attempt to link the concept of social justice with the philosophical tradition of pragmatism. It should be noted that both social justice and pragmatism are too great of concepts to discuss in a paper. They are too great that there is not an agreed upon definition for either; only certain defining features that attempt to better understand. I begin this paper discussing the philosophical tradition of pragmatism and outline its historical roots and foundational concepts. I then briefly discuss the notion of social justice, explicitly how I have become familiar. Following that is a discussion on the conceptual framework of pragmatic social justice. The pragmatic social justice lens is one that appreciates the foundational concepts of pragmatism embedded in social justice. It is my hope this is able to link the concepts for current and future practitioners, regardless of field. I believe a better appreciation for the concepts can lend itself to positive social change.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism concentrates on whether knowledge is useful, or rather, whether it can guide behavior that produces anticipated outcomes (Morgan, 2014a, Morgan 2014b; Tashakori and Teddlie 2010). Or better stated, pragmatism recognizes knowledge comes from taking action and learning from those outcomes.

Initially pragmatism acted as a way to relieve the tension between empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism used experiences to justify truth, while rationalism used intuition (Hookway 2015). The notion of pragmatism bridged the gap between mind or rationalism and body or empiricism (Hookway 2015). Where rationalism and empiricism looked to determine truth, pragmatism looked to determine practical notions; i.e. accepting practical consequences and not accepting unpractical ones (McDermid 2006). Pragmatism then, has three assumptions: 1) there is no mind/body split, 2) there is an active mind, and 3) is based on functionalism (Hookway 2015). The mind is present especially in inquiry (Dewey 1896; James 1909).

To understand pragmatism, there needs to be an understanding that whatever action(s) taken is (are) rooted in human experience and occurs within historical and cultural contexts and certain behaviors have practical outcomes for each individual (Morgan 2014). With a criticism of skepticism, pragmatism argued not for a complete denial of all beliefs, but an understanding that some beliefs work better given the context (McDermid 2006). As James said "We have to live today by what truth we can get today and be ready *tomorrow* to call it falsehood" (1907) This helped establish the notion of fallibility. Fallibility suggests nothing can truly be known when the world is constantly changing (James 1907). Some ideas will work better than others and it is our job to determine the most effective strategies. Programs need to constantly adapt to better understand the changing culture. A fine example of this is language use and its appreciation towards more inclusive language as subjugated population are better understood. To this end though, theories can be relied upon time and again to solve pressing problems and to clear up significant difficulties. To the extent a theory functions practically, makes sense to keep using it, but there always must be the possibility that it will eventually have to be replaced by some theory that works better (Hookway 2015; McDermid 2006).

These historical and cultural contexts are relevant to the members' value beliefs rooted in what has come before working with any program. Acknowledging these contexts with each member allows for mutual learning to occur, leading to an appreciation as to what each member brings to the table; thus having the most efficiently and practically run program. Collaboration is important in this understanding. A key point in pragmatism is the notion

of dialogue across parties (Tashakori and Teddlie 2010; Morgan, 2014). Dialogue is a communicative process that allows for all parties to provide insights from people's history for the outcomes and goals of the project, directly aligning with pragmatism. This notion is a framework that allows for research and engagement to build onto itself. This builds into the concept of inquiry, which will also be discussed under the pragmatic social justice lens.

Social justice

Social justice is a concept advocating for human rights. An agreed upon notion of this broad concept acknowledges social inequalities and how certain populations suffer at the expense of these inequalities (Adams 2013). A social justice framework also recognizes that the ones with power can often times oppress those, even unintentionally, through exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young 2013). Engaging in a social justice framework appreciates that power differences exist because of certain social structures. There has to be an awareness that marginalized populations often times have more challenges that have been constructed in a historical context. This understanding of history can produce positive change. The social justice concept gets tough though when trying to balance the tension between acknowledge a person's difference and his or her similarities.

To understand and appreciate social justice, it has to be understood in terms of both a process and a goal. It is a process because of the very evolutionary nature of society. As society changes, so too should the principles associated. If any political movement stops fighting, the movement ceases. Social justice is a goal because there needs to be something to strive for, something to want to achieve. In the constant changing environment however, the previous goals build a foundation for newer goals. There is always work that can be done for those that have limited power. Just like in research, answering one question creates more questions. Accomplishing one goal, allows more difficult attainable goals to start be accomplished. It is an infinite number of dominoes falling after each other. Good intentions are needed in advocacy, but good intentions are limited without an appreciation for the given population.

The concept of social justice is presented below in an applied format, as social justice can only exist when there is application.

Pragmatic social justice as a conceptual framework

After introducing pragmatism as a philosophical framework and social justice as a theoretical framework, I now turn to the notion of pragmatic social justice. This section will focus on how pragmatism is used when attempting to engage in social justice. It is intended to move beyond simply good intentions. Social justice advocates understand there are problems in the world that create disadvantage to certain populations (Adams 2013; Young 2013).

If these issues are ever to be resolved, at least to some extent, there needs to be strategies in place to deal with the issues. If a person has a voice, as Friere (1970) suggested, he or she can begin to combat personal and societal oppression. A pragmatic social justice framework lends itself to finding workable solutions for marginalized populations. Recall, that pragmatism has three assumptions: 1) there is no mind/body split, 2) there is an active mind, and 3) is based on functionalism (Hookway 2015). Each point helps lay the foundation for how to potentially engage in pragmatic social justice. Pragmatism is more likely to bring social context to the forefront of philosophy, allowing for realities that are in flux and that are always being shaped and reconstructed by their context. Pragmatists emphasize that we must include particular and individual experiences in a pluralistic discussion of multiple realities, and that all parties involved in the issue be involved in any creation of a solution (Whipps 2013)**.**

Firstly, with regard to not having a mind/body split; another way of thinking about this is there is no separation of a person from the environment. That notion, then allows a person to engage and potentially change an environment in which he or she is in to a degree that is physically possible. With the environment amendable, social justice, although an uphill process, is now possible. Meaning the oppressed can become actors that act in ways to change society. This is a big part of Friere's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. If an agent could not change the environment, subjugated populations would still suffer greatly at the hands of the ones in power. Change is possible, because an individual can change the current climate as they are not living in a void nor are people empty vessels. An outlet for which this change can occur is a participatory democracy also called a do-it-yourself democracy.

Towards a participatory democracy and pragmatic social justice

At the heart of any democracy, people lend a voice to processes they deem necessary to change. The concept of democracy started in ancient Greece in an attempt to satisfy the needs of all the people, rich and poor, when the dominating aristocracy created significant social and economic problems (Pomeroy, Burstein, Donlan, and Roberts 1999). This carries over into today's society. In talking about social justice, a functioning democracy gives more power to the people, especially those that would not otherwise have the opportunity.

Clarifying how I believe voices are provided in an efficient manner, pragmatic social justice can use a participatory democracy or one that allows for decisions to be made by the people affected by them (Polletta 2014). This form of democracy can work in schools combating the banking system of education as criticized by Friere (1970), where students are containers and

teachers can fill the minds of their students with knowledge; similar to Locke's tabula rasa (Uzgalis 2016). Participatory democracy can also influence other hierarchal systems in place that don't allow for relationships to be established based in reciprocity. Those wanting to be involved can be involved.

A participatory democracy is one where education fosters the ability to work collectively toward a better society (Westheimer and Kahne 1998). A thing about democracy though, especially a participatory democracy, is it only works if people involved in the process are informed of the issues and potential strategies to deal with those issues. To be involved in the process requires effort, skill, and knowledge. Anytime one ventures into wanting change, there needs to be an understanding of what is occurring in the community and within the people to be able to find the most appropriate, workable solution to the problem at a given time. The given time is the main point here, in the sense that it relates to time and context specificity. A solution without an understanding of what is going on is not a solution. This takes us to the second point of pragmatism as it relates to social justice.

The second principal of pragmatism is there is an active mind. The active mind will be discussed through the process of inquiry. Inquiry can allow people to become informed of the various issues as Dewey suggested:

> Inquiry is also used to facilitate the process of a participatory democracy. A true social justice artist advocates for everyone to be involved […] to have a say in the betterment of society through democratic means. Social justice at the heart, is making people aware. Utilizing pragmatic inquiry as a template, workable solutions to the problems can be found. If we understand there are problems in the world, as social justice advocates do, there needs to be strategies to determine the most meaningful way to solve those issues. Reflection and dialogue help inform the process of inquiry and are needed if a social justice framework is being used. (1933)

Reflection and dialogue

Both reflection and dialogue help to understand how certain practices are needed to change as society changes. Reflecting and dialoging are catalysts for social change. Reflection can be used to clarify direction and make aware of how one might be presenting him or herself. On reflecting, if one is not aware what he or she brings during an interaction, there is an easier time to either be disregarded or discredited. I am a white male and being such has certain implications of how I see the world and the world sees me. If I do not understand my positionality, I cannot even think to be an agent of change. Reflection allows for clarity in thoughts. These strategies are used for purposeful engagement in interaction and change because without these, there is one-sided endeavors that might limit the other person's perspective. Social justice doesn't exist without an acknowledgment of others' beliefs. Reflection in an

individual standpoint allows for clarity in potential biases and one's strengths or weaknesses. These are important because it helps to know about one's self before that person can influence others. Reflection in a communal sense creates a partnership where dialogue can occur. Relationships, then, beckon the understanding and appreciation of what others offer. After all, others might have a better sense of how to do something. Both from the individual and communal sense, reflection better equips what has been done, what can be done, and what is currently happening. In acknowledging I am a white male, I have benefited historically because of those who initially had a voice. If there is to be equality and equity, I need to understand this positionality and why it is also important to give others voice. Building from pragmatism, an important notion in social justice is being able to have an understanding of every person involved.

Dialogue in a social justice framework gives voices to the voiceless (Freire 1970). This allows others to have an identity. Dialogue offers the potential to hear a better idea from someone else, thus leading to a possibility of throwing out your previously held ideas. Again as William James on pragmatism suggests "We have to live today by what truth we can get today and be ready *tomorrow* to call it falsehood" (1907). Dialogue and reflection encourages members of a community to come together for the growth of the community. There is a shared responsibility of everyone to promote social justice for effective social change (Adams 2013; Young 2013). Through these interactions and engagements, there needs to be an understanding though of functionalism. This is important in understanding populations are different and communities change. There is always room for improvement and thinking about how to do so is a framework important in Dewey's work:

> As reflection and dialogue are a continuing process, a democracy can never be a finished entity. As individuals, communities, and societies change, so too should the beliefs associated. There has to be an appreciation of the history and context for which change occurs. This takes us to the third point in pragmatism that ties back to social justice. (1933)

Democratic processes have to evolve to account for the ever changing society. From a pragmatic and practical notion, there is not a true way to engage in social justice because different individuals and different communities exist facing different issues. Pragmatism would support the notion of social justice by providing an outlet of positive inquiry for positive change.

The third principal of pragmatism is how it is based on functionalism, which acknowledge certain things work given the circumstance (Hookway 2015). The functionalism brings the pieces of social justice together. As the preverbal expression goes: the only constant is change. Change occurs within individuals and within community. In order to understand community

change, one must become aware of the history and context:

> Developing a more robust analysis of community, points toward pragmatism's potential contribution to understandings of social inequality, power, and politics as well as how making these ideas more central within pragmatism itself might enrich the field. (Collins 2012)

Being an activist draws us to directly act for others rather than simply making recommendations. What might work somewhere, might not necessarily work somewhere else. There cannot be an ascribed way of addressing conditional community needs with a general system. Having a pragmatic social justice lens appreciates this often overlooked factor.

Forming community means the community is connected and each community member is able to understand the needs of others. Additionally, this community building lends itself to a pragmatic nature because one is required to listen to other experiences (Morgan 2014b). The community is redeveloped through inquiry. Thus the community is a foundational piece of building social justice. Wanting to build community and establishing relationships is an early step to solving social justice issues. The interconnectedness of a community can inform others and help change social and political realities. Because the idea of community is ubiquitous, versatile, multifaceted, and able to marshal emotions that move people to action, community supports democracy (Collins 2012). Jane Addams, an early supporter of pragmatism and founder of the Hull House theorized a continually evolving democracy based on social association which was particular to each generation and locality (Whipps 2010). This theory can become reality if we acknowledge the importance of community within democracy.

Social justice makes people think about things in different ways. As the pragmatist maxim states, ideas are only meaningfully different if they move people to act in different ways (Hookway 2015; McDermid 2006). Social change is only meaningful if people are informed and have reflected upon and dialogued how to act. After all, there is a cycle to understanding social justice. One has to be aware to be able to take action. Additionally, these actions need to help inform future inquires. These experiences allow for further awareness. Pragmatic social justice acknowledges the constant change of beliefs and actions that impact a community as that community and the networks within changes. A social justice lens find common experiences and common ground within differing populations.

This idea of pragmatic social justice has been utilized before with instances such as Jane Addams' Hull House, the rise of and support of feminism (Whipps 2013), and better understanding people of color (West 1994). I mention this to suggest this notion has been done and each lesson can be utilized for future endeavors of inclusion. Addams' says it beautifully, "As

an ethical system, it placed on each person 'a moral obligation' to choose experiences of 'mixing on the thronged and common road' where we can 'least see the size of one another's burdens' " (1902).

Pragmatism is a way to have social justice practices continue because there is always more to be done. The work is never completed!

To review, pragmatism is a philosophical doctrine looking to find the most workable solutions. Social justice is a concept based in advocacy. Pragmatic social justice is a conceptual framework that both inform research and community action alike. This paper functioned as a formal introduction to how these two concepts could be intertwined. By no means does this offer definitive analysis of how to engaging pragmatic social justice. Additionally, reflection and dialogue are not the only strategies to learn about a given culture. Though they both help navigate the complex social sphere. By and large, the pragmatic social justice lens offers an explanation on how to engage in the ever changing culture and community. We as practitioners must be willing to acknowledge our role and others' roles if we want to claim we are operating as activists.

The notion of seeing another vantage point can certainly be challenging, but it is the only way to not undermine potential challenges oppressed individuals face.

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The (Overwhelming) Improbability of Classical (and Christian) Theism

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Abstract

In the analytic Philosophy of Religion, much ink has been spilt on the existence of some sort of supernatural reality. Such work is usually done by theists; those that find classical theism to be probably true. It is my contention that theism (and especially Christian theism) is unjustly privileged by many in the field (including non-theists), even when supernaturalism has been—competently or incompetently—argued for. As such, I present a series of challenges for the theist, finding them to be insuperable at present. The first such challenge concerns the challenge of polytheism. Polytheism is often very casually overlooked on the basis that monotheism is "simpler." Recognising that such simplicity is not necessarily truth-conducive, I argue that polytheism, as a catch-all hypothesis, ought to be preferred. The second challenge proceeds from an assumption not only of supernaturalism, but also of monotheism. There are infinitely many monotheistic alternatives to theism, which can be conceived by simply tweaking the typical attributes of God. Again, simplicity is typically appealed to, and again found to be unhelpful. Furthermore, there are the deistic alternatives to consider also, many of which are seemingly more probable than theism. Finally, I consider the pantheistic god models, deciding that pantheisms are generally more robust and make fewer ad hoc assumptions about the world. As an aside, I concisely discuss the difficulties in moving from theism to Christian theism, which includes an argument against miracles, and a brief explanation of the increasing trend of questioning Jesus' historical existence.

Keywords

Analytic Philosophy of Religion, classical theism,
God's non-existence, atheism, non-theism, polytheism,
alternative monotheisms, deism, pantheism, Jesus' non-existence

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1. This article is based on my doctoral dissertation, and on a paper that was recently presented at the University of Oxford.

Introduction

Many analytic Philosophers of Religion have analysed and scrutinised the common arguments for the existence of at least one god, and found them wanting (Sobel 2004; Oppy 2006; Philipse 2012). I have come to the same conclusion in my doctoral dissertation. There are also good arguments for naturalism, which necessitates that we weigh up the evidences for and against, in a thorough and transparent (epistemic) probabilistic analysis.[2] While personally attempting such an analysis, it became clear to me that classical theism (to say nothing of Christian theism) is not the only alternative to naturalism. I contend that many of these alternatives are so obviously problematic to the case for theism, that any reasonable probabilistic case here would firstly reveal that theism has not been properly argued for as probable, and secondly (more contentiously) that theism is outright implausible. In order, we shall briefly consider the many challenges to theism's probability: the inadequacy of the case for theism; the powerful arguments for naturalism; the problem of polytheism; the problem of alternative monotheisms; and the problem of pantheism.

Theism

Theism, or classical theism, is not simply the belief in some god or gods. It is the belief in God. To theistic philosophers of religion, such as Richard Swinburne and William Lane Craig, God is a specific, person. Richard Swinburne, a prominent Christian philosopher, treats "God" as a proper name of the person referred to by the following description: a person without a body (i.e., a spirit) who necessarily is eternal, perfectly free, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and the creator of all things. This description expresses the traditional concept of God in Western philosophy and theology. Since moral goodness is a great-making property, the greatest conceivable being must be morally perfect, as well as have the other superlative properties listed by Swinburne (Craig 2011).

 To this clearly monotheistic interpretation (Craig 2008, 155, 300), we can add that God is also revelatory (Craig 2008, 249, 258), transcendent (Craig 2008, 50, 108, 111, 152, 264), immutable (Craig 2008, 152−154, 254), and his intentions are inscrutable.[3] Such theistic philosophers present arguments for the existence of God, which non-theistic—and even some theistic—philosophers find unconvincing, for a plethora of reasons. Arguments from contingency, for example, tend to simply assume that the world is contingent

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2. In probabilistic reasoning, we refer to the inherent plausibility of the theory as the "prior probability," the likelihood of the evidence on the theory as the "likelihood" (or the "consequent probability"), and the overall result as the "posterior probability" (or simply, the "probability"); see Lataster 2013.

3. Craig links this to God's being "free" (See Craig 2008, 275−276; Craig 2010, 158−161).

and that there exists a necessary god. They also imply that the existence of the world is a surprising fact; one that cries out for an explanation. However, forward thinking philosophers wonder, "Why is there nothing rather than something?" (Bilimoria 2012, 509). Cosmological arguments also assume much about the world that many critics would not yet accept. Philosophical reasons for supposing that the universe began to exist tend to rely on tensed views of time, while philosophers of time (and even philosophers of religion) often favour tenseless models (PhilPapers "All Respondents"). Theists' scientific reasons generally rely on misunderstandings about what the evidence reveals. For example, the Big Bang Theory does not prove that all things came into existence, from nothing, around 14 billion years ago. Rather, it says that around 14 billion years ago, the localised universe as we know it underwent a period of expansion.[4]

Fine-tuning arguments for theism too quickly dismiss naturalistic possibilities involving chance and necessity, while claiming intelligent design, despite a lack of direct evidence (for either possibility). Some philosophers have even argued that natural fine-tuning does more to argue against God's existence (Sober 2005). Moral arguments simply assume—by ironically appealing to our subjective notions—that objective morals exist, and, more importantly, further assume that they exist because of God. Ontological arguments are logically flawed, and also make assumptions about what a maximal being is, whilst arguments based on personal religious experiences face the problems of credulity and metaphysical excess.

Please note that this is not intended as a thorough refutation of such arguments, which, as we shall see, is not necessary in arguing for theism's overwhelming improbability. Also note that recent work has demonstrated that theists likely overestimate the persuasiveness of these arguments (De Cruz 2014; Tobia 2016), and that the influential and respected William Lane Craig effectively admits that his faith trumps reason and evidence (Craig 2008, 47–48). In any case, let us now turn to the arguments against God's existence.

Naturalism

None of the arguments for God's existence are compelling, largely because the evidence appealed to is at least equally expected on naturalism/s. Furthermore, just about all of the arguments can be altered, with related evidence, to form good arguments against theism.[5] To make the point about natu-

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4. It is also entirely plausible that the universe is eternal, as agreed by several physicists, particularly those who—recognising that the classical laws of physics that predict the singularity actually break down the closer we get to it—doubt the existence of the singularity and the big bang as we know it (see Ali and Das 2015).

5. See the comments about the fine-tuning argument above. I argue for this more thor-

ralism's probabilistic superiority, however, we shall consider only two good arguments against God's existence. The first:

> If God exists, gratuitous evils do not.
> Gratuitous evils exist.
> Therefore, God does not exist.

That an all-good God would allow so much gratuitous evil or suffering has long troubled theists and non-theists alike (Rowe 1979, 337). God has the knowledge that this gratuitous suffering occurs, the will to ameliorate it, and the power to do so as well. It is thus fairly inexplicable why the gratuitous suffering continues when God exists, so that this suffering is *good evidence that God does not exist*. Theodicies can overcome the logical problem of evil, but, being entirely speculative, do not overcome the evidential or probabilistic argument from evil. Appealing to God's inscrutability is also counter-productive, as it ends a probabilistic case, and allows anybody to proclaim her or his hypothesis as preferable.[6] While this argument certainly does not prove that God does not exist, it provides a probabilistic point against. It is simply that such evidence is more expected on the view that God does not exist. The second:

> If God exists, God would make God's existence obvious to all humans.
> God's existence is not obvious to all humans.
> Therefore, God does not exist.

God's hiddenness is effectively inexplicable on theism. The theistic God wants all people to know him, worship him, and be saved. God knows what would convince us all, and has the power to do so. As with the argument from evil, appealing to mere possibilities does not aid the theist. The appeal to free will is especially unhelpful, given that the knowledge of God's existence does not equate to the acceptance of God and his ways.[7] Of course, the lack of clear and unambiguous evidence of God's existence is perfectly expected on naturalism, so that while this again does not prove God's non-existence, it is evidence for it. To clarify, it is obvious that the lack of evidence for God's existence is 100% expected on naturalism. It is surely not 100% on theism. Even if it would not be 0% or 1%, it surely would not be 100% expected, when

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oughly in my doctoral dissertation. Another example concerning fine-tuning is the vastness of the universe. Craig admits that this is indeed evidence for "atheism" over "theism." See William Lane Craig, "Does the Vastness of the Universe Support Naturalism?"

6. For example, that God could lie to us for some greater good; his "holy" scriptures and personal communications may be filled with deceit (cf. Wielenberg 2010).

7. The Jewish Tanakh contains many examples of humans and lesser divinities rejecting God despite knowing who he is, and the likes of Christopher Hitchens also asserted a strong anti-theism that did not depend on the assumption of naturalism.

God is supposed to be a revelatory being. Note that while my own example is anecdotal, I do submit myself as a non-resistant non-believer who just has not been convinced by God. I would happily follow God, as my own religious history (which demonstrates a reluctance to move on, as I slowly journeyed from conservative Christian theism to de facto naturalism) indicates.

As with the previous section, this brief overview does not intend to settle the question over God's existence; that naturalism is less ad hoc and far more probable than theism is a topic for another day. What this subsection reveals, is that, whether or not there is evidence favouring God's existence, there is certainly evidence that points away from God's existence. This renders a probabilistic analysis necessary for anyone trying to demonstrate theism's being probable.[8] The theist who wishes to argue for God's probable existence needs to properly weigh up the evidences for and the evidences against. Unfortunately, theists tend to overlook this; many theistic philosophers of religion—like Craig—fail to provide the probabilistic case they implicitly admit is necessary. Swinburne has tried, but overlooks many of the alternative hypotheses, so that his probabilistic case for God's existence is incomplete (Swinburne 2004). It is to these alternatives that we now turn.

Polytheism

The arguments for theism are not necessarily arguments for classical theism, but for a generic supernaturalism. They largely argue for a creator god or gods, who fine-tuned the universe, and is the source of objective moral standards. Alternative supernaturalisms explain much of the evidence behind these arguments; often better than does theism. The first set of alternatives to consider is the polytheisms. Differentiating the many supernaturalisms by considering only the number of gods that exist, there is only one monotheism. But how many polytheistic hypotheses are there? Well, there is the two-god theory, the three-god theory, the four-god theory, and so on. There are arguably infinitely many polytheisms. With supernaturalism charitably taken for granted, the monotheist must now contend with all the possible polytheisms. How? The most common approach taken here is the appeal to simplicity. Richard Swinburne leads the charge:

> There could in this respect be no simpler explanation than one which postulated only one cause. Theism is simpler than polytheism. (Swinburne 2010, 40)

> The simplicity of a theory, in my view, is a matter of it postulating few (logically dependent) entities, few properties of entities, few kinds of entities, few kinds of properties. (Swinburne 2004, 53)

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8. And not just at the "case level," but also at the "argument level," since evidences appealed to also work on (several) naturalistic hypotheses, and prior probabilities also need to be factored in.

There are different notions of parsimony, with Swinburne seemingly focussing on fewer entities as being simpler. Likewise, William Lane Craig invokes Ockham's razor in restricting the discussion to a single cause of the universe (Craig 2008, 152). However, does monotheism's being simpler make it more probable as a result? This sort of simplicity is not necessarily conducive to truth. It might be, but this would need to be comprehensively demonstrated, which the likes of Swinburne and Craig have not done. Indeed, scholars such as Kosso and van Fraassen have recognised the pragmatic aesthetic of 'simpler' explanations, but stopped short of declaring that simpler theories are more probable.[9] Nevertheless, that such theistic philosophers have failed to demonstrate that simplicity is conducive to truth, crucial as it is, is arguably not the most problematic issue. The bigger issue may be how this knowledge affects the probability distribution. If monotheism is inherently more probable than the polytheisms, the relative prior probability of the monotheistic hypothesis is improved. But are there other factors that elevate the likelihoods or consequent probabilities of the polytheisms, such as the disparate regions of the universe? With the likelihoods held equal for the sake of argument, the issues around the prior probabilities remain, even if our considerations are further narrowed to the simplicity (of this kind) of the theory.

Does monotheism's alleged favourable prior probability render it a probable theory? Imagine that there are only eight possible theories, ranging from the world with one god, to the world with eight, and that the likelihoods are held equal. The one-god theory, being simpler, is the most probable theory. It takes up 30% of the prior probability space, with the other theories taking up 10% each. Clearly, monotheism is here not probable (i.e. more than 50% probable), but only relatively probable. In fact, the broad catch-all hypothesis of polytheism is 70% probable, more than twice as probable as monotheism. And that assumed that monotheism was indeed more probable. The truth is, that we are in ignorance over the matter. Furthermore, there are not only seven possible polytheistic alternatives in reality; there are infinitely many.

With these two considerations in mind, to proceed we must invoke the principle of indifference, and simply roll the (infinitely sided?) die.[10] As such, *P(monotheism|e.b)* approaches 0, even to a trillion decimal places. Conversely,

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9. Philosopher of Science, Peter Kosso, explains that "simplicity is clearly a pragmatic virtue, and for that reason it is a good thing to strive for. But we have yet to see the connection between being simple and being true" (1992, 46). Noting that equating truth and simplicity is groundless, van Fraassen argues along similar lines (van Fraassen 1980). There are also several critiques on this notion relating to Philosophy of Religion, specifically Swinburne's appeal to simplicity (Göhner, Kaiser and Suhm 2008; Korbmacher, Schmoranzer, and Seide 2008; Philipse 2012, 212–220, 245–255).

10. We could at this point just give up and embrace agnosticism.

P(polytheism|e.b) approaches 1. Unfortunately for the theist, the task seems insurmountable even if they were to argue only for monotheism. Even if I am wrong that polytheism as a catch-all hypothesis should be preferred, we would still need to be convinced that monotheism is more probable than pentatheism, octatheism, and so forth, before we should accept that classical theism is probable. And classical theism is only one of the many possible monotheisms; many more challenges await.

Alternative monotheisms

Positing alternative monotheisms is straightforward, especially concerning sub-maximal gods. The philosopher need only imagine the theistic god, for example, with one (or more) of the definitive properties altered, or removed altogether. For example, the theistic god, often hypothesised as being maximally great, is alleged to be omnibenevolent. One alternative would be a god that is omnimalevolent (cf. Law 2010). There may also be gods that are somewhat, or very, good or evil. Another possibility is a god that is balanced, morality-wise, and is neither good nor evil; one that is morally indifferent (cf. Philipse 2012, 250). Some of these non-omnibenevolent gods may even better explain the evidence that gratuitous evil or suffering exists, as philosophers might expect that an all-good God would not tolerate the existence of gratuitous evil or suffering. In other words, the aforementioned argument from gratuitous suffering is not necessarily an argument for naturalism; it is properly an argument against *theism*.

Another divine property that can be tweaked is that of omnipotence. It is easy to imagine a less powerful god, such as one that is powerless to put an end to all evil; again, possibly providing a god-concept that better explains the existence of gratuitous evil. Similarly, there may be a god that does not have infinite or complete knowledge but has x amount of knowledge. Another god may have $x+1$ amount of knowledge, yet another might know $x+2$ facts about the world, and so forth. It is easy to see how there are an infinite number of possibly existing monotheistic gods, of which the theistic God is but one (cf. Philipse 2012, 246). There may indeed be a god that is a "maximally great entity," but there is no reason to suppose that there could not be a creator god that is slightly less great, such as Ialdabaoth, the Demiurge (see Pleše 2006, 51–55). So far keeping to only these three definitive properties of God, it is obvious that while there may be an all-powerful, all-knowing and all-good god, the god that exists might also be weak, stupid, and evil, or even reasonably-powerful, fairly-knowledgeable, and morally-indifferent. Alternatively, properties can be added, such as omniessence, which would conflict with other properties of the theistic god (like transcendence). With such additional properties, there may also be yet more spectra on which to theorise about infinitely more alternatives.

The philosophical theist thus faces almost the same daunting task as with the polytheistic challenge. Even when the likelihoods are considered equal (they are not, as the example of the not so good gods reveal), what elevates theism on the prior side of the equation? Once again, the likes of Richard Swinburne and William Lane Craig argue that, theism, simply, is *simpler*. Swinburne claims that "hypotheses attributing infinite values of properties to objects are simpler than ones attributing large finite values" and that "scientific practice shows this preference for infinite values over large finite values of a property" (Swinburne 2004, 55). He provides some examples:

> Newton's theory of gravity postulated that the gravitational force travelled with infinite velocity, rather than with some very large finite velocity (say 2,000,000,000.325 km/sec.), which would have predicted the observations equally well within the limit of accuracy to which measurements could be made. Only when Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, concerned with electromagnetism as well as with gravity, was adopted as the simplest theory covering a vast range of data did scientists accept as a consequence of that theory that the gravitational force travelled with a finite velocity. Likewise in the Middle Ages people believed that light travelled with an infinite velocity rather than with some large finite velocity equally compatible with observations. Only when observations were made by Römer in the seventeenth century incompatible with the infinite-velocity theory was it accepted that light had a finite velocity.
>
> <div align="right">(Swinburne 2010, 40−41; see also Swinburne 2004, 55, 97)</div>

Interestingly, these scientists *preferred what are allegedly the simpler theories*, and they were eventually *proven wrong*. William Lane Craig's thoughts:

> Considerations of simplicity might also come into play here. For example, it is simpler to posit one metaphysically necessary, infinite, omniscient, morally perfect being than to think that three separate necessary beings exist exemplifying these respective excellent-making properties. Similarly, with respect to quasi-maximally great beings, Swinburne's contention seems plausible that it is simpler (or perhaps less ad hoc) to posit either zero or infinity as the measure of a degreed property than to posit some inexplicably finite measure. Thus, it would be more plausible to think that maximal greatness is possibly instantiated than quasi-maximal greatness. (2008, 188; see also Craig 2008, 187)

Again we face the problem that this kind of simplicity is not necessarily truth-conducive. The appeal to simplicity here is a non sequitur unless it can be demonstrated that a hypothesis' relative simplicity makes it more probable or less probable. And again, the degree of preference ought to be justified. Alternatives cannot be brushed aside simply because theism is considered to be simpler. A slight (or even very large) increase in theism's probability on the basis of its alleged simplicity may not necessarily be enough to overcome the probabilistic weight of the alternatives as a collective, especially when

there may be infinitely many, and especially when other factors that could affect the probabilities in favor of monotheistic alternatives are factored in. And as with the problem of polytheism, the probability distribution is key, and currently unknown. Furthermore, this appeal to simplicity, if successful, does not eliminate all of the alternative monotheisms. Consider the deisms and quasi-deisms, which may also be all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good.

  The god of deism is very similar to God, but is not a revelatory god. She does not interact or interfere with the creation. She does not require us to believe in her. It is easy to imagine that such a god is far greater than the god of theism, which is seemingly needy of human interaction, particularly with regards to being reminded about how great he is. Not only does the appeal to simplicity overcome the deisms; it potentially supports them. The deistic and quasi-deistic gods are arguably simpler and greater, in that they do not need to reveal themselves to us. But it is on the consequent side of the equation where the problem of deism is magnified. Recalling the earlier-discussed argument from hiddenness, the relevant evidence supports not just naturalism over theism, but the many deisms and quasi-deisms as well. The former, because this god does not require belief in her, and the latter because she does not require our belief in her.

  Contemporary analytic philosophy of religion is not only very theism-centric, but is also—inexplicably—anthropocentric. Such scholars ought to entertain the notion that the focus of such a god's attention and infatuation may not, in fact, be Homo sapiens. Perhaps she has actually revealed herself, not to humans, but to another species; perhaps even an extraterrestrial species. Consider also, the post-humanist possibilities that the quasi-deistic god has not yet revealed itself to humanity, or any other species, but will do so in future. It may be tomorrow, or one hundred years from now. It may be to Homo sapiens sapiens, or a slightly evolved future human species (perhaps a Homo evolvus, Homo noeticus or Homo sapiens luminous), or a much changed human species (such as the Eloi or the Morlocks) (Wells 2012), or an alternative species (possibly long after humans are extinct), such as the nobly resilient cockroaches[11] or a highly evolved race of cat-people.[12] Our collective ego, whilst visibly important to the survival of our species,

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11. Perhaps the comedian Ellen DeGeneres was correct, when she speculated about god being a giant bug, one that is unimpressed about all the cockroaches and ants we have killed (1995, 129).

12. *Felis sapiens* plays a prominent role in the surrealist humour of Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. Like humans, these cat people thought themselves very important, created religions, fought holy wars, and obeyed sexually restrictive commandments such as, "Thou shalt not partake of carnal knowledge with more than four members of the opposite sex at any one session" (Naylor 1989, 123–128).

cannot be considered authoritative in matters of objective truth, especially when the matter concerns human importance, where (presently unavailable) outsider perspectives would seemingly be required. These misanthropic imaginings are all possibilities that theistic philosophers have for the most part not even acknowledged, let alone eliminated.

The probabilistic case for theism looks at this point to be unsalvageable, even when supernaturalism is granted, and even when monotheism is further granted. Unfortunately for the theist, yet more challenges await. We have so far only considered transcendent god models. Let us now consider hypotheses entailing a divine world.

Pantheism

What I call "generic" pantheism asserts that god is everything and everything is god. It may or may not be "conscious," whatever that means. One particularly interesting form of pantheism is pandeism, which involves a creative act, somewhat similarly to traditional monotheism. In pandeistic scenarios, there is a powerful deity who effectively sacrificed itself in order to create the universe. These gods become the world. There are also the panentheisms, where the world is divine, but there is more to god than the world. Despite the great variety of pantheisms, they tend to share one crucial element, which leads to important differences with classical theism: the universe, and all that lies within, is god. That is, it consists of divine "stuff." This idea directly opposes theistic notions of transcendence, that the creation is wholly separate from God (Craig 2013, 590). This is an important distinction, which has real-world affects on the sorts of religions that eventuate. One example of the incompatibility of these opposing views is demonstrated by the Judeo-Christian traditions' prohibitions on idolatry (Exodus 20:4). Another significant difference is that theism generally implores adherents to seek and to please god. On many pantheisms, such actions are unnecessary and even fruitless. For god is within, and humankind's only "requirement" would be to *be*; seemingly all a pantheistic god would desire of us, if anything.

There are many practical benefits to pantheistic, as opposed to theistic, forms of religion, which I discuss elsewhere. For example, pantheism would seemingly be relatively more encouraging of people to respect each other and the planet. But in this article, we need only focus on how the pantheisms affect the probabilistic analysis. Regarding notions of simplicity that even theists are happy to admit affect the prior probabilities, it is undeniable that the pantheisms are less ad hoc. This claim is easily justified by the theistic reliance on substance dualism and *creatio ex nihilo* (Plantinga and Sennett 1998, 20; Swinburne 2000, 482–484; Swinburne 2005, 925; Copan and Craig 2004, 90). Apart from the fact that not all pantheistic hypotheses entail

a creation (so that pantheism is already more evidentially robust), these concepts are completely without evidence.[13] It is far simpler to assume *creatio ex deo*, that god created (if god created at all) from her own substance, whatever that may be. And by theists' own reckoning, it is simpler to assume substance monism, than substance dualism.

Regarding the likelihood side of the equation, hybrid god-models as defeaters to theism are easily produced. Pandeism, for example, combines the monistic view of the world (superior prior probability), with the immunities granted to deism (superior consequent probability or likelihood). The same can be done for the "not all good" god. So with "pantheism," there are numerous—arguably infinitely many—god-models that are probabilistically superior to classical theism, on both sides of the equation. It is perhaps little wonder, then, why most theistic philosophers of religion have not presented a thorough and transparent case for theism's probability being greater than 0.5. On current evidence, it is simply impossible. We could of course forego probabilistic reasoning, which would seemingly result in the agnostics being declared the victors. While that would suit a contemporary, pluralistic, and worldly agnostic such as myself, it would not do for the exclusivist theistic evidentialist.

Christian theism

The case against theism has already been forcefully made, but for interest, let us consider how Christian philosophers of religion arrive at Christian, rather than say, Islamic, theism. The most common approach is to unsurprisingly focus on Jesus Christ, and his alleged resurrection. These arguments tend to build on a foundation of historical facts about Jesus of Nazareth (such as that his tomb was found empty, and that some of his followers experienced the risen Jesus), and the proposition that the best explanation for these facts is that the god of theism, God, raised Jesus from death. Unfortunately, mainstream scholarship admits that very little can be known about Jesus.

One contentious possibility, which is not at all crucial to my critique, is that Jesus did not exist historically. Gone are the days when only amateurs and rabid anti-Christians were questioning Jesus' historicity. Now, several scholars in Philosophy and Religious Studies have expressed their doubts (Law 2011; Droge 2009, 23–25; Hartney 2014; Avalos 2015, 10). Independent historian Richard Carrier has argued, Bayesian-style, that Jesus' historical existence is extremely unlikely, in an academic monograph (Carrier 2014). I expressed sympathy for this view in numerous peer-reviewed journal articles, and have recently undermined the case for the Historical Jesus, which so often revolves

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13. Note that when astrophysicists and cosmologists such as Lawrence Krauss discuss "nothing," they refer to "something" that contains much potentiality, as noted by Craig (2008, 115; see also Krauss 2012).

around hypothetical sources (Lataster 2014; Lataster 2015a; Lataster 2016). Furthermore, New Testament historian James Crossley has acknowledged that, "debates over the historical existence of Jesus […] are turning up closer to the mainstream of historical Jesus studies" (2015, 171). This is an important historical question that demands further research. But ignore that now; let us assume for the sake of argument that there was indeed a historical Jesus.

Still, scholars debate endlessly over what it is that Jesus said and did. Even the methods used to procure this information from the obviously problematic sources—namely the gospels, but also the aforementioned hypothetical sources—are under attack (Gager 1974, 261; Theissen and Winter 2002; Keith and Le Donne 2012; Lataster 2015b also critiques the sources themslesves). More relevantly, many scholars, including even Christian scholars, doubt the empty tomb story, such as Bart Ehrman, John Dominic Crossan, Shelby Spong, Robert Price, and Thomas Brodie. That Jesus' tomb was found empty can hardly be considered a fact of history. As for Jesus' followers experiencing the post-mortem Jesus, the same problematic sources are appealed to. These sources do not demonstrate that Jesus' followers interacted with the risen Jesus; they only establish that some people thought so.[14] As for the followers, there are numerous naturalistic explanations for why they may have thought that they had encountered the risen Jesus, and we should also not overlook the possibility of some level of fabrication. Religions stemming from fictions are actually commonplace, as any religious particularist would agree, and even religions that arise out of what are very *obvious* fictions are not unheard of; contemporary examples include Discordianism and the Church of All Worlds (Cusack 2010). Nevertheless, let us charitably accept Christian theists' claims about these "minimal facts" concerning Jesus.

The bigger problem is the notion that "God raised Jesus from death" serves as the best explanation of these facts. Claims of this sort are inherently improbable. Non-believers will think so because of our empirical observations about how the world works, and historical frequencies. But even religious believers can accept that miracles or miraculous claims are supposed to be or appear improbable, in order to have the power to convince potential converts; creating somewhat of a paradox.[15] This does not mean that Jesus' resurrection is improbable; it only means that it initially suffers from a low prior probability, compared to alternative explanations such as exaggeration, allegory, and so forth. In principle, a low prior can be overcome, via superior likelihoods. However, this is not the case

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14. Cf. the many claims concerning sightings of Elvis, who was only a god of rock and roll.

15. Doubters from the Abrahamic faith traditions can consider the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Elijah went out of his way to make the inevitable inferno improbable, and did much to rule out naturalistic explanations (1 Kings 18).

here, since the evidence is so poor, and very much like what would be expected on alternative explanations such as exaggeration, allegory, and so forth.

Some of the gap in the prior probabilities would be addressed by a good case for God's existence. But as we have earlier seen, a good case for God's existence has not yet been made, and seems impossible besides. And that would address some of the gap, not all. Theists need to explain why the god of theism would want to help Jesus, who was one of the many Pagan and Jewish false prophets for all we know, and perhaps explain why an evil god or a panentheistic god would not have raised Jesus. Inevitably, the resurrection argument assumes the very things it is supposed to establish.[16]

Conclusion

None of the arguments for theism are convincing to most non-believers and even to some believers. These arguments typically appeal to unproven or even outright false premises. Conversely, there are good reasons for presupposing naturalism. Nevertheless, with supernaturalism conceded for the sake of argument, it becomes obvious that the so-called arguments for theism work equally well—or better—as arguments for alternative supernaturalisms. These include the polytheisms, the alternative monotheisms (including the deisms and quasi-deisms), and the pantheisms (including the panentheisms and pandeisms). Theistic philosophers generally try to overlook some of the supernaturalistic alternatives due to concerns around simplicity, but this is too hasty. The appeal to simplicity, and its supposedly favourable effect on the prior probabilities, is not always relevant, and when it is, it often works against the theistic hypothesis. Even when it does not, the extent of the probabilistic favouritism is of the utmost importance, though currently unknown. Comfortable with agnosticism, my aim was not to demonstrate that some naturalistic or supernaturalistic alternative to theism is true or probably true. The aim was simply to explain that the case for theism's probability is not yet complete.

I conclude that a proper probabilistic case for theism requires a thorough and transparent probabilistic analysis that incorporates the evidence for (if any), the evidence against, and considers the naturalistic and supernaturalistic alternatives to classical theism. With such an analysis unlikely to argue for theism's probability, it is my hope that philosophy of religion/s becomes just that, and not simply philosophy of theism or Christian theism (cf. Schilbrack 2014).[17]

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16. To be gratuitously critical in this context, even if all this were accepted, Christian particularism need not be.

17. Please note that the aim is not to persuade believers that they cannot and/or should not adhere to their religious traditions. While the evidence does not support theism and Christian theism, religion does not necessarily require evidence. The Bible agrees: see Hebrews 11:1.

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The Impact of Scientific Advances on Our Political, Religious and Social Views

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Abstract

In the United States most people have adopted a worldview based on the core tenets of liberal democracy, capitalism, science, religion and the social sciences. Scientific advances, though, have persuaded many individuals to revise this traditional view and adopt an alternative belief system. Thus some people embrace social democracy, regulated capitalism or a more extreme political philosophy. Others adopt non-theistic religions or break their affiliation with any religion. The latter include naturalists who reject supernatural explanations and take science as the best description of reality. Many people reject the blank slate doctrine and hold that human behaviour results from the interaction of the environment with innate biological factors.

Keywords
Political philosophy, religion, science, evolution, human nature

Introduction

Most of us in the West grew up in a liberal democratic country and adopted the Judeo-Christian worldview. We learned that capitalism, based on the liberal principles of the American and French revolutions, would bring freedom and equality to all people. In science courses many of us were taught the deterministic views of Newtonian physics. We were told that the universe and all life forms were created by a transcendental and eternal God that continues to interact with his creation; humans were created in the image of this God and did not evolve from ape-like ancestors. We learned that humans possess a non-physical soul or spirit, free will, and will enjoy a happy afterlife if we follow God-given moral rules. Social scientists taught us that human behaviour is molded by culture and not by hereditary factors.

In this essay I argue that the advances in scientific knowledge have persuaded many people, including myself, to revise their political, religious and social views. I begin by addressing the impact of scientific progress on political philosophy. *Laissez-faire*, unregulated capitalism has many flaws. It gen-

erates income and wealth inequality, limits the opportunity to fulfill one's potential and tends to corrupt the democratic system. Subsequently, I discuss the advances in science and their effect on the classical views of Newtonian physics. The traditional, theistic, conception of a beneficent God has been disputed by those who point out the high prevalence of pain and suffering in the world. Life forms may have appeared spontaneously from self-organization of inanimate matter and evolved by natural selection. There is no scientific evidence that souls exist and interact with matter and other souls. We have a mind which may be the product of the activity of neural networks in the brain. Religion and morality appear to be evolutionary adaptations designed to increase the cohesion, and thus the survival, of the group. Free will may not exist and human behaviour reflects the interaction of the environment with our innate cooperative and competitive dispositions. The following sections discuss the major views that some of us had to revise.

Political philosophy

I grew up in Cuba under *laissez-faire*, unregulated, capitalism. This political philosophy promoted remarkable economic growth, fueled in part by unbridled consumerism. It championed civil liberties, the rule of law and negative freedom or the lack of external restraints. This system, though, has critical flaws that need to be corrected—otherwise it may create social and political instability. Unregulated capitalism may be deficient in the creation of positive freedom, the possession of the power and resources to reach one's own potential. In addition, it is a powerful creator of inequality, and the influence of money in politics tends to corrupt the democratic process.

  In capitalism the means of production are owned privately, whereas production, distribution and prices are determined by free markets. Because the workers may create more value (surplus value) with their labour than the portion that they receive back in wages, the profits of the owners may become excessive, creating an unjust wealth inequality. In the United States the GINI[1] ratio, an index of inequality, is worse than that of most developed countries. Unfortunately, wealth does not trickle down in a significant way to most of the workers; the system is designed to keep most of the wealth in the top one percent of the population. I believe that regulated capitalism or social democracy may be better choices.

  The United States is supposed to be a representative democracy, government by the people through their representatives. In practice it is a plutocracy, government by the rich. Presidents and members of Congress come and go, but the ruling military-industrial complex, which includes the large corporations, bank and individual millionaires and billionaires, remains in

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  1. This coefficient, developed by Conrado Gini, is widely used as an index of inequality.

control. They work together to maintain the political philosophy of conservatism in power by manipulating the legislative and electoral systems. This is achieved indirectly by means of lobbyists, political action committees, donations of large sums of money to candidates and interfering with the voting rights of minorities and low income individuals.

I left Cuba in 1961 after a communist revolution deposed the ruling military dictatorship. The totalitarian communist system that they instituted in Cuba was similar to that of Stalin's Russia. Because this system aimed to create an egalitarian society with a robust social welfare program, it became very popular during the twentieth century in third-world countries. Communism, though, assumed that individuals can be molded by society and that individual initiatives would continue to support economic growth. Sadly, to stay in power the political elites assumed total control over the population and suppressed all forms of freedom, including holding free elections, and eliminated the right to vote, to have political parties and to own private property. Members of the all-powerful communist party became the privileged class, enjoying all the perks and benefits that the corporate elites have in capitalistic societies.

By the end of the twentieth century most far-left populist systems, like communism, had imploded and adopted the free-market system while keeping the political control of the government in the hands of their party or powerful oligarchies. Recent events like terrorism and mass migrations, and the loss of jobs due to globalization and automation, have driven the growth of authoritarian, far-right populism in many countries. This system encourages nationalism and protectionism and aims to stop poor people from underdeveloped countries to migrate to the north in search for a better standard of living or to escape from violence.

Religion and science

The majority of the population in this country believes in God, a conscious, intelligent and all-powerful supernatural being, who created the universe and continues to interact with his creation (Perez 2015). Most religions are theistic and claim that God has many attributes that include not only necessary existence, but also omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence and beneficence. Many people, though, question theistic claims or find them incoherent. A major argument against the tenets of theism is the problem of evil, the high prevalence of pain and suffering in the world. There are other plausible non-theistic alternatives which include Deism, Pantheism, Process Theology and the minimalist tenets of liberal religions. Some people argue that it is difficult to comprehend the attributes of an entity that may be so foreign to us that understanding His nature may be impossible.

Religion may have an evolutionary origin. It may have been selected by evolution because it increases the cohesion, and therefore the survival, of the group. It also provides behavioural guidelines, explains some of the mysteries of nature and promises an afterlife. Unfortunately, religions tend to be exclusivist; they may incite violence against others and may retard scientific progress.

Atheists do not believe in God and embrace the worldview of naturalism. Naturalists believe that only the natural world exists and it is discoverable by the methods of science. Methodological naturalists embrace the scientific method but avoid the issues of physicalism and supernaturalism. Ontological naturalists are usually atheists who deny the existence of any supernatural being and claim that everything is physical. Nonetheless, it is impossible for them to prove a negative statement, and physicalism has been challenged by the body-mind problem, how our subjective experiences can be explained or caused by objective physical events. I, like many others, embrace agnosticism, because we cannot prove the existence or the non-existence of God.

The task of scientists is to understand the natural world utilizing the scientific method. The simple form of the scientific method that I learned in school is limited by the problem of induction, generalizations are not always correct. A better method of inference may be Bayesian reasoning: starting with prior estimates and then updating them when new information becomes available. Nonetheless, new information requires confirmation by independent observers. Absolute certainty is never possible and sometimes new discoveries change our understanding of reality and propel a paradigm shift.

The twentieth century witnessed several paradigm shifts in physics and mathematics. By combining the laws of gravity and motion Newton was able to explain the movement of celestial bodies. Einstein introduced a new concept of space and time that conflicted with Newton's theory which was based on absolute space and time. According to Einstein's special relativity, nothing can travel faster than light; our measuring sticks have to adjust to conform to this physical fact. Time intervals do not in themselves have absolute meaning but rather depend on the state of motion of the observer who measures them. Einstein's equations of general relativity expressed the link between the four-dimensional space/time curvature and the gravitational properties of material bodies. Quantum theory explained how energy comes in discrete packets and the wave-particle duality found in the double-slit experiments. Quantum field theory holds that particles are vibrations in the quantum fields that pervade the universe. It is still unclear how the world of fundamental subatomic physics relates to the much different world of our everyday experience.

During childhood I was taught that the universe and all living beings were created by God. Subsequently, I learned that some scientists have postulated many theories about the origin of the universe and that life may have originated from inanimate matter in hydrothermal vents deep in the oceans. I was also led to believe that evolution the species did not take place. Some of my teachers followed the bible literally, whereas others claimed that living organisms had to be designed by an intelligent being. I now believe that "creationism" and the "intelligent design" theories are not scientific theories as some of its proponents claim and I have, therefore, embraced Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection.

In the beginning of the twentieth century the biblical creation story became the standard alternative to Darwin's theory of evolution. In 1925 a biology teacher was prosecuted for teaching evolution in his school. The so called "Monkey Trial" resulted in a public relations victory for those supporting evolution. Subsequently, a group of creationists developed the "intelligent design" theory which claimed that there is evidence of design in nature and that this evidence supported the existence of a creator. The theory was refuted by most scientists and its proponents never published their views in peer-reviewed journals. In a highly publicized trial, a court in Pennsylvania ruled that the "intelligent design theory" was motivated by religion and presenting it in science classes was unconstitutional.

The "intelligent design" proponents created the Discovery Institute to support their agenda. One of its members published a book asserting that chance cannot generate order. Nevertheless, evolution is not due to chance alone, but to a combination of chance and natural selection. Scientists have argued that evolution does not contradict the laws of physics; living systems are open systems that use sources of outside energy to maintain order. The "irreducible complexity" argument has also been discredited by scientists.

There are theistic evolutionists who believe that evolution took place but assert that God is in some way involved in the process. Some theistic evolutionists believe that God is still directing evolution; others claim that God set up the conditions for evolution but does not play a guiding role. The latter group holds that evolution follows a divinely created law that tends to build more complexity. Theistic evolutionists point to a collection of examples of what is called convergent evolution, the discovery that some structures evolved numerous times along separate pathways but with the same goal in mind. The majority of evolutionary biologists accept that convergence often occurs, but there is no reason to believe that it occurs because of divine laws.

Nature and nurture

For many years it was unknown which factor, genes or the environment, has the greatest impact on human behaviour. The social sciences model supported the "blank slate" doctrine that played down the role of genetics and stressed the importance of environmental influences. I subscribe to the view that both nature and nurture play a role and that the environment and genes interact in a complex manner to influence behaviour (Pinker 2002).

The Judeo-Christian tradition holds that humans are made in the image of God and have a body and a non-physical soul. On the other hand, science has taught me that we are animals that evolved by natural selection and that souls may not exist. The existence of souls is challenged by causal inertia; we have no explanation for the interaction of the soul with other physical and non-physical entities.

Like many animals, we have the potential to behave selfishly or altruistically, lovingly or aggressively (Wilson, 2014). Our concept of what morality is has been shaped by duty-based Judeo-Christian ethics. Most people believe that morality can only exist if supported by unchanging and transcendental rules established by God. Nonetheless, Plato in his dialogue Euthyphro questioned the divine command theory of ethics by raising the following paradox: Does God establish that something is good because it is good, or is it good because God says so? I agree with those who argue that morality may have an evolutionary origin and that it can exist without religion.

The leading normative ethical theories include consequentialist, duty based, virtue and caring ethics. Recent advances in evolutionary science and neurobiology suggest that there are no moral truths that could be used to ground normative ethics (Morris 2015). Moral beliefs may be the product of natural selection: they served our survival by promoting cooperation among our ancestors. There is evidence that some primates possess the building blocks of the human moral faculty (DeWaal 2013). Moreover, Neurobiology has also challenged normative ethics by questioning free will, a necessary condition for moral responsibility.

Political philosophy

The United States was created as a democracy: government by the people. We have a capitalist economy in which most means of production are owned privately, whereas prices are determined by free markets. Some people revise their ideology and adopt a far-right or far-left position. Most people, though, embrace the moderate positions of the two main political parties. Republicans tend to be conservative and support market economies with low taxation, free trade, small government, family values, militarism and judicial restraint. Democrats are progressive and prefer a regulated economy, big government,

high taxation, a generous social welfare program, fair trade and a secular, labor-oriented, more egalitarian society. People in this country are deeply divided by these incompatible views. The political debate between progressives and conservatives has resulted in the near paralysis of government.

A possible reason why political views are so entrenched in the minds of the citizenry may be that they have a biological origin. Many people are not aware that some of our political and social views may be determined by personality traits or biological factors, not by culture or conscious deliberation. These traits have their roots in behaviours that are hardwired in many living organisms in order to survive and reproduce; they are difficult to modify or eradicate. They reflect our tendency toward tribalism, our degree of tolerance to inequality and our perception of human nature.

According to Tuschman (2013) we have different ways to react to tribalism and its three components: ethnocentricity, religiosity and sexuality. These traits may have originated from the need to achieve a healthy progeny by finding an optimal balance between inbreeding and outbreeding. The more ethnocentric, religious and sexually intolerant people are, the more likely they are to mate with members of their own in-group. Thus conservative individuals favour xenophobia over xenophilia, religiosity over secularism and intolerance to non-reproductive sexuality over sexual freedom.

People also tend to exhibit different degrees of tolerance to inequality. These traits may have their evolutionary roots in behaviours designed to cope with conflicts within the nuclear family and to deal with parent–sibling conflict and sibling-sibling rivalry. Conservatives usually favour hierarchies, whereas progressives are more egalitarian. Humans also differ in their perceptions about human nature. Some individuals think that humans are basically competitive and aggressive and others believe that they are cooperative and empathic. These traits may have their evolutionary roots in the need to balance altruism against self-interest.

Elections

In our political system citizens vote to select the representatives that will govern the country. Our electoral system has been a model for many countries in the world and has resulted in the peaceful, uninterrupted transfer of power after every election for more than two hundred years. Nevertheless, our electoral system has many flaws and needs some revision:

1. The Citizens United decision by the US Supreme Court allows significant monetary contributions to candidate by corporations. In order to avoid corruption of the electoral process, the Citizens United decision should be repealed, and the amounts contributed by individual or corporate should be capped.

2. Gerrymandering may have to be revisited because it is eroding the centrist position and creating a polarized electorate.

3. There is a lack of uniformity with regard to voter registration and ballot machines. There ought to be a universal voter registration card and standardized ballot machines in every State.

4. We need to avoid voter suppression. Requiring voter identification cards and other forms of unnecessary documents reduces the chances of everyone participating and voting.

5. Many people think that the Electoral College should be eliminated. The popular vote is more representative of the will of the people and the electoral vote not always agrees with the popular vote.

6. Voting should be obligatory. At the present time, only about half of the eligible voters exert this privilege. Internet voting should be considered, and computers should be available in polling places. Early voting should be expanded.

7. Publicity for elections, political conventions, debates, and advertising by candidates, or supporters should begin a short time prior to elections.

8. Newspapers, magazines and TV stations should post the platform for each candidate free of charge, as a public service, during the month preceding the election.

9. It will be necessary to design a way to encourage people to become more knowledgeable about the electoral process and political philosophies before they vote. If the votes of all citizens are to count the same, everyone should be well informed about civics and the issues that each candidate supports.

Consequences of inequality

The inequalities in wealth and income in this country and around the world have created many social problems and generated political and social changes that have upended the liberal democracies. The impoverished working-class in some of these societies have elected candidates that support far-right or far-left populist ideologies.

In addition to the flaws of liberal democracy, unemployment due to globalization and automation, events like terrorism, mass migration and the threat of secularism are root causes of far-right populism. The fear and anger generated by these events is having an important impact on the social and political status of Western nations. Far-right populists tend to be authoritarian, nationalistic and xenophobic and embrace protectionism to improve the social and economic condition of the working-class.

The exit of Britain from the European Union and the result of the 2016 elections in the United States are prime examples of the changes in the political landscape that are taking place in many countries. In the United States many members of the white working-class became angry and insecure after struggling financially because of unemployment or low wages, credit card debt and lack of retirement income. A coalition of these people, religious conservatives and racially-prejudiced individuals defeated the progressive coalition consisting of college-educated men, Black, Latinos, and lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender (LGBT). The votes from conservative populists came primarily from the South and Midwest, whereas those for the progressive coalition came from Northeast and Western states. Curiously, this political landscape resembles that which was present prior to the onset of the Civil War.

It is unlikely that we will have secession or another civil war but we should avoid the political dysfunction associated with a highly polarized population. We should learn to compromise and adopt a middle ground position. Unfortunately, the results of the 2016 elections favoured far-right populism that will probably maintain the status quo: rich people and corporations will find a way to lower or evade their taxes, lobbyists will influence members of Congress, big money will corrupt the electoral system and inequalities in wealth and opportunity will not be corrected.

Many Americans understand that we have to solve the flaws of our system first and then take care of mass migration and terrorism, the factors that triggered the current crisis. They do not think that far-right or far-left populism is the answer. To correct the main flaws in our system we need to change the existing power structure of *laissez-faire* capitalism. This power structure consists of corporations and very rich individuals that have designed a system to assure the perpetuation of their dominant status. Both political parties are complicit in this schema. They will resist any changes.

To change the current power structure we need to create a grass root movement and elect leaders who reject the established system. It will be necessary to curb paid lobbyists, campaign contributions and cronyism, the "revolving door" between government and the business world. To control inequality we could increase the minimum hourly wage, reform the tax system to eliminate loopholes and increase taxes for high income groups. Education and health should be considered individual rights, not privileges, and students and patients should not be bankrupted by the system. Most people should be able to find full time employment with appropriate fringe benefits.

Mass migration and terrorism, factors that triggered the current world crises, result from social, political and religious conflicts in third world countries. Poor people are frustrated and angry. They may resort to terrorism or

support far-left populist regimes to improve their living conditions. Many of them will continue to migrate to their industrialized neighbors to the north. The solution to the problem of migration is not creating barriers to migration but to provide economic and political assistance to poor countries and regulating the flow of immigrants. We have the moral obligation to improve the standard of living of third world countries.

Religion and science

Christianity is the most prevalent religion in this country. Christians are theists who believe in the existence of a single deity with specific attributes who created the universe and all life forms, and that species did not evolve but were created separately. For them humans are made in the image of God; we have a non-physical soul, free will and a God-given prescription for morality. Some people have revised this view; there is a wide spectrum of religious beliefs other than theism such as deism, pantheism, process theology and liberal religion. Others adopt non-religious beliefs such as spiritualism, naturalism, agnosticism and hard atheism. Members of the latter group are physicalists who deny the existence of any deity and embrace the scientific theories that best describe nature. They question free will and religious morality and claim that human behaviour depends on the interaction of nature with nurture. The following sections explain the differences between the religious and the scientific views of reality.

The origin of the universe

A creation myth, a narrative of how the world began, exists in almost every culture. In the West most people embrace the biblical creation story which affirms that the universe was created by God ex-nihilo, or out of nothing. Creation out of nothing has also been suggested by some scientists who hold that the universe originated from a quantum fluctuation of vacuum that flickered into existence and inflated to form a full-fledged universe. Critics, however, argue that empty space may not be the same as nothing or nonexistence.

Until last century scientists believed that the universe always existed. There is now strong scientific evidence to suggest that the universe may have begun abruptly from a state of infinite density and temperature 13.8 billion years ago. This event, referred to as the Big Bang, appears to be compatible with both science and religion. Many religious leaders, including Pope Pius XII, have concluded that modern science has confirmed the biblical creation story. The lack of a theory of quantum gravity, though, doesn't permit scientists to explore the earliest moments of the universe's existence. It is possible that the existing universe may have evolved from a prior state or that there was no prior state because time itself emerged along with the universe.

Some scientific theories do not invoke a beginning for the universe. Inflationary cosmology and string/M-theory are relevant to the theory of multiple universes or multiverse. String theory postulates that all particles are made of tiny loops of vibrating energy and high dimensional membranes. Vilenkin's model describes an eternal creation process, forming an infinite number of universes. In the Hawking and Mlodinov's model the origin of the universe was a quantum phenomenon leading to a cyclic universe without inflation or a beginning or end in time. Steinhardt and Turok propose a cyclic universe in which adjacent membranes collide and separate cyclically. Smolin's "fecund universe" affirms that the universe was generated by black holes.

Many philosophers have concluded that the fact that there is something rather than nothing is a brute fact; we may never understand the origin of the universe and why it exists. The concept of necessity could help us to avoid postulating an infinite chain of causal regression. An "uncaused first cause" could be a non-physical, intelligent, conscious and transcendent deity, a physical entity that evolved to create the universe, or something that we don't understand. Nonetheless, some people affirm that it makes no sense to talk about anything, natural or supernatural, as existing necessarily. For example, Kant held that there are no logically necessary propositions that include existence.

Inflation theory explains how repulsive gravity blew the universe up in the few fractions of a second after the Big Bang. The light elements, like hydrogen and helium, were created at that time. The heavier elements originated in the hot and dense core of stars and and were ejected into space during supernova outbursts. As the universe cooled these elements formed lumps of matter that clumped together forming stars, galaxies and planets. Almost five billion years ago a nebular cloud, half way out from the centre of the Milky Way galaxy, initiated the solar system. Our planet is right in the "Goldilocks" zone, a region of space with the ideal conditions for the development of life. It is close enough to the sun to have a rocky composition and far enough from it to hold water in liquid form.

The appearance of life

It is difficult to understand how inanimate matter formed after the Big Bang could have organized itself spontaneously to create the first life forms. NASA scientists suggest that the first life forms must have been single cells that possessed a self-sustained chemical system and were capable to undergo replication and Darwinian evolution. The majority of the population in this country, though, believes that a supernatural agency created life. They hold that the existence of so much complexity required a designer.

Life is difficult to define. We know it requires liquid water for the reactions of life to occur, carbon-based molecules as the building blocks of life, an energy source with catalysts to drive the cellular machinery and long periods of time to evolve. In addition, life forms require a limiting membrane to separate the cellular constituents from the outside environment, excretion of waste products and the large macromolecules necessary to replicate. Many experts have suggested that the initial form of cellular replication utilized ribonucleic acid (RNA) because this molecule is both a catalyst and a carrier of genetic information.

Possible sources of the large amount of water found in our planet include volcanism and the repeated impact of icy comets and asteroids. The position of our planet in the solar system creates the optimal water temperatures to maintain life. Because of its ability to bond with other elements, carbon is an ideal element for the formation of the large molecules used by all life forms. Carbon-based molecules could have been synthesised in the highly reactive primitive earth atmosphere or could have originated in outer space. Proton gradients may have been the initial sources of energy.

Scientists claim that the origin of life could be explained by the known laws of physics and chemistry. Panspermia posits that life came from outer space and reached our planet by way of asteroids or comets; this theory doesn't explain the origin of life elsewhere. Life on Earth may have originated in cold, oceanic pre-biotic pools or in deep, alkaline, hot underwater vents; a definitive theory is not available.

The origin of life may have been a random and improbable event that took place a relative short time after the formation of our planet, or it may have been a widespread phenomenon given the favorable conditions present in the universe. We don't know if life exists in other planets in our galaxy or in other distant galaxies. The recent discovery of many extrasolar planets has renewed interest in searching for life in other parts of the universe.

The evolution of species

For scientists, evolution, not the creative power of God, is responsible for the astonishing variety of life forms on Earth. The combination of random events, like mutations, and non-random events, like natural selection is at the origin of the species. Evolution eventually led to the human lineage and to individuals with a superior mind capable of creating an advanced culture.

The origin of life took place about four billion years ago. The last universal common ancestor of all known organisms came later, at the point of divergence of Eubacteria from Archaea and Eukarya. Prokaryotes (Eubacteria and Archaea) are single cells that lack a true nucleus, mitochondria and cytoskeleton. The more complex Eukaryotes appeared about two billion years ago,

there are no known evolutionary intermediates between them and Prokaryotes. Eukaryotes probably had a chimeric origin, in which a host cell and a bacterial endosymbiont coalesced. The former evolved into a complex eukaryotic cell and the latter into mitochondria or chloroplasts.

Plants, algae and some microorganisms possess the biochemical machinery for extracting energy from the sun by the process of oxygenic photosynthesis. In this process the energy of photons is absorbed by chlorophyll and is used to strip electrons from water. The electrons are then forced on carbon dioxide to form energy-rich organic molecules, giving up oxygen as a byproduct. Early in the Proterozoic era the progressive oxygenation of the earth's atmosphere may have been the result of the photosynthetic activity of cyanobacteria. Aerobic metabolism is a more efficient source of energy than anaerobic metabolism.

The breakdown of energy-rich molecules in aerobic organisms involves respiration, the transfer of electrons from these molecules to oxygen, a highly electronegative compound, ultimately ending in the synthesis of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the energy currency of the cell. The coupling of the electron transfer to ATP synthesis may be indirect, via a proton electrochemical gradient. Life doesn't violate the second law of thermodynamics because the production of entropy by organisms is compensated for by the ingestion of low entropy food and the excretion of higher entropy waste.

Multicellular organisms probably appeared 1.8 to 1.4 billion years ago. They achieved a rapid growth in the Cambrian, the first period of the Paleozoic era. The oldest vertebrates appeared in the early Cambrian, they moved away from the ocean about four hundred million years ago. The step by step transition from fish to tetrapods, four legged land animals including amphibians and reptiles, is well documented in the fossil record. Amphibians had to live near the water, the invention of the amniotic egg and other changes permitted the smooth transition from water to land.

The ancestors of mammals and birds were reptiles that survived the great Permian extinction two hundred and fifty million years ago. Birds and mammals developed larger brains and warm blood, a change that allowed them to be active at a wide range of ambient temperatures. The first mammals emerged from cynodonts, whereas birds came from theropod dinosaurs that evolved in the Mesozoic. As a group, most mammals are characterized by having hair, milk glands and three bones in the middle ear; most exhibit a placenta and have specialized teeth and sweat glands.

The primates are mammals that survived the Cretaceous mass-extinction. They became arboreal probably to take advantage of an ecological niche. Life in the trees was associated with three evolutionary adaptations: hands capable of grasping tree branches, fingers tipped with nails rather than claws and

forward-facing eyes capable of stereoscopic vision. Later on, the development of tricolour vision allowed these animals to distinguish raw from ripe fruit. Primates are divided into prosimians, monkeys and great apes. Hominids include all great apes, hominins (our ancestors) and humans.

Molecular dating techniques suggest that apes diverged from other primates 17–25 million years ago. The orangutan ancestors diverged from other apes about 13–16 million years ago, the gorilla ancestors diverged from the ancestors of the chimpanzees, bonobos and humans 7–9 million years ago, and those of chimpanzees and bonobos diverged from human ancestors 5–7 million years ago.

Human souls

Most religions affirm that humans were created in God's image and that we have a physical body and a non-physical soul. This view, called substance dualism clashes with modern science in that it ignores the conservation laws of physics and fails to account for mind/brain interactions. Most scientists are monist physicalists but some embrace aspect dualism, the theory that the mental and the physical are different aspects of a single source, or panpsychism, the claim that mind is a universal and primordial feature of all things.

Religion also holds that we have free will, the capacity to distinguish good from evil and follow God-given moral rules. Evolutionary scientists claim that we are evolved animals, the evidence of our inheritance can be found in our genes and our behaviour. They question the existence of souls, free will and many are moral antirealists who deny the existence of absolute ethical rules.

Evolution favoured the development of pro-social behaviours such as altruism, empathy and bonding between friends and families. Anti-social dispositions also arose during evolution. During most of their evolutionary history our ancestors had to worry about survival. They were hounded with fear of predation, natural disasters, famine, competition for mates and aggression from other individuals. They adapted by becoming hyper-vigilant, selfish, greedy and aggressive. They stereotyped members of other groups, probably to distinguish friend from foe, and embraced tribalism. In this terrifying world, people invented powerful beings that would protect them and respond to their prayers. This may have been the origin of most of the deities worshipped by different religions.

At the present time some people claim that our anti-social behaviours are gaining the upper hand, others claim that we have made substantial progress beginning in the last part of the twentieth century. Our dysfunctional nature and the resulting identity problems it creates may be due to our conflicting dispositions, we are cooperative and altruistic but we are also responsible

for much of the violence, suffering and environmental damage that exists in the world. In the last few centuries humans have been unable to erase the Paleolithic emotions that took a few million years to develop. Religion and sociology have not helped us to understand this reality and solve the numerous problems that it causes.

Life after death

Common experience suggests that brain death entails the permanent annihilation of consciousness, the so called "extinction hypothesis." There is a tight correlation between mental and brain events. Most religions posit that there is life after death. The fear of death creates great existential anxiety and is perhaps a reason why many individuals believe in the afterlife.

In the earliest surviving work of literature, Gilgamesh undertakes a perilous journey to discover the secrets of eternal life. Epicurus claimed that death is nothing to us because as long as we exist death is not with us, but when it comes to us we cease to exist. Lucretius asked us to look back at the time before our birth, in this way nature holds before our eyes the mirror of our future after death. Swift depicted the evils of immortality with continuing aging and Borges held that without death mankind would have no motivation to achieve anything. Becker thought that most of us avoid facing death and the suffering that it causes. Heidegger held that not facing death makes us live inauthentically.

Is death a bad thing? Yes, if it would deprive us of good life, especially if we die young. No, if it would prevent the suffering associated with a chronic disease and the decrepitude associated with the aging process. Biologically speaking death helps us to avoid overpopulation, and to discard the old and make room for the young. Cell suicide or apoptosis is programmed through evolutionary-conserved mechanisms. Those who favour the "extinction hypothesis" find solace in the thought that some form of immortality is afforded by the continuity of germinal plasma, by leaving our mark in this world or taking part in the process of cosmic evolution.

The "survival hypothesis" postulates the preservation of some kind of consciousness after death. Platonists claim that we have immortal souls or spirits inhabiting mortal bodies, Christians hold that we are mortal but that God will save us from annihilation and many Eastern religions follow the doctrine of Rebirth. There is no scientific evidence, though, that souls exist or that they are immortal and capable to interact with matter or other souls.

There is anecdotal evidence to support the "survival hypothesis." They include apparitions of the dead, poltergeists, past life experiences, communications with the dead, and out of body and near death experiences. The latter are characterized by feelings of detachment, serenity and the presence of a

light. These people probably were not dead but were in the process of dying. Most scientists feel that these experiences represent hallucinations associated with decreased oxygen delivery to the brain. Unfortunately, first person experiences are difficult to study.

In the future, life span may be extended by the use of agents like sirtuins, found in red wine, or the institution of caloric restriction. The knowledge stored in the human brain may someday be able to merge with the capabilities of modern computers and genome editing may be able to produce individuals with a long life span. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that we will ever achieve immortality. Just being able to experience the beauty and wonder of the universe, even with a limited lifespan, is a precious gift that we should enjoy.

The meaning of life

For believers in God and the afterlife our existence has a special meaning. For them, God is an eternal and self-existing entity who created us in his own image and everything in the universe. We are responsible for our actions and are expected to comply with God-given moral precepts. If we follow these rules our souls will live forever in the company of loved ones, doing the things that we like and rejoicing in the presence of God.

For those who are non-believers, life still offers a number of gifts that we can enjoy even if they are only temporary. We possess a marvellous body and a mind so powerful that has permitted us to unlock many of the mysteries of the universe. We are part of the process of cosmic evolution. Most of us have the capability of achieving our goals and making this a better world. As mentioned above, we all enjoy some form of genetic immortality, and will continue to live in the memories of those who loved us or cared for our accomplishments. If we are the only planet in the universe capable of generating intelligent life forms, our lives would then become very significant. It is also conceivable that humanity will continue to evolve to produce superior beings capable of creating new life forms, controlling the forces of nature and altering the history of the universe.

In addition to their aforementioned differences, there are important questions about the tenets of both theism and atheism. The main rational "proofs" for the existence of God are the teleological argument, including the fine tuning argument, the cosmological argument and the ontological argument. In support of the tenets of religion are claims about the need for a God-given morality, reports of miracles and religious experiences and the power of faith and revelation. Critics, though, point out to the inadequacy of the "proofs" of God's existence, the advances in neuroscience and evolutionary science suggesting that moral faculty is innate, Hume's view on miracles, the evidentialists' response to faith and the doubts about the origin and veracity of Scripture.

Theists claim not only that God exists but also that he is beneficent and has many other attributes that include necessary existence, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Many individuals, though, question theistic claims or find them incoherent. The main arguments against the tenets of theism are the issue of future contingencies, the hiddenness of God and especially the problem of evil, the high prevalence of pain and suffering in the world. Some people argue that it is difficult for us to comprehend the concept of an entity that may be infinite, eternal and immaterial. God's mode of being may be so foreign to us that understanding his nature may be impossible.

Hard atheists are ontological naturalists; they are usually reductionistic physicalists who deny the existence of any supernatural being. Nonetheless, it is impossible for them to prove a negative statement and physicalism has been challenged by the body-mind problem, the difficulty of accounting for conscious experience in an ostensibly physical world. Soft atheists are methodological naturalists who embrace science but avoid the issues of physicalism and the existence of supernatural entities. Agnostics claim that we cannot prove the existence or the non-existence of God, leaving the door open to the possibility of divine entities. Religious naturalists find meaning, spirituality and value in nature.

Is it possible to develop a scientific view of reality that is compatible with religion? Quantum field theory is the best scientific theory we have to explain the nature of reality. This theory holds that particles are vibrations in the quantum fields that pervade the universe. Thus particles and the material objects that they create may represent discrete forms of captured energy. Religious beliefs may represent the metaphors and myths that humankind has created to try to explain this ineffable physical reality. What we define as God may be the source of all matter/energy forms. Recognizing the oneness and interconnection among all matter/energy forms may be a source of unity and spirituality.

From the above considerations we may conclude that both theism and atheism have very different tenets and important limitations. The choice between theism and atheism represents a false dilemma. There are many non-theistic belief systems that include deism, pantheism, liberal religions and process theology. Not all non-believers are hard atheists, some embrace agnosticism, methodological naturalism or religious naturalism.

Nature and nurture

Many people have revised their views about human nature. One of the central debates in human development is the "nature versus nurture" controversy, to what extent human behaviour is the result of innate biological factors (nature) and to what extent it is the result of environmental factors (nurture). Supporters of the primacy of the latter believe that science does not explain

what it is like to be human and that emphasis in innate factors may be used to justify inequality or subvert social change. The advances in neuroscience, behavioural genetics and evolutionary psychology have weakened considerably this view and, as discussed below, many aspects of human behaviour have been found to be influenced by evolutionary adaptations (Pinker 2002).

The consensus nowadays is that most behaviours are dependent on the interaction between genes and environment and that the latter may induce epigenetic changes that may become permanent. For example, the capacity for language may be hard-wired into the brains of human beings but each culture has developed sign and symbolic systems, verbal and non-verbal, to communicate with each other. We are born with a specific temperament, described by the five factors model, but certain aspects of the self are formed during infancy by the interaction of the child with the caregiver.

In order to better understand the biological underpinnings of human nature it is important to recognize that human behaviours, like those of all living organisms, are motivated primarily by the need to survive and reproduce. Most organisms have evolved survival strategies such as preserving bodily structure and function, evading the perils of the natural world and facing the challenge of interacting with other living creatures. Reproduction of the species required the development of special behaviours such as courtship, mating, pair bonding and parenting.

It is not well known that traits that we value as most human, like morality, political philosophy and religion may also have their roots in survival strategies of selfish genes. Moral behaviours may be the product of natural selection, modified by human beings' subjective judgement and beliefs. Some of our social and political views may be related to innate factors. Religion helped our ancestors to survive in a dangerous world and face death and the powerful forces of nature.

Human evolution would be expected to select selfishness and aggression as desirable traits to the individual but not to the group. Nonetheless, evolutionary theory suggests that being unselfish and exhibiting sociality and a moral disposition has a beneficial effect on group survival and a perhaps a detrimental effect on individual survival. We have the potential to behave selfishly or altruistically, these conflicting dispositions may be a cause of our dysfunctional nature (Wilson 2014).

Recent advances in evolutionary science and neurobiology suggest that there are no moral truths that could be used to ground normative ethics (Morris 2015). Moral beliefs may be the product of natural selection; they served our survival by promoting cooperation among our ancestors. The evolutionary challenge to ethics is supported by evidence that primates possess the building blocks of the human moral faculty. Altruism is important to moral nativ-

ists because it captures our concern for others, which is central to our moral behaviour. Empathy, the capacity to share another's emotional state, and sympathy are present in our closest primate relatives (DeWaal 2013).

Neurobiology has challenged free will, which is a necessary condition for moral responsibility. Recent studies suggest that we are mistaken in thinking that conscious will is usually responsible for initiating our actions. These findings as well as those of evolutionary scientists support antirealism and the view that there are no particular facts that we could use to enforce morality. We need a more scientifically-informed ethical perspective.

As mentioned above, many of our political and social views may be determined by personality traits or biological factors, not by culture or conscious deliberation (Tuschman 2013). We have different ways to react to tribalism and its three components: ethnocentricity, religiosity and sexuality. These traits may have originated from the need to achieve a healthy progeny by finding an optimal balance between inbreeding and out-breeding. People also tend to exhibit different degrees of tolerance to inequality. These traits may have arisen to handle conflict within the nuclear family. Conservatives usually favor hierarchies, whereas liberals are more egalitarian. Humans also differ in their perceptions about human nature. Some individuals think that humans are basically competitive and aggressive and others believe that they are cooperative and empathic. These traits may have their evolutionary roots in the need to balance altruism against self-interest.

Religion is prevalent in the world and there is some evidence that a religious instinct may be present in humans (Perez 2015). Primitive man utilized agency detection devices that eventually created supernatural beings as the agents of work in nature. Religion increases the cohesion of the group, a factor that helps protect their members from other groups. Religion also has a consolatory aspect that helps us face death and give meaning to life; it produces myths to live by and rituals to give structure to life. Unfortunately, religion has often discouraged scientific advances and has been a source of violence and unnecessary suffering.

For many years the major theories of human nature originated from the Judeo-Christian tradition: humans are made in the image of God and are unrelated to animals. They have a soul, an immaterial substance that has powers possessed by no physical structure and continues to exist after the death of the body. We exhibit free will and are to follow God-given rules of morality. Nevertheless, recent scientific advances challenge these views and impel us to adopt a view of human nature which expands the role of innate factors and provides insights into their evolutionary origin. The new understanding of human nature may lead the way to a realistic and biologically-informed form of humanism.

We can't deny that we are evolved animals, the evidence of our inheritance is found not only encoded in deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) but also in minds that come furnished with an extensive inventory of ideas and behaviours. Among these basic behaviours are:

- status-seeking: this may be a reason why we like hierarchies and have alpha males, dictators and autocrats;
- self-interest: we like to accumulate resources and territory to facilitate survival in a dangerous world;
- mating: we compete with others for reproduction and have a tendency for infidelity, polygamy and rape;
- tribalism: we have a propensity for stereotyping, ethnocentrism and fighting out-groups;
- altruism and empathy: these cooperative behaviours are usually directed to members of our family or our in-group.

Developmental tasks

Human life can be divided into specific stages, each one characterized by an overarching existential challenge. Erikson described eight stages of psychosocial development: infancy, early childhood, pre-school and school age, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood and maturity. Women's life stages are influenced by the reproductive cycle beginning with menstruation and ending with menopause, often including pregnancy, a major life event unique to women. More important is to emphasize that in each stage of life we face specific challenges. Resolving these challenges is conducive to healthy development, and failing to do so may stunt personal growth and the ability to deal effectively with later crises.

Most experts don't consider events during intrauterine life as the first stage in human development. Nevertheless, it could be argued that blastulation, an early embryonic stage leading to the formation of a spherical layer of cells surrounding an inner fluid-filled cavity, may be the most critical challenge in development. The cellular layer contains the inner cell mass that will eventually give rise to the definitive structures of the fetus, and the extra-embryonic tissues. During this crucial stage of development cell polarity, cell specification, axis formation and gene expression are established. Unsuccessful blastulation may lead to death or malformations. The following are the main challenges found in each stage of development:

1. Individuating and acquiring a secure attachment. The main task during the first stage of development is to complete the process of separation and individuation, which usually takes place between the ages of 18 months and three years. Contemporary psychoanalytic theories reject Freud's drive-defense model and hold that the main function of the mind is to

establish and maintain relationships. According to object relations theory, successful separation and individuation leads to the psychological birth of the individual. Initially the child and the mother are in a symbiotic relationship. Through the dyadic relationship the child creates an internal representation of a self, separate from the mother. A positive overall interaction affords the child a sense of well-being and self-constancy. As the infant separates from the mother he asserts his growing self-control and begins touching, climbing and exploring. Failure to separate may lead to impaired self-development.

Erikson held that during the first stage of life the basic attitude of trust and mistrust is established. The quality of the attachment between mother and child has an important influence in this process. According to attachment theory, an insecure attachment to the caregiver generates anxious children that fear abandonment, avoidant children that do not appear to depend on anyone and disorganized children who exhibit features of both anxious and avoidant children.

2. Managing childhood and adolescence. The older child moves beyond self-control and begins to take the initiative more frequently. Parents can reinforce these initiatives or discourage the child's behaviour. The beginning of school expands the child's world beyond the immediate family; the task is now to learn the new skills that are valued by parents and society. Praise for the child's effort results in a feeling of accomplishment, whereas criticism may elicit feelings of inferiority. Many experts, including Erikson, consider the periods of middle and late childhood as separate stages of life.

3. Succeeding in work and love. To leave the security of the home to compete with others in the job market, to find a life partner and perhaps start a family are the tasks of early adulthood. Freud argued that a healthy adult is one who can "love and work." Individuals lacking a strong sense of identity may have less satisfactory relationships and may become isolated. Erikson held that the ability to be intimate and care for others is necessary in order to have a successful marriage and family life. Finding a good job requires adequate training and the ability to relate and compete with others.

4. Questioning life choices and gaining self-knowledge. The "mid-life" crisis usually takes place in middle adulthood. Not everyone has a crisis; many people continue to have a productive career and a healthy marriage. Emotionally mature individuals are usually successful in these endeavors and can take the time in guiding and mentoring their children and those under his supervision at work. Some people may question their career choices or their relationships during this period. This may lead to divorce or searching for a new job. At this time some individuals become aware of their emotional and physical problems and seek psychiatric or medical treatment for the first time.

5. Adjusting to isolation and retirement-related losses. The penultimate developmental task is managing retirement. At this time the individual may suffer from the loss of income, connections and self-worth. Some people adjust well to this stage of life by finding a hobby, doing volunteer work, taking care of grandchildren or staying connected to friends and family. Those who fail to adjust may become isolated, especially if they lack the necessary social skills or the income to live comfortably.

6. Dealing with aging and death. The final major life challenge is to deal with the changes associated with aging and death. Aging is accompanied by loss of vigor, sexuality and changes in body appearance. Many people develop hearing and visual abnormalities that limit their ability to interact with others. In addition, this is usually the time when dreaded diseases like diabetes, hypertension and cancer are first diagnosed. Some people look back at their life with acceptance and satisfaction, whereas others look back at life events with regret. The fear of death creates great existential anxiety and is one of the reasons why many people become more religious at this time.

Everybody has to deal with the aforementioned life challenges. Having good genes and good upbringing does not exempt people from the problems found in each stage of life. Sometimes adverse life events, such as illness, bankruptcy or job loss, may hinder the ability to get ahead and deal with life challenges successfully. People with emotional problems, however, do not cope as well and have a have higher incidence of divorce and financial crises. They may not be able to establish a constructive legacy.

Aging

The brain is the most valuable thing that we possess. It took millions of years of evolution to assemble one hundred billion cells to form the complex structure responsible for our advanced cognitive functions. Neurons first developed at the surface of primitive animals in order to better monitor their environment. Eventually these cells retreated inside the organism. Initially, the nerve cells formed clumps that communicated and formed circuit boards that sustained stereotyped behaviours. In vertebrates the protection afforded by the spinal cord and the skull allowed the central nervous system to grow. Thus in jawless fish one can find the five major brain divisions present in all mammals as well as humans. It was not until five hundred thousand years ago that our ancestors attained a brain size close to that of modern humans.

As we age abnormal protein deposits and inclusion bodies appear in the brain and cognitive function may decrease. It is still unknown if these changes are part of normal brain aging or they are the harbingers of neurodegeneration. The clinical diagnosis of dementia, a generic term that refers to deterioration of more than one domain of cognitive function, does not always correlate

with pathologic changes in brain tissue. Many disorders are known to cause dementia including Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's disease, fronto temporal dementia, Parkinson's disease, vascular dementia, trauma and alcoholism.

The critical factors that favour the onset of dementia may include defects in protein disposal, lysosomal dysfunction, heredity, inflammation, and circulating factors. The defect in protein disposal may be related to the inability of oxidized macromolecules to be degraded by lysosomes. The heritability of the human lifespan is twenty to thirty percent and the genetic contribution increases with age. Ageing has been related to telomere shortening, mitochondrial dysfunction, DNA damage, stem cell senescence and defects in intercellular communications. Genetic and epigenetic studies may help to clarify the relationship between normal aging and neurodegeneration. Inflammatory factors associated with aging could originate from astrocytes or microglia. Of interest, recent studies suggest that circulating factors from young animals may have a rejuvenating effect in the brain of old animals.

Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, is associated clinically with memory defects and histologically by the finding of extracellular deposits of amyloid-beta protein. Another histological landmark, the neurofibrillary tangles, is located intracellularly. These tangles are composed of the microtubule-associated tau protein. People who carry the ApoE4 allele in chromosome nineteen have a higher incidence of adult-onset Alzheimer's disease. Unfortunately, no effective treatment is available and removal of amyloid deposits has not been associated with definite clinical improvement.

The future

Poverty, violence and climate change are the greatest threats to the survival of humanity. Other problems that we face are overpopulation, inequality, hunger, migrations, pandemics, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, pollution and desertification. We all hope that political leaders will take the necessary steps to avoid these crises. The population at large may not fully understand the nature of the challenges and does not have the power to come up with the needed solutions. Fortunately, unforeseen and ongoing social and political events and the relentless increase in scientific knowledge may help us to avoid some of these feared problems.

Poverty

We need a political philosophy in which democratic elections would bring both freedom and equality. The last century witnessed the demise of fascism and communism, and the flourishing of liberal democracies. Fukoyama held that liberal democracy is the ideal political system and that all countries would eventually embrace it. Unfortunately, liberal democracy has failed in

many countries and at the present time authoritarian, far-right and far-left populism are gaining the upper hand.

In some liberal democracies elections have been corrupted by money, only rich candidates are able to afford the high cost of political campaigns, and large monetary contributions influence the results of the elections. In the United States only about half of the population votes and of those who vote many do so based on name recognition or party affiliation. Many people are poorly informed about the issues under consideration or vote to support extreme ideologies. Some vote against their own self-interest.

Liberal democracies support personal freedoms and the lack of social restraints. Sadly, in this system many people are not free to pursue their goal because they are poor and cannot get a good education. They are not free to get a high paying job and have limited access to the social connections that could help them advance in the job market.

As mentioned before, another flaw of liberal democracies has been that they often lead to wealth and income inequality especially in systems that embrace *laissez-faire* capitalism. The profits associated with the system may be used to concentrate capital in the hands of a few owners and rarely trickle down to the workers. The excess profits may not be invested in the modernization of the means of production and the financial benefits of the employees. The middle class is progressively shrinking and less and less people achieve their financial goals.

Poverty and inequality have fueled not only the upsurge of populism but also an increase in terrorism and mass migrations. The large migrations created by global economic, religious and political struggles have caused widespread social instability in many countries. Fortunately, they also have created mixed races when the incoming populations breed with those in the host countries. José Vasconcelos, a Mexican educator and philosopher, was one of the first to point out the positive effects of mixing the genetic characteristics of different populations to avoid inequality. In his book, *La Raza Cosmica* (1925), he exalts the benefits of the synthesis of Western populations with the Indigenous race. Inequality will tend to diminish when we are all members of the same race and ethnic group and governments make an effort to redistribute wealth.

Violence

Tribalism is a major cause of violence in the world. Eliminating tribalism, though, may not reduce the prevalence of in-group fighting and competition for status, resources, territory and mates. A way to decrease violence in the world could be the institution of world government. Many sociol-

ogists have argued that our loyalty should be to the world community not to the state in which we happen to be born. Anti-nationalism could be an effective way to quell armed conflicts. The creation of more uniform races and ethnic groups may also help decrease the prevalence of violence associated with stereotyping and the associated prejudice and discrimination.

There is an inherent conflict between our nature as selfish biological organisms and our capacity for reason that is the root cause of the clash between individual and social needs. To modify the aggressive part of human nature will be difficult, neither the fear of God nor the threat of retribution have been effective so far. Perhaps the advances in genetic engineering, particularly gene editing, may help us to control disease and violence. In the future we may be able to inactivate genes associated with aggressive behaviours and enhance those that help achieve voluntary control over our competitive instincts and enhance cooperation.

Unfortunately, violence is part of nature's design. Animals, including us, survive by killing plants and devouring other animals. This continuous and enormous suffering takes place in the natural world where predators kill their victims, and in human societies in which we kill millions of animals in order to produce the carnivorous diet that we ingest. In the future it may be possible to reduce the number of carnivorous species and replace them with herbivorous ones.

Climate change

Advances in science may give us the capability to extract solar energy and perhaps to find a way to obtain energy from fusion. These scientific breakthroughs should decrease our dependency on fossil fuels and put a dent on climate change. Advanced computers, especially quantum computers, may help us to analyse large amounts of data at a rapid speed, and pursue the most effective solutions to the problems we face.

In the future the knowledge stored in the human brain may be able to merge with the capabilities of computers, creating economic opportunities to all members of the society. Nanotechnology and artificial intelligence will have an application in fields such as electronics, computers, solar energy and water purification. Deploying nanobots we may be able to create artificial blood, combat pathogens or deliver scavengers to remove altered molecules. Globalization may continue to bring economic prosperity to large numbers of people living in third world countries.

Nevertheless, the possibility of natural catastrophes will be always present. They include the impact of asteroids and comets, a supernova in a nearby galaxy, the loss of the Earth's magnetosphere creating intense solar winds, collision with other galaxies, eruption of giant volcanos and

earthquakes. Even if those catastrophic events do not take place, it is clear that eventually the sun will get progressively hotter and will become a red giant star vaporizing nearby planets. Finally, the universe as we know it will disappear, its future may depend on whether "dark energy" increases or decreases.

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Fairness, Dignity, and Beauty in Sport

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Abstract

Fairness is a normative ideal that runs through sports. After all, what defines our cultural evolution in general is a conception of morality, whether thought of in the context of the state, tribe, team, or individual. Human dignity is also one of the important features of sport. Sport is reality for the better part of our nature. We find inspiration for the meaning of life in sport; dignity, social contact, rising to show the "better angel" overcoming adversity, managing defeat, the wondrous sense of well-earned and arduous victory, graciousness toward others in their defeat. While human dignity and solidarity are particularly expressed in the context of the Special Olympics, adaptation, well-being, and the role of sport are important elements in the context of all sporting events. Sport remains timeless while being a lifelong activity for many.

Keywords
Sports, dignity, beauty, fairness

Introduction

People tend to generally agree on what is sport and what is not, and even to share the same sense of ambiguity about the classification of certain activities. Rather as Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart (1964) said of obscenity, we know it when we see it. But there is no one feature that defines sport, except perhaps that it is competitive, and there are always winners and losers. Even in elementary school athletics where everyone goes home with a trophy, the children are always, and sometimes cruelly, aware who won and who lost. But sport is also a type of game, and Wittgenstein (1953) and later game theorists have identified a family of properties that loosely defines a game. One feature games have in common is that there are rules to be followed, and a language or logic to understanding the activities and participating in them. There may be little in common between skiing and soccer, between snowboarding and hockey, but they all are rule-based and have winners and losers based on those rules. Indeed, a signal feature of those activities that some people would prefer not to regard as true sports (although no one doubts that their practitioners

are true athletes), such as figure skating, is that they contain subjective elements such as artistry that can be decided only somewhat arbitrarily by judges and not by a strict, clear application of the rules.

While all sports are a type of game, not all games are sports. Chess and scrabble are conventionally considered to be games but not sports, even though they can be played competitively and there are clear winners and losers.

One reasonable view about how to distinguish play from sport (Guttmann 1978) takes the list of all things we consider to be play and pares it down into games, contests, and then sports. Play includes spontaneous play and organized play (games). Games then can be divided into noncompetitive games and competitive games (contests). Finally, contests can then be categorized by intellectual or physical contests, which is what we consider sports.

Fairness runs through sports. At a young age we learn about the consequences of not doing what is right and about the importance of truth-telling in sport, yet one aspect of that is learning the consequences of deceit. The difference between the two can be murky. Nations and teams want to win, and winning, like eating, is a driving force.

Children have to learn to be truthful: they need reinforcement for truthful behavior in order to develop what we think of as a conscience. Some people pick this up more readily than others, and different cultures reinforce it to a greater or lesser degree. But truthfulness is often a "faint motive" even under conditions where truth-telling is supposed to be a primary feature (e.g., the practice of science). We have cultural mores to promote and then check truthful behavior, and those apply in sports: as Reagan said about nuclear disarmament, "Trust, but verify." In sport and in life, we look to verify. The marker of our cultural evolution is the speed and accuracy of such events. One result is behavioral expression: telling the truth or not, lying or not, playing fair or not.

And of course, there is the cultural cops-and-robbers evolution: as the cops figure out how to detect illicit drug use, the robbers get better at using old drugs and discovering new, undetectable ones. From simple tricks such as substituting another person's urine for a drug test, users have graduated to diverse forms of masking and timing when to take the drug. That requires knowing a lot about how not to get caught. It demonstrates how effective we as a species are at deceiving. And when the deception is institutionalized and has a tradition (as it was with weightlifting, and as we now see in the cycling community), it is extremely difficult to root out.

Indeed, we hear often about drugs and sport; steroid abuse one; and of course not all drugs are the same; steroids are one thing, growth factors to promote recovery is quite another. The issue is about making their use fair and transparent.

But fairness also matters to us, and sport has a long tradition of emphasizing fairness and an even playing field. It may be frail, but it is inherent; we come prepared to measure and keep track of fairness. Classical pragmatist such as Dewey emphasized fairness and the body politic and an expanding participation of individuals. Sport is just one human expression amongst others with regard to fairness.

Fairness

Engaging in play that turns into sport is one way we learn about fairness: following the rules, playing the game fairly. Mammalian play is at the root of the socialization process so essential for getting a foothold in the world and fairness is a feature of our cultural evolution; a feature that coexists and evolved with sports participation.

In sport, rules have to be fair in the sense that they are good for all. What Rawls (1971) called a "veil of ignorance" is also part of fairness in sports: that is, we make a choice because it is fair, even if we don't know whether we receive a benefit of that fairness. Of course, moral sentiments are also a piece of our biology. We are group-affiliated, so where we belong and how we belong there play a role in whether we help, calm, appease, affiliate, become aggressive, or withdraw. These are parts of our cephalic equipment.

Moral sentiments—sympathy/empathy, fairness, discipline, loyalty, etc.—are social in orientation. Charles Darwin, like Adam Smith before him, viewed morality as setting the conditions for social conduct. Moral sentiments play a role in approach or avoidance, helping or hindering, and the many variants from these core moral sentiments pervade human experience.

Visceral expressions are tied to moral digressions, one prominent feature of which is disgust (Rozin 1976; Haidt 2007). Moral disgust, a pervasive expression in our lexicon, may be tied to diverse transgressions in our perception of others. The visceral nervous system runs through the brain; modern anatomy has uncovered the direct connectivity of forebrain and brainstem sites and notes that regions of the cortex project directly to the visceral peripheral brainstem sites.

Moral disgust pervades the discourse surrounding transgressive figures such as Alex Rodriguez and Lance Armstrong. What particularly awakens our moral disgust is their rationalization of their behavior: in their minds, many others are doing the same thing and they are just trying to keep up with the crowd. In their view, sport is a culture of lying, and that offends our innate sense of fairness and justice.

Disgust reactions provoke a desire to withdraw and a pervading sense of moral revulsion. Distress, conversely, provokes approach behaviors in many contexts. These responses are ancient and built into a biology tied to social

dependence: we need each other. Social sports are an expression of this, as are many other human activities. So we are morally repulsed by cheating athletes.

But state-sponsored cheating may provide a legitimating context, encouraging a broad-based conception of getting ahead at all costs. When my wife was exposed to the East German athletes as a competitive swimmer, she noticed that for them, the state—and pretty much the state alone—provided the context of what was acceptable. We evolved as a species that needs to live together in groups and maintain alliances. And the state, in certain circumstances, can become that group, that alliance.

Team- or college-sponsored sport can function in the same way, allowing transgressions to occur and be justified: the college president looks the other way since the team is winning; the team owner who wants home runs to get the fans back ignores what is going on in the locker room; a coach does not investigate the changing shapes and sizes of his athletes. The collective acceptance overrides the sense that the individual may have that the cheating is wrong. Legitimating cheating is not so hard to accept when couched in this collective context. Winning takes precedence over morals, because the group has become the ultimate morality. We look away; we don't want to see.

Yet some people protest at the cheating. Sport is just a part of our human experience. And that is one point; sport is endemic to our existence, and all the highs and lows of the human expression are present. Thus, embedded in sports is a view of ethics that goes only so far, for we are much more than the mere moral sentiments of Smith or Darwin or the pragmatic modification of Mill and the early utilitarians.

The deep-seated sense of disgust with cheaters is tied to one core sentiment: disgust at wrongdoing. Recall, for instance Mark McGwire's 1998 season. Breaking the home run record was exciting and thrilling; but underneath it, and finally emerging, was a visceral sense that what had happened was just not right, just not fair.

The larger sense is that moral culpability is social as well as personal. The ethics of work and individual initiative, the norms of moral discourse and social presentation, are embedded in the social milieu. It does not take much, unfortunately, to legitimize wrongdoing, but it also does not take much to make people look again and re-evaluate behavior in that same social context. Gut reactions are appraisal systems, fast and often accurate.

Problem-solving in general, and with regard to morality in particular, is fast rather than reflective. It is ultimately fallible, and context matters.

Consider Jim Thorpe: Jim Thorpe is considered one of the best all-round athletes America has ever produced (Associated Press, 1999). A Native American, Thorpe attended the Carlyle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, where he played football and ran track. At the 1912 Olympics he set pentathlon and

decathlon records that held up for decades, but he lost his medals the next year when it was discovered that had played baseball with a professional team for a few seasons. Thorpe returned to playing professional sports, both baseball and football, until 1929. He excelled in sports despite an adverse social context, and most believe that the loss of his Olympic medals was deeply unfair.

Avery Brundage also competed in the 1912 Olympics. He lost to Thorpe in the decathlon and pentathlon, but having remained technically an amateur, he went on to win a number of national championships. He later founded his own construction company and became a sports administrator. In 1936, Brundage fought the proposed boycott of the 1936 Olympics, which was held in Germany. Although Brundage's battle to take an American team to Nazi Germany was controversial, he was elected to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that year, and became IOC president in 1952 (Guttmann 1992; Mandell 1984).

Thorpe struggled most of his life. Brundage became an international leader. Fairness is frail, with pockets of clarity amid the omnipresent human tragedy in life and in sport.

What is fairness in sports? Fairness is linked to our notion of rights, and in the West our notion of rights is tied to our Enlightenment sensibility and a long history of events. The *Magna Carta* of 1215 defined the right to a fair trial and equality before the law (The New Encyclopedica Brittanica, 1998). What would eventually become the English Bill of Rights during Britain's Glorious Revolution (1689) established the concept of citizens' rights within a polity. As we separated from religious authority, rights came to include individual choice of belief divorced from government. The Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man following the French Revolution in 1789 expressed universal rights for all and stressed the link to thinking for oneself (Kant, 1787; 1792). Both of these British and French documents paved the way for the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, Constitution in 1787, and Bill of Rights in 1791. But the concept of rights has continued to expand. In the United States, important milestones include the abolition of slavery (1865), the right to vote for African American men (1866), women's suffrage (1920), second-wave feminism and the civil rights movement (1960s), and the current battle for marriage equality for homosexuals. But the concept of rights is never static. In an international context, the American emphasis on political and civil rights is criticized for its neglect of economic and social rights.

Women have been involved in sports for a long time. Spartan women are well known in the context of competition, and the Romans had women gladiators. Ancient Egyptian women competed in sports as well, and in some ancient African cultures women and men competed together in a number of games (Guttmann 1978, 2004).

Figure 1.   Fairness and gender. Source: Public Domain

But modern Western culture has only recently welcomed women's partici-
pation in sport. In the first modern Olympic games in 1896, there were 295
male athletes and no female competitors. By 1948, the Games had expanded
to include over 3,500 male athletes, but fewer than 400 female athletes. By
the 2000 Games, however, the numbers had become more evened with 6,582
men and 4,069 women (Guttmann, 1991).

The passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was a land-
mark in US women's sports. It states that "No person in the United States
shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the
benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program
or activity receiving federal financial assistance" (United States Department
of Education, 1972). Since most national championships are filtered through
varsity programs and many professional athletes come out of college teams,
Title IX facilitated women's participation.

In 1971, before Title IX was passed, there were around 172,000 male
intercollegiate athletes and just under 32,000 female intercollegiate athletes.
However, in 1986, after the adoption of Title IX, the number of female
intercollegiate athletes increased to 83,000; whereas, there were still nearly
172,000 male athletes (Guttmann 1991).

The current struggle for women in sport is being waged in Muslim coun-
tries, where religious requirements and cultural modesty norms have made
it difficult for girls to train, even in private, let alone compete in public. An
example of this is the contention that arose among the more conservative
Muslim leaders after Farah Ann Abdul Hadi, a Malaysian gymnast, wore the
typical uniform of a leotard to the 2015 Southeast Asia Games (Sanghani,
2015). Regardless of the controversy, Hadi proudly won six medals at the
Games for herself and her country. Social pressure can push both ways, how-
ever; the national desire to win Olympic medals is trumping the impulse to

keep women out of the limelight. For example, Iran sent eight women to the London summer Olympics in 2012.

Sport is never free of unfairness. Women were not allowed to com- pete in Olympic ski jumping before 2014. But in 2014, women competed at the Sochi Olympics in ski jumping, with no injuries or obvious detriments to their health.

The disparity in award money, promotion, and sponsorships between the US Women's and Men's national soccer teams became public knowledge after the US Women won the 2015 World cup over Japan in a 5−2 victory (Harwell, 2015). Even though the Women's World Cup championship match, was one of the most popularly televised soccer game in American history, including the 2014 Men's World Cup in Brazil, the U.S women's award for their hard work and persererence was $2 million; whereas, the champions of the Men's World Cup in 2014 was $35 million. Furthermore, the unfairness demonstrated by FIFA in their treatment of the women's teams became even more evident when the women players left the turf fields with painful burns, since the turf was reportedly 120° Farenheit (Payne 2015); whereas, the Men's World Cup was played on typical grass fields and resulted in no burn-related injuries.

But sport often leads the way in the expansion of rights and freedoms.

One has only to think of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in baseball (Rampersad, 1998). The talent in the old Negro baseball leagues was phenomenal, but it took Branch Rickey, the owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, to give Robinson the opportunity, and an athlete of Robinson's character and talent to take that opportunity and make the most of it.
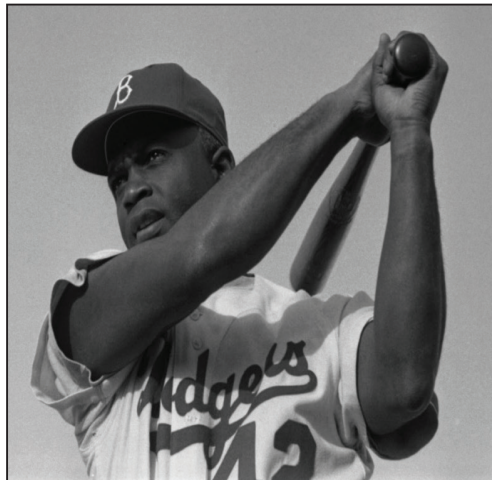

Figure 2.   Jackie Robinson was the first African-American to play in Major League Baseball. Source: Public Domain.

In 2014, Derrick Gordon of the University of Massachusetts became the first openly gay collegiate basketball player, and Michael Sam became the first openly gay player to be drafted into the National Football League.

Russia's homophobic laws targeting "the proselytization of children" brought out droves of gay athletes at the Sochi Olympics. Sports, long a testosterone-rich preserve of manliness, seems to be opening up to the concept of homosexual athletes.

Freedom is a key theme, but freedom does not function in a vacuum—it exists within our life context. Freedom under the law for the wealthy is not the same as that for the poor and the less privileged. While equality under the law is a prime value, it is hard to accomplish. Sport is rife with the privileged and the less privileged. Freedom of opportunity is a key.

Autonomy is important in moral responsibility, but we are also tied to institutions, groups, and states. Autonomy is mostly about thinking for oneself, seeing that a wrong is being committed and being willing to address it. But social context can make this more or less difficult to do. Social hope is its counterbalance.

Social hope and sport

Social hope requires transactions that embrace the differences among us, a conception of the family of humanity—a humanism emboldened by natural piety and a broad common faith based on democratic participatory sensibilities (Dewey 1908, 1925). Social hope is the stuff that ties us together. Our evolution is bound by our social contact and by our sense of and concern for each other (Rorty 2000).

One lesson of our species' history is that we are frail and endlessly labile, promiscuous and beaming with possibilities, with a glorious sense of being connected to others, in participatory labors of self-initiative, self-excellence, and self-preservation.

Social hope is naive, perhaps, but it is emboldened with possibilities and rife with contradictions. Social hope requires the intelligence to be anchored in, but not frozen to, things that matter. An expansion of participation through embodying this process (to varying degrees) underlies the conception of a participatory democracy. So does participation in social groups toward rational ends, where rationality is tied to the clarification of issues and the adjudication and the ability to compromise in context without devolution of principle and purpose.

Living amid the growing sense of rights and social bonding, of "a right of association" and "acting in common," that was part of the origins of modern sport was Alexis de Tocqueville (1848). In the middle of the nineteenth century, he documented the France's evolution from monarchy to republic, in

which common bonds of labor and meaning were at the heart of freedom of expression and social bonds of value. The celebration was about democracy within self-initiatives co-existing with social hope—a social hope chosen, not imposed. Social hope, always frail and yet omnipresent in an evolving cultural milieu, must also be linked to maximizing freedom of expression. Sport is an ideal of this cultural trend.

Social hope is the ideal of balancing in context both individual freedom and social bonds and responsibility, with an eye for inclusiveness as our cephalic capabilities are expanded. There is no panacea here, there are no miracles, just hard slogging amid a lot of intelligence and social practices. We need to acknowledge diverse forms of Thanatos or devolution of function, as well as Fortuna or luck amid re-envisioning the body with little fanfare of Cartesian separation from action that emboldens, while being mindful of our natural continuity with others (Dewey 1908; 1925). The naturalistic urge to forge consequences lies in the participation in group formation, fraught with conflict amid a democratic sensibility, as well as the participation of the least well-off. Sport offers such opportunities.

It is a core cephalic adaptation to forge links through problem-solving. Intelligence raises us above problem-solving toward a rationality, based not on deduction from absolute premises, but on engagement with others, finding ways to forge ahead. Rationality toward the higher ideals, a "common faith" (Dewey 1934) tied to a "common good" amid an evolving sense of rights, becomes a common expression, an expansion of human dignity, frail and fraught with endless disappointments. These are the alluring ideals that beckon to us, and they are made manifest in our sports.

Our transgressions match and complement our progress. Human beings are demythologized on this journey. And it is a journey not toward perfection, but toward peaceful and respectful co-existence—yet endlessly marked by real danger, real wars, and real Holocausts. Worry remains our common currency, an ontic fact and a reason to further forge collaborative bonds, linking social hope to memory and forward-looking sensibilities.

Sports exist in the context of social hope and broader participation in a common context of human expression, striving to release the "better angels of our nature." President Mandela of South Africa, an avid sports fan and a boxer himself, managed to use the all-white South African rugby team to unite a country recovering from the trauma of Apartheid. He was a true practitioner of social hope, and one of our better angels.

Fairness is built into the fabric of our activities. Sport is just a one good example. We need rules for sport and for all social activities. When the rules are not fair, we look to change them. We admire the character of people who follow them fairly; we do not admire people who cheat.

Of course, character pervades sport; showing character even when one can do nothing about a bad call, persevering despite it, showing one's best side—we applaud these features. Getting up and carrying on despite adversity, showing character under stress: these fuel comebacks, and they are normative goals in sports and in the rest of life.

Human dignity and sport

Human dignity is a concept that is particularly hard to define. It is largely described by a range of relationships (Wittgenstein 1953). There may indeed be something like an implicit concept of dignity that is presupposed, but it is hard to capture. Like Kant's view on aesthetic judgment, it does not fit easily into a bounded concept (Kant 1787; 1792). Beauty runs through with tapestries of awe inspiring elegance and dignity.

In spite of these challenges in defining the concept, when we watch individual or group persevere through hard times and we value their intended goal, we understand the sense of dignity: dignity in death, under hardship, amid defeat, or when winning. Dignity is tied to fairness. Human dignity is one of the important features of sport, which is an ideal medium in which to express dignity, and it is a significant part of sport's appeal.

Professional or amateur athletes trying to play in the face of injury, or training to get back from injuries, are a feature of many heroic sports stories. Remember watching basketball player Willis Reed emerge, battered and hurt, for the final competitive battle in a critical game against Los Angeles. Reed, a short center at maybe 6 foot 8, had a beautiful jump shot and was a fearless competitor. Sport is reality for the better part of our nature.

The Willis Reed story is a commonplace one in sport, showing athletes competing under difficult personal or professional conditions when it counts. It reminds us of Kirk Gibson's home run, hobbling across the bases to home plate to win the game for the LA Dodgers against their rival, Oakland, in the last inning of the 1988 World Series. Or, it reminds us of Kerri Strug continuing to vault on an injured ankle and being carried to the podium to accept her team gold medal by Coach Bela Karolyi at the 1996 Olympics. Events like these enliven us viewers and keep fan loyalty and fan identity alive. It is the connection to athletes in these emotive moments that keeps fans coming back time and time again even if their team has not won much.

It is easy to envision Phil Jackson, sixth man for the NY Knickerbockers, during the period when Willis Reed, Walt Frazer, Earl Monroe, Bill Bradley, Dave DeBusschere, and Jerry Lucas played; so many years ago, but to this fan their names read off as if it were yesterday. They were world champs and a formidable team, and the great coach Red Holzman was key to their success. He stressed sharing the ball, looking for the open person who had the best

shot. A group of players working so well as a team is a thing of beauty to watch. Phil Jackson went on to become one the finest professional basketball coaches of all time. He was, of course, fortunate to have the likes of Michael Jordon, Kobe Bryant, and Shaq as his mentees. We recall the endless array of wonderful coaches across time.

We find inspiration for the meaning of life in sport; dignity, social contact, rising to show the "better angel" overcoming adversity, managing defeat, the wondrous sense of well-earned and arduous victory, graciousness toward others in their defeat. Yet we also have the other side of events. Remember the ice skaters Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan. This is the vile underbelly of sport, and there is plenty of it. Take, for instance, competitive parents who end up hurting one another or their children. There are all too many instances of the bestial within the elegant in the human condition. Sports display all aspects of Shakespearian drama in an up-close and personal setting.

Special Olympics

But we still have a phenomenal capacity to reach out to others, as Adam Smith noted when he discussed the moral sentiments (1759). This is explained as a capability in our social nature (Darwin, 1859; 1871): something nurtured in a social context where it can materialize in a culture where consideration and action are understood within a context of fairness (Rawls, 1971). Those who have less can elicit the better angels; one place is the Special Olympics.

The Special Olympics became a reality in 1963 in the United States, with the international variant beginning some five years later.
Dr. Cooke, who was close to the Kennedy's, played a role with Rosemary, John F. Kennedy's sister, who had brain surgery to reduce her aberrant behaviors (with some unfortunate results). He and Eunice Kennedy Shriver, with the aid of many others, ignited what is now the Special Olympics, which

Figure 3.   Special Olympics. Source: http://4vector.com/free-vector/nbc-olympics-80384

is a competitive event that features athletes with special needs. The two of them, with the aid of many others, ignited what is now the Special Olympics. Shriver's experiences with her sister may have inspired her desire to create these events.

What is special about Special Olympics is that it gives individuals with intellectual disabilities a chance to compete, when they might not ordinarily have that opportunity. Competition, a basic drive of our species, is important in creating and sustaining human dignity. Enabling individuals to experience competition on a large scale helps to give and make meaning, and it is an adaptation fundamental to our mental health (Jaspers, 1913). These games are held within a special context, celebrating those among us with disabilities. At its best, it is about human meaning and performance, and striving to be better and get better. It is a celebration of human meaning amid struggle and adversity.

From alpine skiing to volleyball, basketball to sailing, and judo to power-lifting, the types and range of sports in the Special Olympics are rich, and the competition's growth has been outstanding. Meanwhile, the impressive number of sports in Paralympic Games has ultimately facilitated and reinforced improvement of opinions and attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, particularly athletes (Gold and Gold, 2007). Boccia, five- and seven-a-side football, and wheelchair versions of basketball, tennis, curling, and fencing are all part of the Paralympic Games program.

Human dignity and solidarity are expressed in the context of the Special Olympics, and adaptation, well-being, and the role of sport are important elements in the context of sport. These are as special in the Special Olympics as they are in peewee-league baseball or NFL football. Training under these diverse conditions requires excellence of both the coach and the Olympian, impaired or not.

Amid the biology of hope and the endless intertwining of cultural evolution with greater participation in the making of meaning, the Special Olympics stand out as a shining example of the service that sport can do for the world. The way we treat and support the disadvantaged, within the bounds of reason, is a measure of our worth.

The dignity of the underdog

Our "better angel" often roots for the underdog: the athletes and teams who have to work harder than others, who rise up under conditions of adversity and are not expected to win, whether it's the United States vs. Russia in 1980s hockey, amateurs vs. professionals, or Rocky Balboa.

Conversely, everyone hated the New York Yankees' "buying" wins by acquiring players using the enormous resources at their disposal. Of course,

money and players bought does not necessarily add up to winning, although it may buy being a contender. But the mindset is inherently unfair and unsportsmanlike.

For many Americans, "those damn Yankees" were about as far from the underdog as you could get. In the Broadway musical Damn Yankees, an elderly man was willing to sell his soul to the devil to join the losing Washington Senators and, as the ultimate underdog, defeat the Yankees.

The underdog grabs our hearts, and heart is a big part of winning—especially winning when it really matters (no surprise, then, that one song in Damn Yankees is "You Gotta Have Heart"). So we often root for the underdog—except if the underdog is playing against our team.

Our social sense is seeing those with less get more; it is one motivation among many, and perhaps a frail one. But sport reveals it.

Rooting for the underdog goes all the way back to the Bible; think about David and Goliath, or the blinded Samson. Perhaps this is in our nature; after all, it is an expression of an "us" in which biology and culture converge in an expression of rooting for those with less.

Cultural progress is about broad participation in opportunity, and sport is a primary example of this. We do not leave biology and culture on separate sides: they run into each other, like theory and evidence, like fact and value (Dewey 1908; 1925). The revolt of dualisms is evident in sport; cephalic capabilities and predilections merge with training and sport options. Appraisals are rich in values, and values are inherent in our facts. And these facts are not mere social constructions, they are real: facts imbedded in a culture that sport endlessly remind us of.

Perhaps our cheering for the underdog stems from our knowledge that evolutionary "progress" is far from linear. There is no straight arrow forward, just adaptive radiation, extinction, and diverse forms of stability and breakdown in equilibrium (Gould 1977). The underdog may become top dog in the right circumstances, and circumstances are always changing. Both evolution and devolution of function are common, perhaps particularly in our age, since we live longer and care for those who would not have survived in previous times in our history as a species.

Sport is thus a wonderful arena for us to showcase human dignity. Consider, for instance, the case of Magic Johnson, a truly magical basketball player who was diagnosed with HIV, a much-stigmatized and feared disease in the 1980s. Johnson changed public perception of those living with HIV by his admission of his illness, his remaining a public figure, and his friendship with Larry Bird—or rather, the evolution of that friendship, which grew stronger in the context of that disease. Where some did not want to touch him or play with him, Bird and many others embraced Magic Johnson. Fierce competi-

Figure 4.   Magic Johnson and Larry Bird. Source: AP Images.

tors find friendship enhanced by human frailty, human meaning, and social contact (Jaspers 1913).

Sport and aesthetics

In Art as Experience, John Dewey made it clear that aesthetics is a fundamental feature of human experience. Art and aesthetics are built into our adaptive capability, in our building and nesting and attaching to others. Dewey's scholarship reveals the continuity of biology and culture.

Aesthetics is not just something exclusive for the galleries or concert halls or performance spaces. Aesthetics lies within the biology that we bring to our world, within the culture that we live in or are adapting to. We naturally pay attention to the contours of shape and form, manifesting our innate geometrical capabilities. That is one reason that we are in awe of the magnificence and sublime features of nature (Kant 1787; 1792); nature is within our grasp at certain moments, and then lost in the vast space of beauty and power. Sport is rich in awe-inspiring expression. We marvel at the beauty of inspiring turns, the balletic movement, and the match of music and dance as ice skaters swerve and leap on the ice, individually or with a partner.

And the perception of beauty and biology may not be exclusive to our species. Beauty is often tied to fitness, and sport is most definitely about fitness, which is knotted to our attention. When Sarah, an adult research chimpanzee, was shown different dancers, she most attended to the one that her human trainers agreed showed the more beautiful form in the dance.

The link between form and function, so fundamental in aesthetics, crosses the palate of cephalic function; ballet, for instance, is invoked across many forms in sports. Getting there requires thought; as Dewey (1934) asserted has an aesthetic feature. And thinking is richly expressed across sport, across

training, across persevering. No separation of a mind in a body, just the blending into coherent action, anticipatory control.

What pervades sport and aesthetics is an appetitive and consummatory experience; the stuff that underlies action and motivation. The appetitive side is the desire manifest in action, followed by the consummation of some sort of satisfaction. Such experiences are common in biology and cephalic capabilities (Dewey 1925).

The practice of sport, as well as its observance, is an aesthetic experience. Athletes work hard, practice after practice, their activity rich in appetitive and then sporadic consummatory experiences; motivation and satisfaction, pain, redundancy. Sport is not easy, but the aesthetic rewards are strong. We often say that top sports figures are driven to excel, and, indeed, without drive not much emerges. But techniques that promote peacefulness are also essential for sport (e.g., mediation, tai chi, and mindfulness techniques that can enhance attention) and for life more generally, and perhaps in some sports more than others. Though some great athletes make it look easy, drive wins out as long, as there is excellence at the base and good work habits throughout.

So what motivates us in sport? One answer is the enrichment and intensity of the experience, in the same way that good art enriches and intensifies experience. What motivates is the enhancement of experience. Sport brings a confluence of cephalic capabilities in form and function, in achievement. We go beyond the sensory at all times as we pursue; it is not a simple hedonic calculation, though sensory pleasure is a core feature in sport. Achievement and satisfaction are derived also from meeting goals and expectations.

Then, of course, sport plays a key role in the ritualization of life; rules serve that role as we ascend in the continuation of the sport. Bouts of completeness emerge across the contours of the sport experiences. The biological rhythms that permeate cephalic activity also permeate our cultural side and the diverse end-organ systems in the body (liver, adrenals, etc.). Indeed, we are in tune with the rhythmic movements of our planet and our local niche; the measurement of time is a feature of the brain in our adaptation to the world around us.

Much of sport is about rhythm: in swimming, basketball, hockey, running—just about every sport. Like most of life, sport demands order and novelty, twin features of rhythm. Expectations oscillate, along with the emergence of the novel and unexpected, the give and take of continuity and change; this is the stuff of heightened experience and rich adaptation.

Aesthetic experiences permeates sport, as our experiences are heightened (Dewey 1925, 1934). This sense of heightened sensibility is apparent across the array; consider the horse sports. We have the majesty of the horse itself, our cultural selection of characteristics that we admire and that are useful

to us in work, in hunting, in war, and in racing. Aesthetics are built in the relationship between us and horses, and we co-evolved as we traversed the familiar to the unfamiliar and in our sports.

The relationship between horse and human is also instrumental and is tied to our representation, our understanding, our creations, and our explorations. Creating and understanding are often intimate, and such relationships pervade sport, domestication, and the search for excellence.

Aesthetics runs through the whole of human experience; that is why Dewey called it "art as experience." Sport is rich in aesthetics, rife with the perfection of the body, the sense of excellence appropriated from the Greeks and the founders of the Olympic competition. Bodily perfection, training, and performance are diversely expressed across cultures; the array is endlessly rich— an anthropology of the human condition. Art and sport have a conjoined history. From the classical period onward, a rich tapestry of expression reveals the connection between aesthetics and sport. Art loves sport, because beauty and form and excellence are apparent in it.

Boxing, for example, is a brutal pastime, but it can be rich in beauty. George Bellows was a master of showing its elegance and its coarseness, its eroticism and its casual violence. His paintings illuminate, at a fundamental level, the connection between aesthetics and sport: even in *Counted Out*, which shows a boxer at his nadir, we are aware of his physical beauty, the continuing potential for excellence in his bunched muscles, and, above all, his quintessential dignity in defeat.

Athleticism has the same uncanny ability to awaken our aesthetic impulses and make us ignore the sweat and carnage involved. Imagine the sensory motor capabilities of Michael Jordan, predicting where his teammates are going to be, rich in predictive and regulatory appraisal systems inherent in the action itself. The extraordinary balletic quality he brought to the game

Figure 5.   George Bellow's Stag at Sharkey's, 1909. Source: Public Domain.

at his best is on par with the elegance and sophistication of Dame Margot Fontaine—who was an impressive dancer athlete in her own right.

Indeed, athleticism is rich in beauty (Gumbrecht 2006). The aesthetics of sport goes back again to the classical world; there is a reason athletes feature so prominently in their frescoes and on their vases and survive as statues. The sense of beauty in the expression of the body in sport homes in on and elevates it to its highest levels. And many of these athletes and superstars function within contexts of adoring publics, across towns, cities, states, countries. And the burdens are high, on the athletes.

We respond, as we do to shining ranks of soldiers marching elegantly to their deaths, to the sheer perfection of physicality. But that physical perfection begins not in a shapely set of thighs, or powerful shoulders, or a muscular core. It starts, really, in the brain. Thus, while competition, play, social contact, training, and winning are key elements of sport, mental excellence is the feature that decides whether one gets there.

Conclusion: Lifelong sport

Sport is a lifelong activity, and for some people, very long indeed. Oliver Sacks (2015), the recently passed and well-known neurologist, describes his father and himself in the water. His sense of well-being while swimming is tied to being physical, but also to a sense of being with his father. But he also describes swimming as being in a place where he is not reachable in this wired age. For Sacks and his father, it was a respite from the travails of life; a respite into the physical and into practice; a mind in a body; a sense of well-being. This is something we should learn early on, and that remains important throughout life.
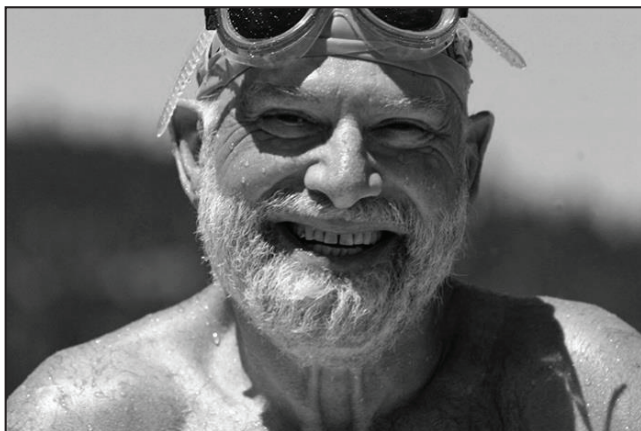

Figure 6.   Oliver Sacks. Source: http://www.oliversacks.com/about-the-author/ photo-gallery/.

Sport is anchored to diverse means of generating health through physical activities, mental games, or sports. Physical action may not generate happiness on its own, but it sure helps. We move from "winning at all costs" and being vulnerable to injury, to sustaining what we have and cultivating health in the context of movement and action.

It is non-trivial that being successful involves taking care of cephalic systems (the mind–body continuum); it is doing with less and making the most of it, a feature of successful aging and human well-being. In fact, achieving excellence in sport is a process of maximizing and taking advantage of resources and sustaining them. Of course, these features underlie a good deal of adaptive behavior.

This can be hard to handle for the ex-athlete. Athletes are wired to win, to push hard. Sometimes ex-athletes push too hard, when their cephalic systems are not what they used to be. But the end-game is a reflex of what once was; what is hard about aging is not the old body, but the new one; athletes must remember that in order to preserve what they have and avoid injuries.

And what is clear is the richness of biology, culture, and deep relationships; sport reveals what makes us human in our biological evolution and in its modification and expansion into cultural evolution.

And then, within this view are the tools evolved for instrumental exploration across sport, linked in the efficiency and adaptation that figure across our exploration of neural function. Design principles are an efficiency that reflect our species and its capabilities for survival in local niches. The neural systems reflect specificity, separation, minimization. "All things in light of evolution" (Dobzhansky 1962, PAGE), and, it is always apparent, all things in light of culture; culture occurs endlessly within an evolutionary context (Boyd and Richerson 1988); and events like the capability to throw accurately figured importantly in our evolution (Calvin 1982). Sport makes this transparent; biological and cultural continuity are palpable in sports.

Cephalic capability, coupled with culture, learning, training, and sheer fortune, is what allows the expression for sport and sense of solidarity with sport. Sports nationalism, along with sporting solidarity, co-inhabits the human space of meaning.

There is no one theory about sport or one definition of it (Baker 1982; Guttmann 1978; Mandell 1984). There are important similarities and many differences. What pervade are normative notions of fairness, civility as an ideal, and the importance of dignity and growth—that is the ideal, anyway. Sport is civilizing, or can be, and represents values that many of us hold dear: fairness, hard work—an evolving ethic of participation.

And there is dignity. Some individuals do a lot with a less-than-ideal start. We have a special sort of Olympics where sport is inclusive, and inclusive-

ness is our expanding sense of participation as human expression. And sport brings us together—yet it also divides, due to nationalism. As in all things human, there is the good, the less than good, and the ugly.

Hard as it is, the pursuit of excellence is pervasive in sport. The valuation of excellence, motivation, and sport achievement reaches deep in our shared human experience across cultures. It is embedded in our biology.

The building block for sport has roots outside of sport; sport is part of culture. And play, though found in many species, is particularly pervasive in ours—our behavior merges from play to sport, given a suitable cultural context. Pedagogy and getting a foothold in the world of others, playing with others, are rooted in this world in which we depend on each other and are constantly adapting. Sport is one vehicle for this.

Evolutionary steps led us to becoming the sporting species that we are: an erect stance, an expanded shoulder capability for throwing with the tools we developed to catch prey and to fight, and a developed Achilles tendon and the resulting ability for long-distance hunting—tracking animals over time and space—and then sustaining the running behaviors in social cooperative manners. And not surprisingly, the size of an expanded cortex is tied to the degree of social complexity (Dunbar 1992).

The discipline of sport, the endless practices, are set in the larger context of striving for excellence in competition, and sometimes in participation sports as well. And within this context are training to improve performance, the tools that make that improvement easier, and, of course, the cheating and broken hearts.

Though sport is about more than winning, winning is non-trivial. And there is a fine line between what is fair and what is not; what we want is transparency, and what is allowed for one person should be available for another. But life is not fair; some of us have resources, a lot do not. But biology is also not fair; some people are amazing, most are not. Some people utilize their capabilities to great degree, most do not; some people avoid injuries, and some recover quickly, some less so. Biology endlessly matters, including the biology of temperament and learning capabilities.

Most of us have enough of the right stuff to participate in diverse sports. This involves us in a form of enculturation and participation, team belonging, striving to participate, and the motivational allure to succeed in the context of the development of a social self.

As we live longer, these are non-trivial effects. Add to them the secretion of brain endorphins. It is not hard to see sport's fundamental link to our sense of well-being. It reveals the utter integration of a mind in a body, in practice and in performance. This is one reason why sport is so revelatory. Another is that sport is also about beauty. And this is also non-trivial,

because fitness and adaptation are key to survival. This is not beauty in the abstract, it is beauty in performance, in action, the allure of sport from the audience's point of view and the aura of sport within the athletic sensibility.

Sport cultures evolve within a biological framework; culture shapes some of the biology that is expressed in sport, and sport provides a telling window into the human condition. After all, it puts everything about us on display.

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