Do pragmatic naturalists have souls?
Should anyone be paid to worry about it?

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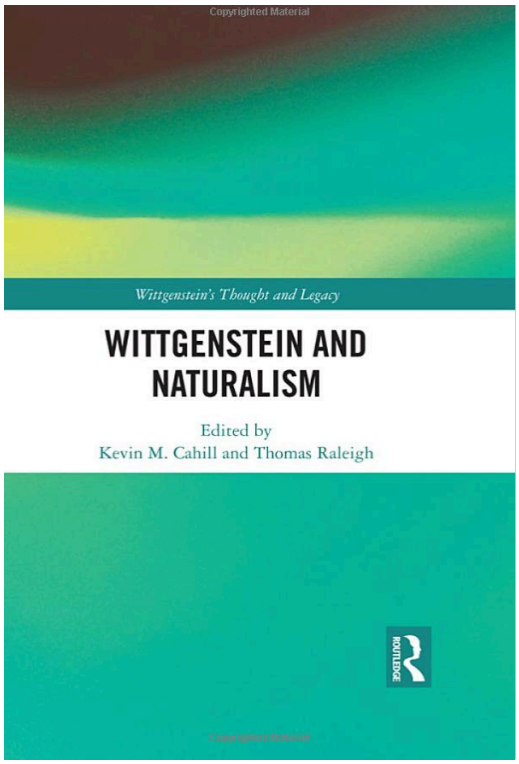

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Abstract: *Pragmatic Naturalists* must grapple with a tension between the urge to be sweeping in their meta-philosophical critique and the wish to be relevant to the practice of the discipline. In this chapter I consider three self-declared pragmatic naturalists, Richard Rorty, Philip Kitcher, and Huw Price, all of whom have made it their business to offer reform-inducing critiques of philosophy. With Wittgenstein as a common reference point, I consider their positions with respect to the challenges brought on by the attempt to offer *radical diagnoses* without sacrificing *practice-directed authority*. The lesson, I suggest, is that meta-philosophy is not the engine of philosophical reform. Rather, in so far as philosophy is a proper subject of reformist ambition at all, this ambition should be couched in ethical and political terms, addressing institutional forms and norms of practice.

I.

Let us say a soul is the *psychic identity* that something has. So worrying about souls—whether there are any, what their distinguishing properties are, how they come to be and cease to be, etc.—that is something that the philosophy of mind does. However, philosophy of mind also indisputably *has* a soul; the question of the place of mind (any mind, not just "ours") in the natural world. Its soul is a conflict, a problem of fit; the mental must be, yet cannot be, a part of the material world: Subjectivity, intentionality, phenomenal experience, agency, these are patently real, yet they appear to be crowded out by the kinds of objects and properties that natural science recognizes and by the explanatory scope that natural scientific understanding has. So there is work be done to mark out or make up appropriate space. Complicated families of positions shape the intellectual topography, but it has an organized structure, a unity. It is, at least in rough outline, a familiar enough landscape to most philosophers, drawn up in standard courses and introductory texts. This landscape is not static, though, and such texts need to be updated every few years, if they are to maintain their status as—predominantly—reporting textbooks. In time, presentations of the landscape slide into the category of historical artifact, partisan expressions of a historically conditioned and now transcended perspective. So the enterprise goes on, and it is the problem of the soul that shapes and directs it, and thus constitutes *its* evolving soul.

Pragmatic naturalism may be taken as a certain kind of response to this enterprise. The first question of the title, however, suggests that there is something peculiar about that response—that a pragmatic expression of naturalism with regard to the problem of the soul lacks the kind of unity and drive that this problem gives to—or at least until relatively recently has provided for—the discipline we think of as the philosophy of mind.

The second of the two title questions is meant to indicate a set of issues that are important but hard to make tractable. What sustains the idea of philosophy as a subject and a discipline? What supports a claim that philosophy be recognized and funded as a worthy intellectual project, to be commended to *bildung*-aspiring young adults? What, in short, is philosophy good for as a *public endeavor*? I take it that simply to pose (and pursue) this question is *not* to answer it. There must be more.

What more? One might say that philosophy *has been* important; you can't understand much of the emergence of either modern politics or modern science without some understanding of the history of philosophy. However, while it is true that a mandate of philosophy departments is to interpret and convey past philosophy, if this exhausted the remit of the discipline, then something clearly must, at some point or other, have changed dramatically. Whatever role philosophy had in bringing about modern scientific and political thinking, it did not serve that role solely by reflecting on its own history.

So while critical meta-reflection and thoughtful self-narrative arguably are intrinsic to philosophy, philosophers must also be doing something else. What else?

The possibility to be considered is that pragmatic naturalists get themselves into a special kind of hole with regard to this second question. What pragmatic naturalists share with most famous, canon-forming philosophers over the centuries, is a sense that there is something wrong with the approaches they find on offer wherever and whenever it is that they grow up to be philosophers. However, where other discontents have made their mark by showing us how to get it right, and thus constituting the history of philosophy, pragmatic naturalists encounter challenges at just this point. It is these challenges and the responses they draw that I want to consider.

One way to engage in meta-philosophical critique is to set out to get clearer on what philosophy really is, what its proper ends are. Such self-description typically leads to explicit critique—even radical critique, which contests fundamental aspects of the self-understanding with which its target operates. Still, it may be *internal critique* in so far as it aims for improvement of philosophy in light of its *own*—now properly understood—*ends*; it is a *correction*, rather than a *displacement*. However, for someone suspicious of the underlying idea—that philosophy *has* proper ends—this avenue appears blocked. Internal critique is not going to be radical, because from the internal standpoint no foil is available against which the practice as it is found can be chastisingly held. The clarified real or proper ends of philosophy were supposed to play that part. Without this idea in play, the radical impulse, the urge to be sweeping in one's critical diagnosis, forces one into an external stance—in effect, a stance against philosophy—in which one makes claims about, for instance, the uselessness or worthlessness or self-deluded nature of the enterprise that one is describing. The

difficulty now, though, is in convincing those engaged in the practice that they should listen and take you seriously. On what grounds can you now claim their attention as philosophers?

This problem—something like a dilemma—is faced by what I have been calling pragmatic naturalism, at least in so far as its proponents engage in meta-philosophical critique. Let us call the stance in question PCPN: *Philosophy Critical Pragmatic Naturalism*. Not all pragmatic naturalists fall under PCPN.[1] But *self-styled* pragmatists, in the tradition of classical pragmatism, tend to do so. This means, I will suggest, that they must grapple with a tension between the urge to be sweeping and the wish to be relevant. The meta-philosophically most interesting exponents of PCPN are those alert to the challenges of offering *radical diagnoses* without sacrificing what we may call *practice-directed authority*. Guided by the challenges posed by this particular tension I will proceed by comparing elements of the meta-philosophical critiques offered by three self-declared pragmatic naturalists; Richard

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[1] Daniel Dennett is a case in point, as fellow pragmatist Richard Rorty notes:
"I enjoy metaphilosophy in a way that Dennett seems not to enjoy it." Rorty, Richard, "Dennett on Intrinsicality," in *Truth and Progress, Philosophical Papers,* vol. 3, 98-121 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119.
Indeed, for Rorty, critical meta-philosophy, reform of the practice, is where the game is at:
"I think, in short, that Dennett's "urbane verificationism" is a bit *too* urbane. It stops short of the goal out of what seems to me misplaced courtesy to a half-defeated enemy." (Rorty, "Dennett on Intrinsicality," 119)

Rorty, Huw Price, and Philip Kitcher, all of whom have made it their business to offer sweeping, reform-oriented critiques of philosophy.

II.

In his recent *Preludes to Pragmatism,* Kitcher aligns explicitly with PCPN. With approval, he says of James and Dewey:

> they are out to focus philosophy on issues that matter to people. Both are suspicious of the idea of timeless philosophical problems, demanding to be tackled in each generation; both suppose that the deepest philosophical challenges of an age depend on the previous evolution of human life and culture.[2]

Kitcher has been "increasingly moved by this reformist approach to philosophy," and presents his essays in the volume as "investigations in the spirit of the would-be pragmatist revolution." Kitcher hopes "to renew the James–Dewey project for our own times."[3]

Kitcher's stance is undeniably radical:

> Pragmatism should not be domesticated and brought into the precincts of "normal philosophy," so that James and Dewey can join the pantheon of

[2] Kitcher, Philip, *Preludes to Pragmatism: Toward a Reconstruction of Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), xiii.

[3] Kitcher, *Preludes*, xiii.

> respectable philosophers. To paraphrase Marx, the point is no to continue philosophy-as-usual, but to change it.[4]

Pragmatists like Robert Brandom and Hilary Putnam are too conservative for Kitcher, in so far as they "are inclined to find a closer connection between pragmatism and central themes in "analytic" philosophy than [Kitcher] would favor."[5] Kitcher wants to end the separateness of pragmatism not by modifying its vocabulary, but by changing philosophy in line with the vision of Dewey. As he says, this is, "the revisionary hope I take to lie at the heart of pragmatic naturalism."[6] What's wrong with philosophy? It is spending too much of itself on problems that are of secondary, or of little, or of no importance, of no real value to the larger community that supports the activity. Too much is scholastic, in the pejorative sense, different only in degree, Kitcher says, from some hypothetical group of lucky researchers "who decide, solely for reasons of personal satisfaction, to spend their days counting the dust motes or musing on the shifting patterns of the shadows on the floor."[7]

So, Kitcher urges: "To revive pragmatism today is, I suggest, not to invoke James and Dewey as allies in current debates, but to recognize that our own scholastic conception of philosophy cries out for just the reform they wanted."[8]

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[4] Kitcher, *Preludes,* xiv.

[5] Kitcher, *Preludes,* xiii.

[6] Kitcher, *Preludes*, xv.

[7] Kitcher, *Preludes*, xiii.

[8] Kitcher, *Preludes*, 192.

In his radical stance Kitcher recognizes Richard Rorty as close kin, with one major proviso; where Rorty, Kitcher thinks, concludes that philosophy has run its course, Kitcher, with Dewey, seeks to liberate philosophy, regarding it "as growing out of an impulse that is central to human nature".[9] Where Rorty draws his get-over-philosophy *consequences* of pragmatism, Kitcher sounds his optimistic *preludes* to a renewed pragmatist philosophy.[10]

Kitcher is right to see his project as more closely aligned with Rorty's than with the other new (or *neo*-) pragmatists he addresses. Rorty, too, is concerned to hold on to the radical nature of the critique he traces to James and Dewey. Here is Rorty, speaking, as its president, to the APA Eastern Division, just as his magnum opus, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (henceforth PMN), was coming off the press:

> Peirce himself remained the most Kantian of thinkers—the most convinced other species of discourse could be assigned its proper place and rank. It was just this Kantian assumption that there was such a context, and that epistemology or semantics could discover it, against which James and Dewey reacted. We need to focus on this reaction if we are to recapture a proper sense of their importance.[11]

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[9] Kitcher, *Preludes*, 192.

[10] Kitcher, *Preludes*, xvii.

[11] Rorty, Richard, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," in Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 162.

There is no super-context. That is the heart of Rorty's appropriation of his pragmatist predecessors. To show this, and show what it meant for philosophy, was Rorty's great project in PMN. And what it means, Rorty there argues, is the end of epistemology and metaphysics as it has been pursued since the early modern age—the end of representationalist philosophy. We must stop this fruitless scholastic endeavor and turn to something different.

While Rorty here may sound quite like Kitcher, the latter is concerned to keep an important space between them. As Kitcher emphasizes, Rorty's radicalism terminates in an external stance. Kitcher, by contrast, thinks that philosophy should not be given up, but radically changed.

A tempting reaction to this, however, is to say that this is merely a difference of definition of terms. One suspects that is exactly how Rorty would have responded; "look, Kitcher, we share the same heroes, the same revisionary hope, the same impulse toward a liberating, humanizing change in the practice we call philosophy. We agree with Wittgenstein and Dewey that philosophical problems are not to be solved, but gotten over. We both think this could actually happen. Let us not quibble over labels!"

We should grant this reaction the point that the contrast between Deweyan optimism and Rortyan pessimism about philosophy, a contrast that Kitcher makes much of, is less straightforward than Kitcher suggests. In fact the distance between both the ends and the means of these two champions of PCPN really is smaller than Kitcher's juxtaposition suggests. Still, it is clear that there *are* revealing differences between the

way Rorty and Kitcher express the Deweyan revisionary hope for a humanized intellectual culture. These differences matter to the problem with which we began; how to be a sweeping reformist critic while retaining practice-directed authority. To see these differences play out, though, we must first look a little more closely at the kind of view I have labeled pragmatic naturalism.

III.

There are two quite different things one might be pushing for in articulating pragmatism. There is a strong swell of contemporary pragmatists (Robert Brandom, Cheryl Misak and Robert Talisse are prominent representatives) who work to end the separateness of pragmatism by tailoring its vocabulary to fit the themes of mainstream epistemology and philosophy of language.[12] This mode, let us call it philosophical pragmatism, makes the notion of agency and intervention central, takes practice to be the source of normativity, and expands the scope of means-ends reasoning as far it will possibly go. Philosophical pragmatists develop distinctive views on a wide range of recognizable themes.[13] Pragmatism in this key is a set of basic, integrated

[12] For a recent work of historical narrative explicitly engaged in this project, see Cheryl Misak, *The American Pragmatists* (New York: Oxford University Press), 2013.

[13] A list of core topics might be: The nature of truth, knowledge and justification; the nature, source, and possibility of objectivity; the nature of meaning or content; the nature of value, particularly the nature and source of the force of moral values; the relation between facts and values, between the descriptive and the normative; the conditions of the good life or human flourishing—or the flourishing of any creature capable of some form of it; the nature of justice, of autonomy, of democracy; the

commitments, along the lines just indicated, that undergird a series of theories on a series of topics, theories that, one supposes as a pragmatist, will stand up to criticism better than rival views do. Support will come at either end—from the plausibility of the account of the phenomena, and from the force and plausibility of the core commitments. Representatives of philosophical pragmatism of this form have no trouble with their self-understanding as philosophers, or with pragmatism as philosophical and as requiring philosophical work, nor with the idea that their engagement in mainstream debate produces thoroughly philosophy-internal criticism of rival positions. Pragmatism is a distinctive family of positions, perhaps, but in a conventional, familiar matrix. It isn't, and ought not to be, in any way *separate*.

The other kind of pragmatism, by contrast, the kind to which Kitcher and Rorty both belong, along with Price, is not a foundation for rival theories of this or that. It is not a set of basic commitments of the sort that gives rise to an integrated set of theoretical answers to familiar philosophical questions in various domains, answers comprising distinctive theories that may compete with other theories in providing answers to—more or less—the same questions.[14] It is fundamentally and broadly reformist. It is unhappy about philosophy—it thinks that philosophy is, in some sense, in some way, barking up the wrong tree. Typically and unsurprisingly, such pragmatists also take Wittgenstein's assault on constructive philosophy as a central source of inspiration,

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nature of personal identity and the relation between the self and its social and natural contexts of existence and persistence.

[14] I say "more or less" here, because almost all interesting theoretical rivalries in philosophy also concern—sometimes mostly concern—the nature of the question to be answered.

and it would not be misleading to emphasize the contrast with philosophical pragmatism by calling this mode of pragmatist thinking Wittgensteinian pragmatism.[15]

One immediate challenge that Wittgensteinian pragmatism faces is to delineate its object of dissatisfaction; that toward which a negative attitude is to be struck. A very common name for it among champions of PCPN is "metaphysics". Metaphysics, however, is hard to define. It may appear as if the very act of delineating the area one wants to leave alone, or get over, or be quiet about, is already to make too much noise. Certainly this is a theme that has figured centrally in discussions about how Wittgenstein ought to be taken, particularly with regard to sense and nonsense.[16] Here,

[15] In the case of Rorty and of Price, this assimilation needs no qualification, since both are explicit about their debts to Wittgenstein and the Wittgensteinian elements of their attitude to philosophy. With Kitcher, the matter is more complicated. However, precisely by virtue of what I will argue is distinctive about Kitcher's meta-philosophical stance—its predominantly ethical character—I believe there is a strong argument to be made for the label also in his case. Of contemporary pragmatists, the one whose thought is most explicitly a development of Wittgensteinian themes is David MacArthur (see for instance Macarthur, David, "Wittgenstein and Expressivism," in *The Later Wittgenstein on Language*, edited by Daniel Whiting, (London: Palgrave, 2010), 81-95.)

[16] Rorty's summary of the issues that divide "pragmatic Wittgensteinians" from "resolute Wittgensteinians" is offered in his "Wittgenstein and the Linguistic Turn." (Rorty, Richard, "Wittgenstein and the linguistic turn," in Richard Rorty, *Philosophy*

though, we are at a point where champions of PCPN show a distinctively pragmatic attitude; the vices they aim to expose are not sins against sense or meaning as such, but projects built on more specific substantive assumptions. In Rorty's case, these are summed up under the label of *representationalism*, which amounts to the idea that systems of linguistic or mental representation may be assessed for adequacy in terms of their ability to capture the way the world really is.

Much of Rorty's PMN is devoted to arguing that this idea leads us nowhere interesting or useful, and certainly not to knowledge: Representationalist metaphysics, Rorty thinks, even in its Kantian form—where the nature of the knowing subject, not the world in itself, is the target—is delusional, in treating its own constitutive metaphors as magically obligatory. Certainly there is much to be said out knowing subjects, but without the representationalist framework in place, the universality and the necessity that such investigations may aspire to simply falls away. Instead we elaborate perspectives, and we evaluate concepts and vocabularies in a context-dependent historically shifting means-ends scheme, where no pretense of transcendence or finality is present. We reflect on science, and on how to incorporate the insights of science in our lives. But science, for Rorty has no ontological priority—since nothing has. Science, morality, poetry, these are all evolved ways of coping. There is no way the world is in *itself*. The only scale of measurement for vocabularies of any sort is usefulness to agents' purposes.

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as Cultural Politics, Philosophical Papers, Volume 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160-175.)

As is well known, Rorty's case draws on arguments developed by central figures in 20th century analytic philosophy. He presents the case he makes in PMN as Wittgensteinian in spirit, but in its detail it is built largely from elements provided by Quine and Sellars, filtered through some Davidsonian arguments. By this route, the story developed in PMN arrives at a point where Dewey, so Rorty claims, is already waiting. By this last claim Rorty means, I take it, that if we accept his line of argument, we will see that the sort of issues that representationalist assumptions lead us to confront will dissipate once we follow those assumptions through to their conclusions. So we are driven by philosophical argument to the conclusion that there is no other source of philosophical problems than those we make up for ourselves as we go—important enough, perhaps, many of them—*for a time and a place.* And Dewey, Rorty suggests, offers just the right response to that predicament, even if he didn't have at his disposal the dialectical arsenal of PMN, and so could only adumbrate the arguments that get us there.

For Rorty, then, pragmatism is both a stance of philosophy and a stance toward philosophy. Philosophical argument and reasoning lead to the conclusion that epistemology and metaphysics—construed in representationalist terms—are pointless activities. We can still do philosophy in a meaningful way, Rorty insists, but it should be *edifying* rather than constructive, *redescriptive* rather than argumentative, and *hermeneutic* rather than epistemological.

It is worth pausing briefly at these three imperatives of PCPN (Rorty-style). The edifying ambition in PMN is elaborated through a contrast between two essentially different kinds of revolutionary philosophers; there are those who offer new, better

systems, and there are those whose work reacts against systematic philosophy, aiming to undermine our faith in constructive efforts. Rorty explicitly holds up Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as a work of the latter kind.[17] Speaking of Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey, Rorty remarks:

> Thus, their later work is therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic, designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophizing, rather than to supply him with a new philosophical program.[18]

The point, for Rorty, in invoking Wittgenstein here is to emphasize that philosophical *activity* may be valuable even when nothing is thereby constructed, in so far as reactive, edifying writers may aid us in breaking the grip that certain vocabularies have on our thinking, by helping us see that these vocabularies—representationalism in particular—are contingent elaborations of optional metaphors. The main strategy for such therapeutic philosophy is *redescription*. In so far as it contrasts with *argument*, redescriptive activity is not aimed at direct rebuttal of some target view,

[17] See Rorty, PMN, 368-372.

[18] Rorty PMN, 5-6. In PMN, Rorty more or less equates edifying philosophy with therapeutic philosophy. Twenty years later, however, responding to readers of Wittgenstein who link the idea of philosophy as therapy with a notion of nonsense and of the deceptiveness of certain forms of language, it becomes important for Rorty to distinguish his form of pragmatic naturalism from the therapeutic readers of Wittgenstein. In Rorty's terms, the problem with this approach is that it recommends a quietist stance based on an essentialist picture of what philosophy is—albeit a negative picture.

but offers a presentation of the matter under discussion under *some other aspect*. Argument, in this scheme, is about settling truth-values, while redescriptive innovation is about proposing different truth-value candidates. Successful argument settles our beliefs, while successful redescription makes us care about different things, or the same things in new ways. *Hermeneutic* philosophy, finally, is what we have when we replace, as Rorty proposes, objectivity with solidarity as a guiding norm for intellectual conversation. Hermeneutic philosophy is not informed by the goal of developing an overarching vocabulary in which all rival claims or perspectives may be put, but rather with exploiting incommensurabilities between perspectives or vocabularies or forms of life so as to generate further and richer descriptive options and so to expand the dialectical space in which we operate. We might say that hermeneutic philosophy aims to expand discursive (pragmatic) reach, whereas epistemological philosophy enforces discursive (semantic) discipline.

These rough contrasts capture, I think, important concerns in Rorty's critique of philosophy. However, whatever one thinks of them, it is pretty clear that these are not prescriptions that point in any particular substantive direction. They generate no particular philosophical impetus, they indicate no road of inquiry. The *deconstructive* strategy that Rorty deploys brings him to a point where *all* the steam seems to be let out of the philosophical boiler. So while the *process* has been an internal endeavor, the terminus of Rorty's critique, as Kitcher notes, is external. And there is no getting back inside—there seems to be nothing to get back inside *into*. The "what more" question, posed initially—asking for a working order, of some sort, seems to have no answer in Rortyan terms.

Kitcher's argumentative strategy, by contrast, is not deconstructive in this way. He is closer to Dewey (and, perhaps, to be fair, to Rorty in later years) in that he takes what is fundamentally a *moral stance* toward the practice of philosophy—he does not deconstruct, but confront. Before returning to Kitcher, though, it is necessary to say a little more about the kind of naturalism that is operative in PCPN. And in this context the variety of PCPN that Price has articulated will be particularly illuminating. A consideration of naturalism will show both points of convergence and points of contrast between Price and Rorty, which in turn will be of use in our attempt to understand where PCPN leaves philosophy.

Both Rorty and Price habitually invoke Wittgenstein as they situate themselves meta-philosophically. A good place to start, then, might be with the kind of naturalism that we might plausibly attribute to Wittgenstein.

IV.

An excellent point of departure is Marie McGinn's perspicuous summary of features of Wittgenstein's naturalism, which she takes to be "a fundamental and all-pervasive approach to philosophical perplexity":

> the importance of seeing things in context, of looking at particular cases, of seeing connections, of looking at how something develops or unfolds in time and of recognizing patterns; the rejection of explanation in favour of description; the use of analogies and comparisons; the suspicion of abstractions, hypostatizations, and idealizations; the avoidance of dogma; the appeal to the reader's full sensuous awareness of phenomena and the attempt to make phenomena present to the imagination; and finally, the consistent

> emphasis of doing over knowing, on the application or employment of linguistic techniques in everyday human activities and on the roots of our language-games in primitive responses and reactions.[19]

As McGinn expounds Wittgenstein's naturalism, it is easy to appreciate its attraction for the kind of pragmatism I am pursuing here. Both the positive means and the objects of suspicion chime with the Rortyan emphasis on the therapeutic, the redescriptive, and the hermeneutic aspects of philosophical practice. Moreover, McGinn's list of features brings out the integral connection in Wittgenstein's philosophical practice between a conception of *how* to do philosophy and a view of *what* its aims and commitments may be. And this is a useful way to frame the issue we are pursuing with regard to PCPN. Just at this point, however, complications arise. In Wittgenstein's case, the mandate of philosophical activity is, as McGinn puts it, "to overcome the intellectual temptation […] to idealize, create abstractions, and hypostatize objects," in the reader that he engages, and thus to liberate the reader from philosophical perplexities.[20] PCPN however, differs from Wittgenstein in just this regard. PCPN does not want to leave everything as it is, but, in the spirit of pragmatism, seeks to articulate a mandate for philosophy in the general project of promoting human wellbeing. Philosophy, for PCPN, ought to be a positive force for change, change to the better. Naturalistic therapy aimed at releasing us from philosophical perplexity cannot, from the point of view of PCPN, be the whole story.

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[19] McGinn, Marie, "Wittgenstein's Naturalism," in *Naturalism and Normativity*, edited by Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 347.

[20] McGinn, "Wittgenstein's Naturalism," 347.

It is not surprising to find, therefore, that there are other elements of naturalism in PCPN than the Wittgensteinian therapeutic features.

Wittgensteinian naturalism contrasts with what we might call *orthodox naturalism*. Orthodox naturalists are the folks whose gut tells them that science—the practice of systematic empirical inquiry—tells us what the world, including its thinking things, is really like. This gloss on the label is of course as far as we can get from a technical and precise definition. It is also of little use before the advent of modern physical science makes the mind-body problem available. So while most lines of thought in this area have ancestry that goes back to antiquity, there is little point in applying the label "naturalism" before, say, the exchange between Descartes and Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia.[21] Since then, though, orthodox naturalism offers one reasonably tractable historiographical distinction in philosophy concerned with the problem of the soul. And the formulation, casual though it is, does pay heed to both the epistemic and the ontological dimensions of the commitment at issue, and also to its self-reflexive nature.

[21] "And I admit that it would be easier for me to concede matter and extension to the mind than it would be for me to concede the capacity to move a body and be moved by one to an immaterial thing." Princess Elizabeth to Descartes, May 1643. Quoted by Jaegwon Kim (Kim, Jaegwon. *Philosophy of Mind*. 3rd ed. Boulder: Westview Press, 2010), from Daniel Garber (Garber, Daniel, *Descartes Embodied: Reading Cartesian Philosophy Through Cartesian Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 173.)

For the orthodox naturalist, the problem of the soul is just an instance—a tricky and interesting instance, but just an instance, none the less—of a general issue: How is it that *any* of the kinds of things not in the ontology of science can be accommodated in our view of the world? Orthodox naturalism faces a puzzle concerning the relation between physics and everything that isn't part of basic natural science. This is the purest version of what Price and other have called "the placement issue:"

> If all reality is ultimately natural reality, how are we to "place" moral facts, mathematical facts, meaning facts and so on? […] In cases of this kind, we seem to be faced with a choice between forcing the topic concerned into a category that for one reason or another seems ill-shaped to contain it, or regarding it as at best second-rate—not a genuine area of fact or knowledge.[22]

Orthodox naturalists typically approach their task as one of locating truth-makers of a suitably worldly and objective kind for the discourse under pressure. They want to show us what we are *really talking about* when we use moral language, or wonder about the properties of numbers—or, as in our case, wonder about the nature of our souls. The stance is expressed in exemplary fashion by Jerry Fodor, when he says that "if aboutness is real, it must be really something else."[23]

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[22] Price, Huw. "Naturalism without Representationalism," in Huw Price, *Naturalism Without Mirrors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 74.

[23] Fodor, Jerry, *Psychosemantics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 97.

Other approaches, such as Davidson's original anomalous monism, may be weaker with respect to ontological commitments and softer on reduction, but nevertheless remain ways respecting the orthodox form of the naturalist impulse, taken as a restriction on our catalogue of ontological items.

Now we can state the tension that arises for champions of PCPN with regard to naturalism in the following way. While their philosophy-critical inclination toward Wittgensteinian naturalism suggests that both the ontological and the epistemic dimensions of orthodox naturalism is a symptom of uncured philosophical perplexity, their pragmatism nevertheless inclines them to feel, on the other hand, that there is *something* right about what orthodox naturalism is trying to tell us about the scientific view of the world. Moreover, taking on board that lesson, in the right form, and in the right way, would be an advance for human culture. Bringing this cultural change about is exactly the sort of task that pragmatist philosophers should be engaging in.

In the paper that I have already quoted from, "Naturalism Without Representationalism," Price goes on to propose an alternative way of respecting the naturalist gut instinct. Price writes:

> Concerning naturalism itself, then, my argument is something like this. To assess the prospects for philosophical naturalism, we need a clear sense of the task of philosophy, in the areas in which science might conceivably be relevant. Clarity about this matter reveals not only that the approach commonly called naturalism is not the only science-sensitive option for philosophy in these areas, but also that a different approach is the preeminent approach […].[24]

This different approach Price designates *subject naturalism*. In the spirit of Hume, the subject naturalist takes as her starting point the notion that we, thinking things, are

[24] Price, "Naturalism without Representationalism," 185.

natural creatures doing natural things, also when we exercise the capacities of our souls—for instance, when we pose and solve placement problems. We need not reconstruct the argument of Price's paper here. The important point, for present purposes, is that it leads Price, or rather allows Price, to treat orthodox naturalism as a form of metaphysics, and metaphysics as something naturalistically dubious. Price's form of naturalism differs from orthodox naturalism along just the demarcation line I aim to trace by speaking of *pragmatic* naturalism, in so far as it self-consciously aligns itself *against* metaphysics. Price, then, is a pragmatic naturalist precisely because he does *not* take the classical, ontological problem of the soul (material, yet not material) at face value. Indeed, he thinks the problem should be abandoned, not solved. Hence Price, too, is a reformer. His philosophical arguments diagnose struggles between realists and anti-realists as based on shared, erroneous premises. In this respect, Price's attack on metaphysics is akin to Rorty's. But where Rorty's dialectical purpose is a transformative genealogical story meant to show that the foundation of the core problems of philosophy is a set of optional, contingent metaphors, a line of thought which pushes him exceedingly close to Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophical practice, Price takes himself to be *clarifying the constructive tasks* of philosophy. Object naturalists—the ontologists who worry about placement, have made a mistake *on their own terms* (Price argues) by *failing to see* the priority of subject naturalism. And once that is conceded, there is no obstacle other than prejudice to a generalization of the *expressivist* (i.e., non-metaphysical because non-representational) approach to all our assertoric discourses. That means that the central task of solving the ontological problems that representationalist semantics brings on in its obsession with the question of what our various discourses are really about, is in truth a misguided effort—it is based on an

inadequately understood naturalism. Price sees *global expressivism* as the dialectical outcome of a philosophical argument that in effect pragmatizes orthodox naturalism. He begins on what appears to be, and is meant to be, common philosophical ground with orthodox naturalists. And the upshot of the argument is that where philosophers in the past have taken themselves to be concerned with the nature of things and our representations of them, what we should be trying to illuminate is the purpose and function served by various different vocabularies for natural creatures like us. Thereby, "the expressivist simply sidesteps the metaphysical conundrums that trouble her representationalist opponents, realists and anti-realists alike. ('Those are not my issues', she tells them.)"[25]

V.

Price, then, unlike Rorty, offers a substantive, post-metaphysical replacement project. The replacement project that arises from Price's deconstruction of orthodox naturalism requires some conceptual innovation, such as Price's own development of Sellarsian distinctions into what he calls e-representations and i-representations.[26] Here something is clearly left for philosophers to do, at least in characterizing the program. But the task is, as Price stresses, at heart an empirical project. Its goal is to understand naturalistically the *use* we engage in; the various things we *do* with our different vocabularies, what functions they have and purposes they serve, and also the various things that language does with us. Here, too, the contrast with Wittgenstein is apposite. Price articulates a position that appears Wittgensteinian in its rejection of

[25] Price, Huw, *Expressivism, Pragmatism and Representationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 157.

[26] For an elaboration of these notions, see Price, *Expressivism*, chapters 2 and 3.

representationalist metaphysics and its emphasis on the elucidation of practice, of what we *do*. However, in its systematic aim and its quasi-scientific ambition, it launches an explanatory project—a project of knowledge—that implies a break with Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy as therapy, and his embodiment of philosophy as a dialogical naturalizing *practice*.

Like Rorty's philosophical arguments, Price's lead to a position that makes common projects of philosophical theory look very questionable on their own terms. But Price's development of subject naturalism (incidentally, heartily endorsed by Rorty) comes in the guise of an improvement of the understanding of the project to which orthodox naturalists are already committed. Certainly, Price's version of PCPN, if one accepts it, makes a certain kind of metaphysical worry go away. And if one goes with Price's program, there is no doubt that reform is quite extensive—ontology as the search for truth-makers may be found in many domains, and if Price has his way its days would be over. But Price's objection to the metaphysics that he "sidesteps" is in one sense quite narrow. He thinks it is based on a failure to see a philosophical point, in a sense of "philosophical" that Price would expect to be entirely uncontroversial, but that both Rorty and Wittgenstein might view with suspicion. The sidestepping of metaphysics is argumentative and completely internal to the basic project of naturalistic philosophy. The project goes on, though now the inquiry to be undertaken is fundamentally empirical, and philosophy of language Price-style, is continuous with the various sciences of language, of communication, and of behavior generally. Still, though, it seems that the project is not confined to these. For science to get its grip on our linguistic practices, someone must be paying attention to what we are doing and begin to *describe* it in a way that renders our discursive practices available

as objects of scientific investigation. But here again the contrast with Wittgenstein is clear; Wittgenstein's descriptive activity and its appeal to forms of life are designed to free us from the temptations to generate explanatory theory. Price, by contrast, expects from the right kind of philosophical redescription of these practices that they emerge as tractable objects of empirical science.

While some philosophers may think this Quinean transformation of philosophy troubling, the grounds for the move are hardly external to the project under scrutiny. In contrast to Rorty, Price provides a work order for post-representationalist philosophers. And in contrast to Kitcher, Price does not confront the practice of philosophy on *ethical* grounds. Perhaps, then, it is fair to conclude that in the incarnation of PCPN that Price articulates, the tension between radical critique and practice-directed authority is resolved in favor of the latter. In Prices program, it is the ambition of *radicalness* that gives way. One could imagine a fresh young object-naturalism enthusiast one day coming up with an argument that Price couldn't reply to, thus bringing metaphysics back in more or less traditional, ontological form.

Rorty's genealogical arguments are of a different sort, and the persuasion they effect (if they do) is of a different order. Here we are at a point where the motivation for Rorty's invocation of Wittgenstein and the idea of philosophy as a kind of edifying activity (against philosophical perplexity) is most apparent. For readers once convinced by PMN cannot be brought back inside metaphysics by some particular and particularly clever argument. The reason is that such readers have been given a

template for reading that *genre,* a template that robs its instances of moving power.[27] The cost—if it is a cost—is that Rorty institutes no new soul for naturalism. His polemics against and redescriptions of representationalist activity play a dialectical role, as he put it, serving, when they work, a liberating capacity—at their best, they free philosophers' souls from what have become stifling self-conceptions. Rorty's critique is radical, in that it dislodges practitioners of philosophy from the metaphors that structure the vocabularies in which problems of epistemology and ontology are phrased. But then—what? What about the "What more?" question? Wittgenstein offers at least a kind of challenge—perpetual vigilance against the temptations of language to lead us into philosophical perplexity. But Rorty, refusing quietism and dismissing the idea of a general diagnosis of philosophical perplexity, seems to leave us with no particular thing to do, nothing to get on with. Rorty's dialectical fate suggests that PCPN, in its radical version, may not have an answer to the "What more?" question. And if it does not, why should philosophers take it seriously?

Perhaps, though, the problem is not that PCPN, in its radical, Rortyan form, provides no answer to what philosophy should be or do. Perhaps the problem is the level of abstraction at which the question is posed. In effect, this is the hypothesis that a core message of PCPN is that philosophers should stop expecting that a proper

[27] This may be what Robert Brandom has in mind when he argues for the point that as they are absorbed in pragmatist thought, historicism and naturalism are mutually reinforcing positions. (Brandom, Robert B, "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism," in *Rorty and his Critics*, edited by Robert B. Brandom (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 156-183.)

understanding of *philosophy* will provide them with a work-order. This is the thought I should like to pursue in the final section.

VI.

Let us briefly consider the philosophy of mind again. The field has altered in recent decades.[28] It has as much steam as ever, but its soul clearly has changed. A great many current practitioners are aiming for a kind of understanding that science gives us—to understand various forms of consciousness, perception, conceptual and cognitive capacities, as empirical phenomena. Such theorists could not care less about a priori necessary truths about mental phenomena, but they do not feel their self-labeling as philosophers the least bit threatened by that. Nor is their work *confined* to conceptual clarification or analysis, or theory. They try to understand the mind, and science is one very important way into the phenomena they are interested in. Their work also deals with the nature of causation, the nature of explanation, the nature of properties, because in our efforts to get a scientific grip on the soul, the phenomena are such that assumptions about the scaffolding concepts of science become salient. But these problems are frequently treated instrumentally—in a pragmatic spirit, worth dealing with only in so far as they help improve naturalistic understanding. In such

[28] Compare for instance the aggressively essentialist, armchair-clinging attitude of Colin McGinn's 1982 textbook (McGinn, Colin, *The Character of Mind. An introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*. 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 (original edition published 1982)) with the various approaches represented in John Hawthorne's state-of-the art 2007 collection (Hawthorne, John, *Philosophy of Mind. Philosophical Perspectives*, *volume. 21*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2007).

approaches, many of the themes of metaphysical philosophy of mind live on, but thoroughly instrumentalized, co-opted by a pragmatic attitude.

So have these workers heeded a call to reform? I cannot offer much of an argument, but I suspect that would be an entirely unhelpful way to explain these developments. Certainly, this change is not a *result* of some general critical argument about the dubiousness of metaphysics. But the change does, perhaps, attest to some difference in attitude toward the discipline.

And here, maybe, radical critique a la PCPN can play a part—by opening up, by liberating, rather than by directing. Rorty's radicalness—clearly maintained, in his case, at the expense of practice-directed authority—suggests that if PCPN has anything like a soul, it must be an ironic soul. Its discipline lies in its abstentions. If it does any useful work at all in its meta-philosophical mode, then I suspect that this is in so far as it is absorbed as an attitude, one that is affecting but not directing what people—philosophers—care about, and what they stop caring about. Maybe this is all that radical meta-philosophical critique in a naturalistic key can ever hope to achieve. If radical critique were to be directive, it will undermine itself, or merely look ridiculous. When Price's critique does neither of these things, it is perhaps because it is not so radical after all.

But perhaps Price and Rorty do not exhaust the options. I should like to close with a final glance at Kitcher. I said above that Kitcher does not deconstruct, he confronts: Too many philosophers are spending too much time on problems that are not relevant to human wellbeing. Kitcher's response to this is *not* to construct an argument that

will lead step-by step from wasteful metaphysics to meaningful project. Nor is it to deconstruct the offending activities by undercutting their self-understanding. His response is rather to remind us of our *civic obligations*; to justify what we do as being of some significance, in a wide, idealized community of deliberation. This move derives its force from the fact that its ground is not one over which philosophers have any special entitlement, yet it is not possible to simply dismiss it as external, as not pertaining to what we do. The ethical is general. So Kitcher can be both radical, like Dewey, and Rorty, and yet retain authority in his critique.

However, the difficulty comes in saying what specifically is and isn't useful, justifiable, of promise, worth doing. Neither Rorty nor Price have *that* particular problem, because they have arguments, which *pick out* just those things that fall under the scope of their dialectic; object naturalism with its attendant metaphysics, for Price, and the premises of representationalism in philosophy, for Rorty. Kitcher goes an entirely different way. Because there is no super-context, there is no fixed list of useful things—we can, however, settle on what is useful *deliberatively*, Kitcher suggests, through an idealization that looks like an adaptation from Rawls.

My hunch, though, is that incommensurable views and interests will ensure that such judgments of a deliberative community would be essentially contested. I doubt that the kind of deliberatively grounded assessment of importance or use that Kitcher proposes could have much power to influence the choices of individuals already engaged in the target inquiry. Moreover, the element of nonstrategic, non-instrumental curiosity-driven—perhaps useless-seeming— investigation is arguably important for the enterprise. Seemingly pointless inquiries and constructions come to

touch on issues that matter. These, of course, are points the Kitcher himself would insist on. But if that is the case, then where does the ethical critique of philosophy lead us?

Perhaps Kitcher's recipe can be transposed from the level of disciplinary content—problems and methods—to the level of disciplinary structure or *practice*. What if, instead of asking ourselves what philosophy should be, what we philosophers should be working on, we were to ask ourselves; how do we maximize the chances that philosophers spend their time on useful things? Would we not then be pointing at practical, tractable issues? One lesson that pragmatic naturalism teaches, in spite of the rhetoric of some of its practitioners, is that when we talk about the ends of philosophy, only the thinnest of abstractions will be uncontested. Thicker, direction-giving project proposals such as Price's, may, if they have merit, gain momentum and entrench a particular understanding of a way of doing what philosophy should be doing, for a time. But the idea, invoked by Price, that the force of such proposals *derives from* a proper understanding of the aims of philosophy—that is surely a hopeless one. This insight, if anything, PCPN should take from Wittgenstein. As Rorty emphasizes, on the pragmatist's view of Wittgenstein's achievement, "he did not show metaphysics to be nonsense. He simply showed it to be a waste of time."[29] The point is not to replace a misguided notion of philosophy with a proper one, then, but rather to see that there is no particular, distinctive intellectual task that philosophy, as such, requires of us. By contrast, Price's suggestion that we first get clear on the proper aims of philosophy and then figure out how to pursue them invites back in an essentialism about philosophy that invariably encourages ascent to free-floating

[29] Rorty, "Wittgenstein and the linguistic turn," 163.

abstractions and ensuing debates of a spurious, vicarious, and ultimately counterproductive sort.

As Kitcher poses the question that pragmatic naturalism forces on us, however, the call for reform is not based on some understanding of what philosophy really is about. Rather, it is based on an appeal to significance over which philosophy has no particular authority, but which philosophers, as part of a community, are under a general obligation to recognize. Kitcher, as I propose we take his reformist call, in effect encourages us to lift our gaze from the argumentative texts, and to consider our practice from the point of view of organization and structure. Might our current forms of practice of philosophy be modified in ways that would make us more likely to move the discipline in innovative, useful directions—as, arguably, philosophy of mind has done in recent decades? Are there aspects of present structure and organization and norms of conduct that contribute to the production of philosophy at its worst, that is, as insular, self-sufficient, self-righteous, privilege-protecting, dust-mote-counting exercises? These are, obviously, multi-faceted issues, and hardly ones with clear answers. We are already deeply enmeshed in them when we ask about the significance for philosophy of organization and of human composition—that is, of representation—not semantic but cultural, economic and social. Looked at this way, the question about the ends of philosophy or the reform of philosophy isn't really a *theoretical* issue at all, not a question of the success of this or that line of deconstructive argument or program-pushing counter-argument. It is now a question of how we politically, practically and institutionally facilitate the sort of intellectual activity that Kitcher characterizes as an ideal:

> Philosophy, so understood, is a synthetic discipline, one that reflects on and responds to the state of inquiry, to the state of a variety of human social practice, and to the felt need of individual people to make sense of the world and their place in it.[30]

One must recognize that there is no implicit direction, no program, no method on offer in this characterization. Transposed along the lines I am now suggesting, the point of PCPN is to trigger a kind of conceptual unclogging; to foster a commitment to raise destructive argument whenever there is a proposal or a tendency to close philosophy by tying it to a particular substantive vision or a particular methodological orthodoxy; a commitment to issue perforating reminders that philosophy, both materially and intellectually, runs on steam generated from engines beyond the discipline; a commitment to generate proposals for increased openness, flexibility and inventiveness in the effort to enrich the discursive spaces in which human beings struggle to make sense, to be the best humans we can be. The lesson PCPN teaches is not that there is some flaw in this or that conception of what philosophy is, but that there is no intrinsic end of philosophy at all to which one might appeal in justification of means that do not stand up to ethical scrutiny. PCPN, then, is not a source of intellectual fuel for philosophical innovation; we should stop thinking that such fuel could be meta-philosophically generated. Rather, the pragmatist anti-foundationalist message of PCPN is a work-order of a different sort; it reminds us that it is an integral part of the business of philosophy to improve the justice and the openness and the representativeness of the practice as we find it, not just as matter of internal house-

[30] Kitcher, *Preludes*, 216.

cleaning but also in its relations to the communities and societies in which some of us have had the incredible luck to be paid to do this kind of work.[31]

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