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Pragmatism and the "Changing of the Earth": Unifying Moral Impulse, Creative Instinct, and Democratic Culture

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PRAGMATISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF SOCIAL HEALING

Pragmatism is a practical philosophy that is concerned with addressing the real-world consequences of human actions, and with interpreting a full range of human needs. It offers the citizen a path through which new moral consciousness might be achieved and conditions of good living for all created. As a psychologist and educational reformer, John Dewey grasped the potential of pragmatism to bring about a much more profound collective state of social integration, even while holding fast to the particularity of the individual and recognizing the realities of intra and intergroup differences. His affirmation of an integrated principle within community life, through which public intelligence is developed and society reorganized, did not diminish the validity of his seemingly contradictory claim, that conflict and variety are essential to justice, democratic association, and learning (*LW* 2: 259; Bernstein 2010: 82). He believed

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that it was only when confronted with a problem that humans begin to think in a realistic and integrated manner. The citizen's psychology and communicative power emerge when "there is a conflict of social customs of such a nature that the individual can go on acting only by working out himself the proper mode of action" (Dewey 1991: 101). Spiritual pragmatism is a description, in philosophical terms, of how the individual goes about "working out" that right way of acting.

Today, pragmatism is particularly important for disentangling and healing complex global problems and social ills. Many conflicts now are what James Bohman has termed "deep" conflicts, in that they contest dominant forms of public reason, challenging the "moral assumptions and political procedures" of the modern European nation-state (1996: 73). These require new ways of thinking about justice and reason-making, and therefore, a revised conception of the nature of democratic culture. The integrated principle upheld by Dewey engages pragmatism as a method of connecting the material and the spiritual, so that, in the attempt to address the root issues present in deep conflict, historical trauma can be more wisely understood and troublesome divides between body and mind, nature and society can be reconciled.

The Sioux tribe stance, regarding the monetary compensation offered by the United States for its violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, when it illegally seized the Black Hills and large areas west of the Missouri River, is the kind of conflict Bohman is talking about. A Yankton Sioux Tribal council member, Darrell Drapeau, who teaches at Ihanktowan Community College, has reminded that the Treaty, for Sioux, is a living document. It signifies protection of rights and homeland for the Sioux and these are still vital concerns and needs for them. He questions the Treaty's status as merely "*an artifact* of America's uncomfortable past"—when the U.S. Constitution, a much older document, signed four generations earlier, is nevertheless, still perceived to be *a vital governing force* in the daily life of U.S. citizens. Attorney for the Cheyenne River and Great Plains Tribal Chairman Association, Mark Von Norman, gets at the moral and sociocultural rift present in the conflict. In this statement, quoted in a Smithsonian magazine article, he indicates the Sioux disinterest, not only in money as replacement for sacred lands, but more generally, in an assimilationist framework of thinking:

> We don't always think that the courts are the right forum for us, because it's really nation to nation, and it shouldn't be a United States court telling

our Sioux Nation tribes what the treaty means. It's based on the principal of mutual consent (Cutlip 2018).

As psychologist Isaac Prilleltensky has posited, in his efforts to persuade social scientists to consider a wider range of moral questions raised by various psychological approaches to human development, "the moral point of view is always *relative* to the subjectivity of the moral agents and their social context" (1997: 519; italics my own). In a pluralist world, this means that justifications for actions need to arise out of an appreciation of *multiple* moral viewpoints, rather than any one culturally dominant perspective. In addition to the kinds of differences present in the conflict between the Sioux Nation and the United States, which reflect a deeper conflict regarding what constitutes public reason when "moral and epistemic standards are inextricably intertwined" (Bohman 1996: 75), there are now also critical environmental controversies to contend with. These latter involve plant and animal life, ecosystems, and the non-living. Reid and Taylor perceive that this is indeed the time for the public to free itself from the political hindrances and veils of ignorance that obstruct the rise of moral consciousness:

> [the] cultural and political webs of plurality are peculiarly urgent now as the jaws of greenhouse gases close around our planet, externalities concatenate uncontrollably, and the legions grow of people made superfluous in the global economy and culture. Externalities dangle everywhere, and we have lots and lots of illth to monitor and get under control- if we can (2010: 14).

The "proper mode of action" Dewey referred to entails addressing these problems and more, without resorting to absolutism, that is, it requires regulating and balancing multiple values, not obscuring or oppressing any of them. The pragmatist's challenge is to nurture a non-avoidant and inclusive attitude that overcomes the obstacles presented by cultural pluralism, social inequality, and institutional complexity, the three hindrances to deliberative political life, cited by Bohman (1996: 3). In his definition of the moral good as a particular approach to social and political endeavor, Dewey further described how this attitude functions:

> The moral good is not truth-telling, benevolence, etc., but *the attitude* which is most effective in maintaining all of them [the values which have been realized in the life of humanity and which we wish to maintain],

simply seeing that each one of these has its place provided for it (Dewey 1991: 54; italics my own).

For Bohman, this attitude is cultivated in a dialogical account of deliberation, in which norms and procedures for reaching an understanding are continually reinterpreted "in light of new experiences and problematic situations" (Bohman 1996: 53). Despite the reality of conflict, a unique form of "cooperative activity" progressively unfolds because of an overarching collective acceptance of a "distributive ideal of agreement that accords to each his own motivation for cooperating in processes of public judgment" (ibid: 53). Established practices are not the basis of shared agreements then. Instead, a democratic culture informed by deliberation requires that one's "intelligible actions" be accountable to others. Actors can reflexively maintain the cooperative activity needed for deliberative democratic life by adopting an attitude that extends accountability "to all actors and to new situations" (ibid: 54).

Pragmatism is concerned with this dialogical or mediating process of managing diversity, conflict, and accountability. It respects a full range of different values and as in cases of deep conflict, like that involving the Sioux Nation and United States, acknowledges and honors entirely different modes of perception and feeling (Locke 1989). It endues the action-oriented philosopher with an attitude of cooperation that is both empirical and non-absolutist and a methodology that unifies these two. In his book on the topic, first published in 1907, William James explained that a pragmatist "turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins" and toward a feeling relationship to "concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power" (James 1978: 20).

This open-mindedness and emphasis on the need for responsible action leaves "the empiricist temper regnant and the rationalist temper sincerely given up" (James 1978: 20). In pragmatism, the "open air and possibilities of nature," are able to oppose fully all "dogma, artificiality, and the pretense of finality in truth." Nevertheless, pragmatism is not authoritarian or in any way fixed in its expression of power: it "does not stand for any special results" and "is a method only" (ibid: 20). Pragmatism then is able to empower the sovereign citizen to relate to conflict and plurality in an optimally flexible, dynamic, and practical way. Rather than

becoming agitated or ossified, one's means of gaining understanding becomes increasingly resilient and adaptive.

Dewey perceived that this improved attitude toward reaching an understanding "simply represents the biological life process" involved in our optimal human development (Dewey 1991: 308). He further maintained that, "integration of mind-body in action is the most practical of all questions we can ask of our civilization" (*LW* 3: 29). Intellectual and spiritual activities are not for a realm of "ideal matters too refined to be infected by gross matters." They need to employ and direct "physical instrumentalities" in such a way that real-world material changes can be fully instantiated (ibid: 29). Especially when faced with the challenges of deeper human conflict, one's pragmatic attitude toward the creation of democratic culture must act as a guiding intelligence directing both the mind and body of the citizen, toward the emergence of a new public consciousness that serves the purpose of bringing about "better control and direction" (1991: 308).

In addition, Dewey asserted that beliefs and activities "tend toward abnormality" to the degree that theory and practice, ideal and real have become divided and to the extent that psychological processes do not reflect the wisdom of the deeper neurobiological processes involved in integrative reasoning and multi-leveled comprehensions (*LW* 3: 29; Hall 2011). On the other hand, beliefs and activities that defer to the importance of the integration of mind–body in action contribute to the unification of theory and practice because they invite meta-awareness of how psychological and biological processes can be better aligned, and this in turn supports citizen engagement in reconciliation work and in problem-solving related to crises like environmental degradation (van der Kolk 2014; O'Dea 2014). As stated in the opening, deep conflicts and urgent dilemmas especially call for a renewed conception of justice and more plural modes of reason-making in which dominant cultural norms are not universalized. Instead, one's relation to facts, action and power is respected, and the autonomy and agency of the subject as political actor is given due regard so that each value might "have its place provided for it" (Bohman 1996; Touraine 1995; Dewey 1991: 54).

In this chapter, I examine how pragmatism as a philosophy of social healing provides an explanation of social thought and action that is capable of unifying moral impulse, creative instinct, and democratic culture. First, I discuss the relationship of biological impulse to the democratic ideal. I explain why, in the pragmatic conception of democracy, the

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connection between these two is always preserved. Pragmatism upholds
a higher criterion of authenticity, so that the need to be responsible and
accountable in one's thoughts and actions comes to the fore, as a kind
of faith activity that improves spiritual functioning in the society. The
first section of the chapter considers how this commitment introduces for
consideration a theoretic approach to reality in which citizens participate
in the making of democratic culture so as to create social conditions that
respond to the inmost spiritual desires of humans, to know and under-
stand all that can be, and to love all that is loveable (Helminiak 1998). I
consider one major criticism of Dewey's vision of democratic culture and
respond to this, defending Dewey, by elaborating on the meaning of faith
activity.

Then I look at James' advice to the pragmatist, to gather the real refer-
ents and practical function of abstract terms like reason or truth, and
to set these inwardly grasped, specified meanings to work. This requires
reflection that integrates, over time, personal feeling, sensory experience,
factual data, and individual and collective memory. I consider how efforts
like Truth and Reconciliation, and public disclosures, contribute to the
pragmatic effort of gaining greater conceptual insight and moral power.
In this second section the reader is also introduced to a Bahá'í ecolog-
ical metaphor of growth and transformation which provides a way of
understanding how the sincere spiritual pragmatist unites theory and
practice through experience and interaction in community. These kinds
of metaphors convey the interrelationship between religious instinct,
nature, artistic practice, and scientific insight that Dewey referenced in
his work. Countering the Western notion that an inherent contradiction
exists between instinct and culture, the poetic images reconcile polar-
ities like ideal and real, order and variety, generality and particularity.
Instead of relying upon lifeless, one-directional "banking concepts" of
learning (Freire 1993), knowledge formation in spiritual pragmatism is
linked to interactive processes of growth and blossoming within Nature.
I conclude that the aesthetic ecology promoted by this pragmatism
supports truth-seeking and transparency in society and encourages the
kind of human development needed to unify moral impulse, creative
instinct, and democratic culture.

Moral Impulse and Democratic Ideal

The concept of a moral impulse was being developed in different ways in the early twentieth century, not only by American pragmatists like Dewey interested in democracy, education, and the psychological dimensions of social reform, but also by thinkers like Henri-Louis Bergson. Bergson was a Nobel prize-winning French-Jewish philosopher who in the first half of the twentieth century affirmed the importance of intuition and immediate experience in understanding reality, over that of pure intellectual rationalism. He was also interested in questions pertaining to creativity, transindividual creative force, and causal power. Scientists in other countries also took up the concept of a moral impulse. Notably the respected Russian-Swiss neurobiologist Constantin Monakow, who in this time period theorized, based on his study of the capacity of the brain to heal and adapt after injury, that there was indeed a vital, evolutionary, autonomous, intelligence within life, which he termed the "*horme*" (Sarikcioglu 2018). An organizing factor that was rooted in protoplasm and that mobilized, through the necessary process of struggle, "the upward drive of individual organisms and species in new directions," the *horme* could be viewed as the continual "lead protagonist in a drama of species change and development" (Harrington 1996: 90). The overall motivating creative impulse of the *horme* was present within every living cell of a person. Called a "*Worldhorme*," it linked humankind not only to ancestors and descendants, but also to the entirety of the living world (Harrington 1996: 90, 92).

Monakow understood the *horme* to be constituted of five basic instinctual urges, beginning with the instinct in the embryonic phase of life "to form and grow according to one's morphological plan," and progressing to the instinct "to strive for holistic unity with the cosmos," or what Monakow called the "religious instinct". The *horme* at its most evolved level of instinct could serve as a source of moral orientation for humanity (Harrington 1996: 94). Writing on the history of the concept of holism in German culture and the re-enchantment of science, Harrington explains that Monakow's appreciation of the interconnectedness of humanity and the process of identifying with an increasingly larger living community, "up to species, the organic world and finally the cosmos," led him

To advocate a politics of cosmopolitanism—albeit one that bears little relationship to the "ideology of internationalism" of the time. For Monakow,

international community was *not a thing of human reason but rather of mystical necessity*—the "natural" culmination of a holistic world view in which all living creatures were united in the cosmic dynamic of hormic evolution (95; italics my own).

Monakow's biopolitical view directly challenges Rawlsian notions of public reason, which tend to socialize the public "into identification with a specific social role — that of 'a particular type of liberal democratic citizen'" (Steinmetz 2018: 504; quote from Button 2010: 255). In this rationalist view, the values related to citizenship reflect "reigning norms of membership and legitimacy in defining the bounds and character of our moral concern for others" (Steinmetz 2018: 504). However, when civic engagement becomes a way of life, and a cultural practice of striving, then the relational and inclusive ideals of spiritual democracy come into play. The fact of the matter is that, it is not possible to define in a limited or closed manner, the bounds or the character of the public's concern for others. The ways of caring, and the spheres in which caring arises, are complex, dynamic, and plural.

For instance, in the 1980s U.S. Sanctuary Movement contestation regarding "all those affected" by the problem of U.S. policies in relation to migrants and asylum-seekers itself crossed many borders. Citizens engaged with questions pertaining not to one given domain, but many, like "legal categories, public discourse, and the nation's moral imagination" (Steinmetz 2018: 504). As Bohman (1996) points out, public deliberation by its very nature, requires many different forms, each characterized by equality, non-tyranny, and publicity, because there is no one single domain in which deliberative politics unfolds. It necessarily involves a variety of activities. These include: "formulating and achieving collective goals, making policy decisions about means and ends, resolving conflicts of interest and principle, and solving problems as they emerge in ongoing social life" (1996: 53). There is no one form of public reason appropriate to these multiple domains of concern and varieties of deliberative activity.

Like Dewey's vision of a Great Community brought about through the public's realization of a self-organizing integrated principle (*LW* 2: 259), Monakow's intuition of an international community as *a mystical necessity* reflects the idea that, even given the multiplicity just described, coherence might be achieved through collective integrity to the "spirit of *Dharma*". Giri clarifies that in this expression, *Dharma* is a way of being responsible

that serves and fulfills needs for Justice. It is a source of human unity and a path to articulating the most encompassing life purpose for all humans.

> *Dharma* refers to modes of right conduct and thinking which is different from righteousness as a fixed system of classification between right and wrong especially imprisoned within a political and religious system of classification between righteous self and unrighteous other...*Dharma* challenges us to go beyond an anthropocentric reduction of justice and dignity and realize our responsibility not only to human beings but also to the non-humans... (Giri 2016: 5).

In this sense, the spirit of *Dharma* is about *how* the structure of human consciousness and the "continued unfolding of spirit toward the universe of being" are known through their inherent "normative requirements" (Helminiak 1998: 16). These are: to begin with, that consciousness bring awareness to a person, and therefore *attentiveness*; next, that in the quest to understand life, *intelligence* be engaged; after this, that as judgments are made, based upon what is known from understanding, that these evaluations be *reasonable*; and finally, that in the progress made toward self-determining actions and world, responsibility in the *dharmic* sense become the leading transcendental precept that "keeps open the open-ended unfolding of consciousness" (ibid: 16). The root meaning here of what one "ought" to do, one's moral purpose or *dharma*, abides within the reality of "what is," so that human authenticity, as in Buddhist practices of becoming, has "objective validity" built into it—as a "fruit of authentic subjectivity" (Helminiak 1998: 17; quote by Lonergan 1972: 292; Macy 1991).

The democratic ideal as a vitalizing force is an expression of the spirit of *Dharma*. As a means of becoming it obligates one to fulfill the normative requirements within the structures of consciousness outlined by Helminiak. His tripartite model of the human can help one to further understand the connection between moral impulse and democratic ideal. In this model, three interrelated levels of being interact with one another to generate different modes of conduct and thinking. The physical dimension of the person is *organism*; the feeling, affective dimension of the person, *psyche*, which includes imagery and memory, built on the internal functioning of the external perceptual system; and the mental dimension is *spirit*, expressing dynamism in one's approach to "all there is to be known and loved" (Helminiak 1998: 11). The critical point here

regarding the relation between impulse and ideal is this: the mystical necessity Monakow refers to, arises because there is a "non-reflecting dimension" in the human spirit. Moral impulse expresses this dimension, which is experienced through self-transcending movement and "openness to the ineffable". The presence of a non-reflecting or natural, unconscious dimension explains mystical experience through the tripartite model of the human being, "apart from any appeal to God" as an external reality (ibid: 23). In a natural holistic process of growth guided by the spirit of *Dharma*, the mystical experience provoked by one's responsive relationship to the "non-reflecting dimension" in the human spirit, eventually becomes necessity (ibid).

Judith Green builds on this line of thinking, when she describes how an approach to democracy that is formalized and institutionalized as political machinery, is conceptually inadequate (1999). Such an approach, she claims, does not recognize the "directional guidance of the democratic ideal" making a place for moral impulse and the dynamic ways it has historically influenced the unfolding of social life (Green 1998: 432). In the tripartite understanding of the human being, the moral impulse, that in actual experiences within community life advances progression through the structures of consciousness—leading one from awareness to understanding to judgment to responsible self-determination—becomes increasingly democratic as it manifests in an open-ended way, as both a "directional tendency" and a "motive force" (432). As Dewey reminded, democracy, as an idea, is "the idea of community life itself" (Dewey 1927: 328; quoted by Green 1998 432–433). The motive force within community expresses the democratic ideal through the self-transcending movement provoked by moral impulse. Furthermore, the ceaseless struggle to follow the guidance of a directional tendency assures that this motive force will endure, fulfilling the evolutionary self-transcending potentials of *Worldhorme*, as Monakow would say.

Finally, moral impulse supports the "tendency and movement" of democracy toward its "final limit," as it moves and inspires given individual persons to interact with science, religion, humanities, and art. These interactions are characterized by a more complex, comprehensive, and inclusive understanding of social health as social and systemic integration (Dewey 1927: 328). The motive force behind these intellectual and spiritual interactions is deeply social, responding to the distinctions within the tripartite model of the human. It is therefore perceived as a

key component of the moral good as an "attitude" toward social trans-
formation. The moral impulse is crucial for keeping citizens on track,
ontologically and epistemologically, with a practical and global ethical and
spiritual vision, one aligned with a "politics of cosmopolitanism" such as
advocated for by Monakow. Inviting connection to the motive force and
deeper directional tendency within democracy, the visionary democratic
ideal, though perhaps mystical, is not utopian. It serves practically "as
basis for criticism of institutions as they exist and of plans of betterment"
(Dewey and Tufts, LW 7: 349; Green 1998: 434). The democratic ideal
connects citizens inwardly to the spirit of Dharma when it functions this
way. It empowers them to be accountably self-determining, reminding
them of their innate regulatory powers. Right regulation of systems in
the human body increases the capacity of the citizen to participate in
self-governance. So too, in the outer world, public intelligence may be
introduced to transform social inertia through a more wise regulation of
resources, life energies, and power. This creates conditions not only for
moral and spiritual association, but also, for the authoring of new and
improved social and legal forms (Reid and Taylor 2010).

In a "politics of cosmopolitanism," ideals function both critically and
constructively, then. They act as regulatory intelligences, not prescrip-
tive principles. Consider how early Church councils, impelled by moral
impulse, engaged socially with precepts and principles from Greek culture,
in order to critique and to transform problematic issues. The coun-
cils established creedal definitions that all could agree to internalize and
commit to within a personal and cultural way of life. Today, citizens within
emergent publics may begin to take similar initiative, developing a prag-
matic relation to guiding ideals, one oriented by the directional tendency
of moral impulse itself. Helminiak perceives that the "hallmark of spir-
itual functioning" is in the quality interaction of pairs like *credo* and
commitment, meanings and *values, vision* and *virtue, beliefs* and *ethics,*
understandings and *evaluations* (1998: 15). The first half of these pairs
represent levels of consciousness involved in awareness, understanding,
and judgment, while their second half pertain to decision-making and
integrity to the spirit of *Dharma*. The distinction between the two sides
of the pairs is akin to the difference between descriptive science and a
normative science of ethics: the former provides facts describing *what is*;
the latter provides information necessary for action, about the value of
facts and *what "ought to be"* (1998).

With a meta-framework for analyzing spiritual functioning, the criteria of authenticity can begin to be better assessed and prioritized in education, institutional life, and within a personal and cultural way of life. Attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness can then inform cooperative activity, producing the wisest meanings, creeds, visions and beliefs; and a sense of mutual responsibility can begin to empower how the values, commitments, virtues, ethics, and evaluations directing normative ethical action in the real world actually function. A "science of ethics or ideals" therefore becomes possible in a society that is spiritually functioning. It both responds to and informs living regulatory realities within real-world interactions, rather than imposing prescriptive principles (Carter et al. 2001). Attentiveness to regulation and right relation becomes a "middle way" path of wisdom. Citizens are invited to explore diverse possibilities for interacting with multiple worldviews, ontologies, and imaginaries. Like normative scientists, members of publics seeking truth and transparency, are encouraged to think broadly, clearly, logically, and empirically about all of the analyzable data needed to improve spiritual functioning in a society and to address the consequences of human action. The democratic ideal here serves to identify biases in theory and practice; to encourage collaboration and creativity as the basis for ethical critical thinking; to promote inclusive and holistic practices; to transcend tribalism and embrace globalism; to synthesize the personal, social, situational, political, ecological, and auxiliary virtues inherent in ethical decision-making (Carter et al. 2001). Democracy as ideal is therefore not visionary in the imaginative sense. Instead, it directs one to strive toward the "hallmark of spiritual functioning" (Helminiak 1998).

Many have questioned whether Dewey's idea of democratic method is naïve (Flay 1992; Estremara 1993; West 1989; Hewitt 2002). Each individual citizen, through democratic education and communication, develops a pragmatic approach mindset toward the diverse resources in collective life. Persons work toward political freedom with a sense of civic responsibility, within various meetings, exchanges, and collective judgments. They apply the intelligence that they accrue to "protect, discover, and enhance the conditions that nourish more democratic associations with others" (Hewitt 2002: 9). In the self-transcending movement of spiritual growth, citizens become able to adopt the perspective of both observer and participant. They therefore are able to call upon various cultural perspectives, including "political, economic, international, educational, scientific and artistic, religious" (Dewey *LW* 13: 187; Hewitt

2002: 9), in order to discern with greater acuity the nature of the "existing conditions and relations that one is a part of". In this way, they become able to bring about improved conditions and more creative and ethical relations (9).

Is Dewey's proposed method indeed capable of transforming the underlying power complexes at the root of social inertia and unaddressed power differentials within social relations? Political freedom requires that both inter-agentive and systemic non-domination be realized (Hayward 2011). Only through the kind of responsibility referred to by Helminiak, in which specific normative requirements are fulfilled can the self-deceptions and false rationalizations that hinder the realization of democracy as mystical necessity, be overcome. Without integrity to the spirit of *Dharma*, "the ideas and habits of thought by which those subjugated legitimize their own subjugation" remain unchanged (Hewitt 2002: 10).

In his own response to critics of Dewey's political philosophy and vision of educational reform, Randy Hewitt affirms Dewey's pragmatic insight that democratic ideal is not separate from moral impulse. That ideal instead expresses a motive force and directional tendency in the human being. Humans naturally seek improvement of experience. There is no reason to believe they cannot work together to improve spiritual functioning. With the right intentionality, they can achieve the level of authenticity needed to transform the power complexes implicated in inter-agentive and systemic domination:

> ...despite the Sisyphean nature of the task, Dewey ... provided every sound philosophical reason for believing so. Is it naive to believe that human beings have all the capacities necessary to correct themselves, to force, through peaceful discussion and collective pressure, entrenched forms of power to act for a greater justice? Dewey answers: 'Is human nature intrinsically such a poor thing that the idea is absurd? I do not attempt to give any answer, but the word faith is intentionally used. For in the long run democracy will stand or fall with the possibility of maintaining the faith and justifying it by works' (Hewitt 2002: 10; quote from Dewey and Tufts *LW* 7: 152).

Dewey believed that spiritual functioning would improve as citizens actively distinguished the integrated quality of spirituality-in-action from those qualities observable in other kinds of actions. Most notably, he stated, "We need to distinguish between action that is routine and actions

alive with purpose and desire" (1928: 2). It is necessary to consider actions in their integrated wholeness so that a person can discern the different qualities of behavior resulting from different modes of integration and kinds of relationships to power. Various forms of logic, moral reasoning, perspective taking, and coherence making are present in human interactions. As these intersect with one's locus of authority, boundaries of social awareness and development of symbolic reasoning, different kinds of faith activity emerge (Fowler 1981; Parker 2009: 41).

Theologian James Fowler observed in this activity distinct stages of faith development (1976, 1996). For Fowler, faith is not a set package of necessarily theological understandings. Instead, it is an expression of motivational forces within human nature. Constituted by evolutionary dynamic structural actions, which are highly interactive with the environment, faith is stabilized through dispositional ways of living and valuing. Faith is in behavior and activity, then, and the motivations underlying them, rather than in any one statement of a belief system or social identity bound to a particular religious group. Recognizing and understanding faith is about appreciating cognitive dispositions, ways of knowing, modes of feeling, and orientations toward grandeur, *as applied in action*. Furthermore, stages in faith development are not discrete but overlap with one another and are context-dependent. Fowler's understanding of faith is therefore akin to Dewey's faith in democracy: faith is a permeable and mutable process. Through faith activity, moral impulse animates democratic ideal, both internally, as one proceeds from awareness of experience, through to understanding and judgment; and externally, as one commits to decisions and ongoing actions.

Faith in democracy becomes a personal way of life through one's active concern for: spiritual functioning; increased recognition of the qualities of actions that express integrated wholeness; and ongoing transformation of the limitations on freedom and sources of systemic error in one's conditions. Dewey and Tufts explain, democracy needs to be understood "as an ideal of social life [that] in its political phase ...is much wider than any form of government...it expresses the need for progress beyond anything yet attained" (*LW* 7: 349). Green similarly relates the democratic ideal to faith activity when she states that it represents the "prophetic possibility within our individual and shared experience" (1998: 434). The existence of deep conflicts and environmental crises calls humanity to recognize that this progress is indeed imperative today. By engaging in the mediating movement of pragmatism, and adopting a pragmatic stance and attitude,

conceptions of Justice can be revised. Kinds of reason-making used to make public decisions, can then be expanded, so that the "prophetic" social possibilities within the human experience can become new social realities.

The Changing of the Earth

Likewise perceiving faith as dynamic activity rather than static ideal, William James asserted that the pragmatist must not allow large abstract words, like God, Truth, and the Absolute to become a resting place for the mind. When a citizen understands the theoretical, existential, and ontological bases of abstract concepts like Reason and Freedom, then she can ascertain their real referents and analyze their social role. Without serious, contemplative engagement with these commonplace notions and conceptual ideas from social science, religion, and philosophy, citizens merely call upon them in a routine way. Their capacity to transform the society's conceptual foundations is limited, accordingly. Pragmatism provides a solution, in that it requires that people integrate life observations, deeper feelings, and memory, making diverse connections and building more complex and refined networks of meaning. Broadly encompassing terms like the Absolute will then appear "less as a solution," and instead, "as a program for more work," and "as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed" (James 1978: 20). Dewey perceived that pragmatism in this sense "marks a return to the idea of philosophy which prevailed when reflective thought was young and lusty, eager to engage in combat in the public arena, instead of living a sheltered and protected life" (*LW* 3: 25).

The process advocated for by James, of meditating on ideas and making meaning, is not only intellectual but also creative and biological. Writing on the regions of the brain and biological processes involved in reaching an understanding, biologist David Zull (2002) explains that for significant comprehensions to occur, there needs to be deeper integration of learning. For most people with both brain hemispheres intact, this involves more engagement with the brain structures in the back cortex. Intensive processes of building understanding enable the brain to distinguish both *what* things are and *where* things are. The *what* region responds to physical form attributes that distinguish the boundaries of what something is and allows for *generalization*; the *where* region defines spatial relationships, which includes metaphorical relations of sequence,

that have to do with the relative value (or size of importance) of one thing compared with another in a given circumstance, and therefore is relevant to *prioritization.*

Zull concludes that "*What* (category) and *where* (relationship) are cornerstones of mind" (88). In terms of Dewey's definition of the moral good, cited in the opening of this essay, the *what* cornerstone of mind grants one a broad scope of vision. It allows a person to locate the many worthwhile values realized in the life of humanity. The *where* cornerstone helps a person to see that each value "has its place provided for it" (Dewey 1991: 54). Zull cites these words of Lewis Thomas to illustrate how time-intensive integration processes are in the back cortex, the region implicated in transformational learning and genuine comprehension:

> We pass the word around; we ponder how different people put the case, we read the poetry; we meditate over the literature; we play the music; we change our minds; we reach an understanding (Zull 2002: 83).

The specific activities involved in contemplative work may be different for different people and may vary in cultures and times periods. Translating this into the biological framework of how learning happens, Zull summarizes that what *all* people seem to do generally is "gather new information, think about it, identify categories and relationships, engage with it in [diverse] creative ways, and eventually we understand" (ibid: 89). The ongoing development of the mind necessitates significant periods of reflection on sensory data and the retrieval of specific memories. He warns that, "trying to speed up comprehension may distract us and obscure important aspects of both *what* and *where*" (ibid).

Unfortunately, present-day educational norms literally bank on this speed up, as they rely on space-time frameworks for learning that fit human-constructed paradigms of achievement and that attempt to gear students to meet scheduled requirements for material worldly success, but that short-circuit the biological processes involved in integrative psychological reflection, pragmatic philosophy, and genuine dialogue. Helen Keller notably commented on this problem as she experienced it as a young woman studying at Radcliffe College. Disappointed that the schedule of courses left no time for deeper processes of comprehension, she wrote:

> But in college, there is no time to commune with one's thoughts. One goes to college to learn, it seems, not to think. When one enters the portals of learning one leaves the dearest pleasures—solitude, books and imagination—outside with the whispering pines (Keller 1902, Chapter 20).

The political and economic paradigm produces social conditions that exclude classes of people from the gifts of a contemplative life, including the intellectual and imaginative joy of reading. The community sector therefore lacks human resources needed for developing the conceptual insight needed to change the established cognitive order of the society. Norms, policies, and laws formally express that order (Strydom 2015). They reflect not only the collective mind in a society but *the time* that citizens have invested in critical reflection and back cortex integration processes, "communing with one's thoughts" as Keller phrased it.

This means that, in democratic life, legal policies reveal the quality of activity present as citizens either express, or fail to express, their faith in democracy. Changes in policy achieved through new conceptual insights come about through changes in the quality of faith activity. An example of this is how deliberative time spent in Truth and Reconciliation has influenced legal policy and democratic culture. This kind of work has created trends in civil law toward restorative justice and away from punitive judgment, reflecting a new level of spiritual functioning in the society (O'Dea 2012). Nelson Mandela established the first Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa, but freely elected governments have established them also in Argentina, Columbia, Brazil, and Canada. In Argentina, the National Commission on the Disappeared (Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas, CONADEP) operated for nine months, from December 1983 to September 1984 to investigate the disappearances of people between 1976 and 1983 due to a series of military juntas in which thousands of people considered to be "subversives" (leftist guerillas) were abducted, tortured, killed. The book *Nunca Mas* championed the truth of the people's voices regarding this persecution and became not only the most read book in Argentina, but also, a kind of testament to the power of people's faith in democratic ideals of speech and freedom.

In movements like those in Argentina, an abstract concept like Truth is not a remote ideal. Instead, it interfaces directly with political infrastructures and social actions on the ground. It permeates human feelings at the level of survival and transforms moral emotions and thoughts from

the inside out, generating, over time, the new insights, language, perceptions, and values to reconcile deep conflicts. By bringing light to social injustice, rather than allowing it to remain hidden or silent, citizens are able, as pragmatists, to rethink democratic norms in their society. Bohman points out that, disclosure is "an act of expression that opens up new possibilities of dialogue and restores the openness and plasticity necessary for learning and change". In pragmatism, disclosures do not in themselves reveal truth, but are "prior to truth" in that they concern "what makes truth possible" and require "public reflection to test them for idiosyncrasy" (1996: 229). Bohman writes:

> In critical discourse moments, historical experiences may 'disclose' new forms of democracy and new democratic principles....Learning requires coherent development, but it also is discontinuous to the extent that whole new types of reasons and principles may be introduced into the public basis of justification. The term 'disclosure' is meant to signify the innovative side of social learning, which is typical of the public use of reason (Bohman 1996: 231).

As publics include diverse modes of reason-making, marginalized or silenced voices, and submerged themes in their deliberative life, they heal the division between subjective personally lived experience and outer world events. Citizens come to feel and know how transsubjective spaces of truth provide an ontological basis for social problem-solving. Processes of knowledge building and social integration in this way become a mode of being authentically human.

Public acts of truth-telling and citizen disclosures assist citizens in developing the articulated political and philosophical insights that are the pragmatist's work, according to James. Through public communications, citizens become better able to ascertain the real referents and social role of formerly abstract terms like freedom, justice, or truth. Citizens could develop this ability further through education dedicated to improving spiritual functioning and deliberative life. Indeed, *without* educational reform supporting this direction in citizenship, there are serious limits to citizens' ability to create a completely democratic culture. Through truth-telling and disclosure, it becomes apparent that the intensity of human feelings like desire, sorrow, rage, and hope demand new social structures (Reid and Taylor 2010). Today, ontology is separated from epistemology by foundational dichotomies, like those between: public and private; paid

and unpaid labor; production and reproduction; order and disorder in social relations; man-made and natural; mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. These dualities short-circuit the deeper processes of creativity and integration that are involved in maintaining the connection between moral impulse and democratic ideal.

The deliberations of Asian American women striving to adopt an authentic Christian spirituality are an example of this crisis and need for reform in education and in society at large. The women linked the experience of the suppression of both grief and anger, to the social positivism used to hold together structural relations that bind family life to the growth mindset, or "production mode" aspects only, of Christianity. They also linked it, by extension, to the logic of the global capitalist system that now influences education and the development of all life on the planet.

> Just as anger is not talked about in our homes and often considered unnecessary to express, grief is also looked upon as unimportant. We were taught that instead of looking towards the struggles, we should only work towards achievements and the "good things" that happen in life....In many ways, we were taught to look only upon the resurrection of Christ and the recognition of the *life* that were (are) given. As much as this is important and necessary, the crucifixion and the death of Christ were often overlooked. The three days before his resurrection and the necessary mourning that took place was not a priority. It certainly was not good to feel and give space to such grief (Bae 2017).

In creative democracy's quest for truth, the total transformation of self and world made possible through emotional rationality and integrity to moral impulse can be understood through metaphors that connect the individual and the community to organic life and death processes on the planet. For example, Bahá'í Writings refer to the "changing of the Earth". In these Writings, the word Earth signifies not only our outer world planet, but also the "earth of understanding and knowledge" within the human heart[1]. For the movement of the moral good to change conditions in the world, one needs a total reformation of human character. This reformation engages biological life systems. However, it requires intellectual and spiritual interaction with meta-level premises, or presuppositions. These come from different sources. They are: collected from a broad study of human history, that discerns lateral universals across cultures (Werbner 2017; Reid and Taylor 2010); found in ethical treatises

arising out of communal reflection and action, like Four Worlds Principles for Creating a Sustainable World, (from Global Indigenous Wisdom Summit); and discovered in Revelation recorded in scripture. The intellectual principles and spiritual ideals within this last are depicted in Bahá'í Writings as a "heaven" that rains onto the "earth" of the human heart, as "bountiful showers of mercy" producing "myrtles of unity" in the "soil" of human hearts. Bahá'u'lláh exclaims:

> What blossoms of true knowledge and wisdom hath their illumined bosoms yielded! (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, 43)

Here supposedly abstract principles and ideals take on organic life and vitality. The breaking open of the seed of spiritual knowledge within the human heart and the death of its outer covering, makes possible the life of the flower. The process of blossoming and growing itself creates greater unity and rootedness. This personal experience of knowledge formation produces the meta-wisdom of the communal self (Narvaez 2014); it is conducive to cooperative activity in which "the moral point of view is always *relative* to the subjectivity of the moral agents and their social context" (Prillentensky 1997: 519). Formation of ethics becomes a psychological process that unfolds within relationship and that involves the time-intensive process of back cortex integration, referred to by Zull. It expresses the underlying dynamics of interdependence (the "*myrtles of unity*"), that constitute community. In the Bahá'í metaphor, comprehension of ethical precepts and integration of divergent creative instincts within the recipient, together bring about a stabilized moral impulse that can support a science of ethics or ideals. The result is the making of "true knowledge".

Like Monakow's scientific theory of the *horme* principle, which is an internal holistic physiochemical process, aligned with a larger evolutionary creative force and blueprint of integral development, humankind journeys toward that wisdom which continuously reveals to it, its multifaceted moral orientation. Citizens therefore come to participate in "the aims and methods by which further experience [and therefore, creative democracy] will grow in ordered richness" (*MW* 14: 229). This inwardly transformational journey of forming ethics, and the simultaneous political process of contributing to the emergence of just social structure, encompasses spirituality and ecology, psychology and the vigor, beauty and resilience of natural growth. The result is the reformation not only of the person, but

the culture. Progress is achieved through greater individual and collective commitment to emotional integrity and to the creativity and complexity inherent to processes of renewal and self-transcendence, like that alluded to by the Asian American women.

Green elaborates on how the pragmatic and democratic attitude toward life that emerges would change the human relation to particular goods and interests, and therefore impact the formation of new value imperatives and practical norms:

> In its ethical dimension, deep democracy as a way of life would give rise to and depend upon a sense of persons, relations, our ecosystems, and nature as a whole as precious. Individual persons, memories, hopes and active projects, as well as the cultures, communities, and ways of life that form, locate, and direct these, would be regarded as morally significant (Green 1998: 436).

Dewey's vision of the citizen as an ecological recipient and producer of wisdom in the feeling sense Green describes above, is aligned with the Bahá'í vision of a totally engaged and creative transformation within the person and social reality. It also resonates with his belief, that through artistic practice, the citizen could develop social political insight and have an enriched experience of conceptual meaning. By this he meant a religious experience of illumination and comprehension, that is not removed from life, but rather, encompasses the experiences of everyday life in that it is continuous with biological life processes of unfolding and maturation, like those described by Bahá'u'lláh (*EW* 1: 91). Reid and Taylor observe that in this regard, Dewey "outlined an aesthetic ecology of public intelligence" (2010: 126).

In *Experience and Nature* (1958), Dewey further clarified that a distinction must be made between modes of practice "that are not intelligent, not inherently and immediately enjoyable" and modes of practice "which are full of enjoyed meanings" (*LW* 1: 268; italics my own). The latter are advocated for in the Bahá'í Writings and by Green when she radically affirms recognition of *the moral significance* of both "Individual persons, memories, hopes and active projects," and of the matrixical energies present within "cultures, communities, and ways of life". When Helen Keller extolled "the dearest pleasures—solitude, books and imagination" and indicated that "the portals of learning" that produce meanings worth caring about might be found in communion with "the

whispering pines" she too was siding with modes of practice that are inherently and immediately enjoyable (1902, Chapter 20, see quote at beginning of this section). Dewey understood artistic practice to be essential to the remaking of tradition since it engenders respect for the kind of deep feeling referenced by Bahá'u'lláh, Green and Keller, and because it protects the ability to comprehend and create symbolic language.

The kind of artistic practice Dewey advocated for also cultivates creative instinct. It contributes to the aesthetic dimensions of experience within cultural traditions and multicultural institutions guided by the motive force, directional tendency, and criticality of democratic ideal. Intelligent modes of artistic practice nurture the creative values like "variety, multiplicity, dynamism, and jazz-like fusions" that support emergent deliberative life within these aesthetic dimensions; such values are able to partner cooperatively with the values that tend to protect status quo norms, like "purity, unity, simplicity, and stability" (Green 1998: 436–437). When individuality is affirmed and creative values encouraged, deliberative activity flourishes. Bohman observes that, "Like a good jazz trio, deliberation succeeds ... when each individual maintains his or her distinctiveness and the group its plurality" (1996: 56). For this reason, the fostering of an aesthetic ecology promotes wisdom and the fulfillment of environmental and social justice (Reid and Taylor 2003: 79).

We are presently alienated from this ecological experience of power as constitutive of being. Artistic practice reawakens this experience, activating the inner faculties involved in comprehension, and purifying human feelings so that these can become part of what Spinoza called intuitive knowledge. All sciences, and especially fields like neurobiology and evolutionary psychology, are "handmaidens" assisting in this fulfillment of Nature. As Dewey reminds, "both philosophy and the sciences were conceived and begotten of the arts"; the sciences once aspired "to find their issue in arts of the special branches of life" and philosophy "in the comprehensive art of the wise conduct of life as a whole" (*LW* 3: 25). In the partnership of science and art: "freshness, continuity, and connectedness compatible with innovation" infuse social development; and the presence of beauty in all its "myriad faces" is recognized (Green 1998: 436–437).

Describing inner and outer world transformation through these metaphors of growth, hints at how relational developmental systems require the stabilization of moral impulse for their evolution. The

growth of biological and social structures that support more enlight-
ened forms of human association—like the development and integration
of neural pathways for modulating fear and emotion or the practice
of deep listening—must be rooted in the interactions within commu-
nity that allow divergent creative instincts, and distinct modes of feeling
and ontologies, to achieve coherence through fulfillment of the norma-
tive requirements within the structures of consciousness described by
Helminiak (1998). Joanna Macy sees the complex inter and intrapersonal
interactions that make the moral good and that transform culture through
inner blossoming of comprehension processes, as "a movement away from
entropy". In it,

> intangible webs of relationship are spun, new forms, new ideas, new real-
> ities emerge. ...differentiation and integration go hand in hand; they abet
> and give rise to each other. ...*This notion is at variance with the idea that
> there is an inherent conflict between instinct and culture.* ...the systems view
> perceives a continuum in the flowering of integrated heterogeneity (Macy
> 1991: 187; italics my own).

Self-realization is *not* "at odds with harmonious interaction" and engage-
ment in the life of community because "it is in relationship, not in
isolation, that beings give expression to diversity and distinctiveness"
(Macy 1991: 187). Green affirms this interactionist stance. She perceives
that in the "contingent processive metaphysics of deep democracy" the
intangible within human interiority, like "ideas, memories, and hopes"
actually have "empirical effects". This is witnessed in the popularity
of books like *Nunca Mas* and in acts of public disclosure involving
personal narrative. In these, the intangible within human interiority inter-
acts with "material characteristics, forces, and relations... in patterns of
mutual influence" (Green 1998: 436). With care for an aesthetic ecology,
the dynamic and embodied self-organization of ideals and precepts
contributes over time to a blossoming and flourishing of public intel-
ligence—an "ordered richness" of ongoing further experience, within
and across people in community, that itself characterizes the develop-
ment of creative democracy. In this self-organizing movement, the "forces
inherent in human nature and already embodied to some extent in human
nature" are protected "to their logical and practical limit" as the norma-
tive requirements of consciousness direct the citizen to regard human and

non-human life on the planet, its variety in all its relations, as holy and inspiring awe and wonder (Green 1998: 436). Macy concludes that:

> It would seem that Freud's view, so influential in our culture, stems from a polarization of the notions of order and variety—as if order, sacred or secular, were some preset master plan we can only follow by inhibiting novelty, by being good children obedient to an autocratic father (Macy 1991: 188).

Far from polarizing order and variety, the wisdom conveyed in New Earth metaphors, like Bahá'u'lláh's, holds up the promise of a spiritual and intellectual democracy that protects truth-seeking, transparency, cultural creativity, novelty, and planetary biodiversity. As in Monakow's assertion of the *horme* principle, there is no need "to fight or repress" instincts. Instead, the key is "to learn to orient our feelings toward those higher instincts"; one can do this through the artistic practice advocated for by Dewey. In this practice, which is closely associated with the religious instinct, "biological health and internal harmony" are "automatically promoted" (Harrington 1996: 94). The journeying *horme* left a biological record of its "progressive achievements" in the human body, said Monakow, one that provided moral order and direction for humanity, as it revealed that "spiritual, selfless instincts stood naturally above and over selfish, material instincts" (ibid: 94). By respecting one's deepest biological impulses, which pulse within the protoplasm of one's very own cells, a person comes to feel and know humanity's greater evolutionary course (ibid: 98). Their creative instincts, as expressed through artistic practice, represent a fulfillment of Nature in this sense, and are a practical means of giving birth to new philosophies and sciences.

The democratic ideal does not suppress the enjoyed meanings within the teachings of moral leaders and visionaries nor does it attempt to quash spiritual knowledge including the wisdom within Scripture and sacred or holy ways of life. The motive force within these sources of guidance and dimensions of human development and their directional tendency instead are understood to be essential to a creative democracy. Spiritual pragmatism is concerned with rooting the democratic ideal in the heart of each individual citizen. Therefore, it offers to humanity the beauty and integrity of an aesthetic ecology that responds to more noble inspirations. One is naturally motivated in these conditions to nurture and respond to moral impulse, and to recognize the connection between that

impulse and a greater evolutionary path. In the aesthetic ecology, order and variety contribute spontaneously and collaboratively to the maturation of citizenship and of the community sector. As in the metaphor of the "changing of the Earth," moral personhood, no longer constricted by compartmentalizing habits of mind and by the imposed space-time constraints of the political economy, itself becomes a fertile ground for unifying moral impulse, creative instinct, and democratic culture.

NOTE

1. This phrase from Bahá'í Writings is found in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, or Book of Certitude, which was originally called *Risaliy-i-Khal*, Epistle to the Uncle, because it is a response by Bahá'u'lláh to questions from the Báb's uncle, about the nature of his nephew's station. A major theme throughout this tablet is the nature of spiritual perception and conceptual realization. Bahá'u'lláh explains in different ways how the Manifestations of God are to be understood *metaphysically* prior to their particular existence and *epistemologically* prior to their universal identity and unity. When people are fixated on personal power, or confused by personal insecurities, their thinking becomes overly materialistic and literal. They do not comprehend the nature of the unity and particularity of the Manifestations, and the progressive nature of God's Revelation. This kind of conditioning is akin to overly socio-centric modes of social change that focus more on obedience to external forms than on internal moral realization within the citizen and genuine creative ethical action. Shoghi Effendi translated this tablet and has explained that it was "written in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Báb, Who had specifically stated that the Promised One would complete the text of the unfinished Persian Bayán, and in reply to the questions addressed to Bahá'u'lláh by the as yet unconverted maternal uncle of the Báb, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad." (Shoghi Effendi 1987: 139) For more on this work, please visit https://bahai-library.com/wilmette_kitab_iqan_outline.

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