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ABSTRACT

Huw Price has developed versions of naturalism and anti-representationalism to create a distinctive brand of pragmatism. 'Subject naturalism' focuses on what science says about human beings and the function of our linguistic practices, as opposed to orthodox contemporary naturalism's privileging of the ontology of the natural sciences. Price's anti-representationalism rejects the view that what makes utterances contentful is their representing reality. Together, they are to help us avoid metaphysical 'placement problems': how e.g. mind, meaning, and morality fit into the natural world. By combining subject naturalism and his own 'global' version of expressivism with Robert Brandom's inferentialism about content, Price proposes a pragmatist 'anthropology' as a replacement for substantively metaphysical approaches to placement problems. In this paper I argue that Price's project cannot succeed, and that this shows something important about what form pragmatism ought to take. Price's view doesn't work because no subject naturalist vocabulary is sufficient to describe any assertional practice; there is no way to connect his expressive-functionalist explanations to the practices and concepts which are their subject – nor, even, to the human subjects who are the focus of a philosophical anthropology. I close by suggesting how we might improve on these shortcomings of Price's pragmatism.

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1. Introduction

Naturalism seems to be the default philosophical orientation of much of analytic philosophy (Papineau 2020),[1] but it has also been a prominent strand of pragmatism. Pragmatism is also notable for its anti-representationalism[2] and hostility to traditional

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[1]Many dissenters from contemporary naturalism are not *anti*-naturalists, but reformers hoping to improve (as they see it) naturalism. See e.g. (De Caro and Macarthur 2004) and (2010).

[2]Of varying kinds, from eschewing 'representation' entirely (Rorty), reconstructing representation in inferentialist terms (Brandom), or constructing a pragmatic account of representation itself (Peirce's

metaphysics.[3] In this context, Huw Price has developed versions of naturalism and anti-representationalism into a novel form of pragmatism.[4] The view is a response to metaphysical 'placement problems', which he diagnoses as the result of the combination of contemporary naturalism and representationalism. By moving away from these to his pragmatist alternatives, he hopes to avoid placement problems entirely.

His naturalism is 'subject naturalism', which focuses on the human being qua natural creature, and why we have come to have the concepts we do, rather than focusing on what things in nature – if any – those concepts are *about*. This latter view, typical of contemporary naturalism, Price calls 'object naturalism' (2013, 4–7). For his anti-representationalism, Price adopts fellow pragmatist Robert Brandom's inferentialism and combines it with his own distinctive expressivism in a union he calls 'global expressivism'. Global expressivism is 'global' in virtue of its rejection of the typical expressivist bifurcation of apparently assertive speech acts into those actually descriptive of the world, and so genuinely assertive, and those which are actually non-descriptive 'expressions' in assertive guise. Instead, global expressivism treats *all* declarative speech acts as both expressive *and* genuinely assertive (2013, 29ff.). It holds that, in addition to an inferentialist account of the content of assertions, we can give pragmatic analyses, in terms of the purposes or functions they serve, of their role(s) in the language-games in which we deploy concepts. These 'pragmatic grounds' (Price 2019, 146) derive from our needs and circumstances as natural creatures, and shape our linguistic practices. The resulting expressivist accounts tell us what aspects of human life, as natural creatures, these functions and purposes 'express'. Combined, subject naturalism and global expressivism lead away from metaphysical placement problems, and in their place, Price pursues the naturalistic, pragmatist project of constructing expressive-functionalist 'genealogies' for our vocabularies; replacing metaphysics with something akin to 'anthropology' (2013, 6ff.; 2011, 30).[5]

Semiotic). The commonality is a rejection of, roughly, a *Cartesian* notion of the relation of mind to world as between 'internal' representations of an 'external' world.

[3]Pragmatism's relation to metaphysics is contested. Should we reconstruct metaphysics, or reject it entirely? I won't address this here, but I think pragmatism rejects metaphysics as *traditionally* conceived. A pragmatist argument for the necessity of metaphysics via a critique of Price is (Legg and Giladi 2018).

[4]Or is it *neo-pragmatism*? I won't hash out terminology here or judge who is or isn't a pragmatist. 'Pragmatism' is both a historical philosophical movement and a set of ideas related by family resemblance with or direct influence from that movement. For me 'pragmatism' includes everyone from Peirce and Dewey to Price and Cheryl Misak.

[5]Cf. (Price and Macarthur 2007, 230f.).

In this paper I argue that Price's project cannot succeed on its own terms, and that this shows something important about what form pragmatism, and its 'anthropological' genealogies, ought to take. Price wants to tell naturalistic stories about the function of the linguistic practices which deploy concepts that engender metaphysical puzzlement. Price takes this project's task to be to describe what a participant in a practice has to *do* in order to count as *saying* something in the vocabulary in question.[6] The aim, then, is the creation of what Robert Brandom calls 'pragmatic metavocabularies' – to produce descriptions of a practice, in a favoured vocabulary (in Price's case, subject naturalist vocabulary), sufficient to say what participants in that practice must do to count as deploying the vocabulary which is the target of explanation (Brandom 2008, 10ff.). But for this project to be coherent, the Pricean pragmatist must be able to locate, from the subject naturalist perspective, the practices of assertion – shaped by the 'pragmatic grounds' – which deploy the vocabulary of interest and thus generate the content of the corresponding concept(s). But this means they must have the descriptive resources to properly locate *practices* of *assertion*, rather than, say, *coordinations* of *noises*, so that the resulting pragmatic metavocabulary describes the practice which is actually the one sufficient to generate the content of the concept up for expressivist explanation. I argue that this is not possible because of the constraints subject naturalism places on vocabulary choice.

To show this, I reconstruct Price's view as an attempt to construct subject naturalist pragmatic metavocabularies. I then argue that it is not possible to give such pragmatic metavocabularies for any concept of interest, because no vocabularies acceptable to the subject naturalist are sufficient to describe a genuinely assertional practice. Thus, no subject naturalist vocabulary can adequately describe the practice deploying the vocabulary of the concept for which it wants to give an expressivist explanation. The project fails by its own lights because the impossibility of constructing such a pragmatic metavocabulary is, in effect, a subject naturalist version of a placement problem.

I criticize Price not to oppose pragmatism but constructively in the service of pragmatist aims. So I close by briefly suggesting that Price's view's shortcomings teach us two things about what form a successful pragmatism ought to take: we should (i) 'liberalise' subject naturalism

[6]An idiom of Brandom's (2008, 12). See §2.5 below.

from narrowly scientific constraints; and (ii) ensure our anti-representationalism does not hollow out the very notion of 'conceptual content'.[7]

2. Price's pragmatism

2.1. Placement problems and serious metaphysics

'Placement problems' are the vexing metaphysical difficulties of trying to find the 'place' of 'meaning, value, mathematical truth, causation … , and various aspects of mentality' in the world as conceived by natural science (2013, 5).[8] One source of the problems is contemporary analytic philosophy's basic naturalism, the idea that 'natural science properly constrains philosophy' (3). Since science is the best game in town for explaining reality, philosophy should ally itself with, and constrain itself by, the natural sciences. Hence the placement problems: the 'scientific image'[9] of the world does not contain meaning, value, normativity, etc. This basic naturalism regards the idea of nature as lacking intrinsic values, meanings, and normativity as the sharp break from the medieval-Aristotelian worldview that in turn enabled the rise and success of the natural sciences. But adopting this naturalism makes these metaphysical concepts puzzling: how can what these concepts pick out be part of nature, too? Science has no problem understanding how atoms, chemical reactions, bacteria, organs, and mating behaviours are part of the natural world. The case is not so clear for intentionality, modality, moral value, and so on.

One response to these puzzles is 'serious metaphysics', the attempt to find naturalistically-acceptable ways to reconcile these problematic phenomena with our knowledge of the natural world. In more detail, it is a project to find out what in nature plays the role of truth-makers for sentences containing these concepts, or what realizes the causal roles the concepts pick out. Serious metaphysics rolls up its sleeves and does substantive metaphysical work to understand what in nature – if anything – these concepts hook up to.[10]

[7]Contrast other pragmatist critiques of Price: Heney's (2015) Peircean criticism of "Truth as convenient friction" (Price 2011, 163-83), Brandom's critique of his global anti-representationalism (Brandom 2013), and Legg and Giladi's (2018) critique of his rejection of metaphysics. A recent non-pragmatist critique of Price's view is (Knowles 2017).

[8]Similarly, Jackson (1998) calls them 'location problems'.

[9]A concept from Sellars's "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" (Sellars 1963, 1-40). The scientific image is the world as construed by the natural sciences, of physical (chemical, biological) objects behaving according to natural laws. This image is very different from our 'Manifest Image' of ourselves and our world as rich with things like furniture, persons, rights and wrongs, economies, etc.

[10]If there are no such truth-makers or realizers, this calls for expressivism, fictionalism, or eliminativism about that concept. See Jackson (1998).

Price rejects this project, and the placement problems to which it's devoted, as a product of misguided ideas about mind and world, namely representationalism[11] and object naturalism. He thinks we'd be better off without these ideas and the metaphysical puzzles they engender. So, he builds a pragmatist alternative from some different ideas about naturalism and representation (2011, 2013).[12] Below, I explain Price's naturalism and his distinctive expressivism, then explain how the resulting pragmatist programme is supposed to work.

2.2. Subject naturalism

Like all naturalisms, subject naturalism holds that the natural sciences are the best route to knowledge of the world – including human beings. But as a *subject* naturalism, the focus is on us, the human animal, and how best to understand ourselves as animals in and of nature, a product of natural selection; as opposed to focusing on the world's objects, properties and processes (Price 2013, 3–5).[13] Subject naturalism directs our attention to us as animals who use language, and tells us to focus on our language-use not in terms of what in the world we might be talking *about*, but rather in terms of what talking in the ways we talk, using the concepts we use,[14] allows us creatures to *do* (2013, 20–21).

For the subject naturalist, the materials in play are those pertaining to human beings qua 'natural creatures, in a natural environment' (2011, 9), especially to the 'extra-linguistic … features of ourselves and our environments that explain our linguistic practices' (2007, 400); what it is about us and our environment that establishes the shapes of 'human linguistic usage' (Price 2011, 28) which we will describe via 'appeals to non-linguistic ontology' (2007, 400). We are working with what, from the standpoint of the scientific image, characterizes us as the animals we are. As such, the relevant scientific domain is *biology* (2011, 111; 222–3; 271–73; 73 n.18; 320). Although Price often refers to subject naturalism as taking

[11]Often written with an upper-case 'R' to denote its status a substantive theory, I won't follow this convention, taking it that the word's reference to a substantive theoretical view is captured by its '*-ism*' suffix.

[12]I won't here justify the pragmatist stance, but take it on board to see if Price's version can do what he hopes.

[13]One of the first steps Price takes is arguing that subject naturalism is theoretically prior to object naturalism, and that the latter needs validation from the former perspective, which it can't get (2013, 6–15). As before, I will just take this on board as part of trying to see if the overall project can work.

[14]The Pricean and Brandomian pragmatist adopts the view common to Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Sellars that in general, to understand a concept is to have mastered the use of a word in the appropriate language-game(s).

an 'anthropological' view, or as engaging in 'anthropology' ([2011, 11; 30], [2013, 181ff.]), he actually considers anthropology to be 'a small but interesting sub-specialty of biology' (2008, 91; see §2.4 below).

As such, the subject naturalist restricts the allowed explanatory vocabularies to those with naturalistic bona fides – those vocabularies which have their home in the scientific image, in particular the biological – 'studying language as a phenomenon in the natural world' (2011, 11). We cannot use, in our explanations, the vocabulary we want to naturalistically explain; e.g. in trying to understand 'truth'-talk, one ought not to characterize the psychological states mentioned in the explanation in 'factual' or 'representational' terms (2011, 176). This is also, I take it, why Price holds that the subject naturalist will '*use* scientific vocabulary but *mention* the various object vocabularies with which we are concerned' (2013, 59; 314). This is what it is for philosophy to 'defer to science' (3), both in materials and method, as it were.

For my purposes, I want to note the status of normative and intentional vocabulary in subject naturalism. Since subject naturalism restricts itself to scientific-image vocabularies (or at least vocabularies which can themselves be non-circularly understood in scientific-image terms), we cannot use normative[15] or intentional[16] vocabularies in explanations. This does not assume that normativity and intentionality can't be naturalized. Rather, the point is that if it is true that normativity and intentionality can be naturalized, the form that such a naturalization would take is the subject naturalist one, in which we would use a non-normative, non-intentional vocabulary to describe what subjects must do to count as using normative or intentional vocabulary. Price says that 'the notion of linguistic function … is itself acceptable … in naturalistic terms … [so] long as the functions concerned can be characterized in naturalistically acceptable terms', e.g. not in intentional terms (Price 2011, 133; 133 n.3). Since *all* assertion-practices involve normativity (Price 2007, 401n33), and the uses of language therein have intentional properties (like meaning or semantic content), the subject naturalist is committed, in the final analysis,

[15]Normative language is licit in functional explanations, of how something ought to normally work, as defined by its function. E.g., a heart ought to pump blood, not because it is subject to a rule it ought to follow, but because when a heart doesn't pump blood it is not working properly. This functional sense of normativity is not the kind of normativity the naturalist excludes, since we have already gotten a naturalistic grip on it via selection effects, such as evolution. The excluded kind of normativity is the categorical, rule-governed kind, which is notoriously naturalistically recalcitrant (efforts to explain the latter in terms of the former are ongoing, if as yet unsuccessful). Daniel Dennett helpfully calls this distinction that between *instrumental normativity* and *social normativity* (20177).

[16]By 'intentional' here I mean relating to intentionality—also notoriously naturalistically recalcitrant.

to understanding assertion-practices in non-normative, non-intentional terms.

Price is open about the fact that scientific ontology is privileged from the subject naturalist standpoint, but thinks it is a perspectival, methodological privileging, not an absolute metaphysical privilege; primacy only 'from the standpoint of the present project' (2011, 31).[17] Nonetheless, it is an extremely significant privileging, since by Price's own lights the project is the systematic scientific and philosophical understanding of human beings. He notes that if subject naturalist investigations seem to threaten our sense of self, this is 'simply … continuous with a long scientific tradition' of 'showing us how insignificant we are, from the world's point of view – how idiosyncratic the standpoint from which we attempt to make sense of it' (31-32). Even if perspectival, the subject naturalist project is nonetheless constrained by these scientific-naturalist scruples, and so must carry out the project in those terms. In what follows I'll call such subject naturalist vocabularies *narrowly naturalistic vocabularies*.[18]

2.3. Global expressivism

Price has developed and refined his expressivism over time (since at least Price 1988), eventually combining it with inferentialism and pragmatism to yield its current form, 'global expressivism'. Global expressivism is 'global' because it rejects the old expressivist bifurcation of speech acts into those which are genuine assertions actually descriptive of the world, and those which are non-descriptive quasi-assertions only expressive in function, although they still 'look like' real assertions. Instead, global expressivism treats all declarative speech acts as both expressive and genuinely assertive (2013, 29ff).[19] All assertions are alike qua assertions, and Price adopts Brandom's inferentialism as an account both of what makes an assertion an assertion and what gives an assertion its content: that it be a speech

[17]Price does consider the possibility that 'the human component [of explanations of why we use certain vocabularies] might be entirely pruned away … and [we would] be left with a bare description of nature' (2011, 30). Although he thinks '[in] practice … that this limit is out of reach—that the contribution on our side never goes to zero' (ibid.), this is not because of naturalism's limitations, but rather a limitation imposed on our judgements by our contingent dispositions to 'go on in the same way' in the same particular way. So, it is dispositional *contingency* (they might have been different had we evolved differently, say) that prevents a bare description of nature, not the fact that a bare description of nature might leave out something distinctively human beyond the narrowly natural. This suggests to me that the restrictions on subject naturalist vocabularies I describe and critique in the main text are inherent in how Price conceives naturalism. See §3.3, below, and cf. (Beasley 2015).

[18]I use 'narrow' as a proleptic suggestion that perhaps a 'broader' but still naturalistic vocabulary is possible.

[19]For the argument for taking expressivism global, see (Price and Macarthur 2007) and (Price 2019, 143–148).

act that plays the right sort of role in a game of giving and asking for reasons (2013, 31–34).[20]

Brandom's inferentialist view of conceptual content sees content as instantiated by normative social linguistic practices. Price favours Brandom's 'rich, normative, linguistic' vision of conceptual content for its explanatory power and versatility, rather than 'some sparer causal-functional notion of mental representation' (2013, 37).[21] For Price, Brandom's account shows how although linguistic practices are diverse in function, assertions in those practices all have the same 'clothing' – all are assertions, and are contentful, thanks to their playing the role they do in practices that have the structure Brandom elaborates (41). Further, because of Price's deflationary semantic minimalism (11), he can hold that all assertions are both expressive in function but are also truth-apt and conceptually contentful, insofar as a deflationist has a use for those notions, while still denying that their truth or content has anything to do with 'correspondence' to nature.

As for 'expressivism', global expressivism is expressivist in the sense that the functional roles of the vocabularies that deploy concepts are expressive of needs or requirements of living a human life (2013, 33). This sometimes means they are for expressing internal states, as in classical expressivism, but more generally they enable forms of behaviour that are, broadly speaking, expressive of our organic needs and aims. Though a somewhat novel use of the term, Price thinks it is a good label for theories that understand our concepts functionally and non-representationally.[22] Thus global expressivism is supposed to succeed where traditional expressivism failed, since it can combine unity at the level of assertions and content, with the resources of expressivist variability at the functional level. This yields a 'two-level picture of the functional architecture of truth-evaluable uses of language' (2011, 19), and this two-part feature of Price's view has been consistent since its beginnings (1988, 217). One part is leaving behind the traditional expressivist division of factual and non-factual/expressive discourse and giving a uniform account of truth-apt utterances. The other part is giving analyses of the plurality of expressive functions for which we use language, 'each

[20]See (Brandom 1994). A sort of *Reader's Digest* version is (Brandom 2000), and a brisk article-length summary is (Brandom 2010).

[21]A paradigm example of the 'sparer' view is Dretske's causal-informational semantics (Dretske 1981). I believe the most promising version of this sort of view belongs to Ruth Millikan; however, though it is more 'robust', it is still ultimately causal-functional in nature (1984); (2017).

[22]See (Price 2011, 261 n.5), (2013, 176), and (2019, 134). He has called the view 'non-cognitivism' (Price 2011, 112) or 'non-factualism' (Price 1988), but now sticks with 'expressivism'.

associated with different aspects of our psychology, needs, and situation' (2011, 19).

An important change took place as his view matured, however. Previously, Price took it that in both parts of the project we should do without semantic notions – 'content, truth, and the like' (2011, 205 n.2) – and invoke only 'psychological states construed in non-representational or non-conceptual terms' (220). In rejecting the metaphysical project of pointing to 'substantial properties' in the world which connect up with our use of a certain concept, we should instead 'explain the *function* of such … locution[s] … in terms which don't require that [they refer] to substantial properties' (1997, 115). This approach 'will tell us under what circumstances speakers use the locutions … and what functions this use serves' (115). Since this applies just as much to the concepts 'truth' and 'content' as it does others, the part of the story giving a uniform account of truth-apt uses of language (i.e. assertions) itself had to eschew semantic notions.

The problem with this approach to pragmatic functionalism is that although it had two *parts*, it was not two-*level* – it was explanatorily 'flat', as it were, characterizing our linguistic practices in non-semantic terms while also trying to explain *why* we have the practices we do, and thus the concepts we do, in naturalistic and non-semantic terms. But as others have pointed out, this sort of view eats its own tail, since it has no ability to account for the content of the concepts it is supposed to be explaining – if we aren't allowed to think of our linguistic practices in terms of their content, then there aren't any concepts to expressively explain (Shapiro 2014; Macarthur 2014a; 2014b).

As I read him, Price's sensitivity to this problem prompted a revision that led to the present shape of his view. The two parts of the view are now indeed two different *levels*, two planes on which the account works, and which can admit of different analyses: one level that gives a unified account of assertions (according to inferentialism), and another which gives expressive-functionalist accounts of our different language games. Since now there are truly two different *levels* of analysis, Price can think of our language-games, and the conceptual content there instantiated, on their own terms – i.e. without leaving out the very idea of content – and shift the expressive-functionalist analyses to the level of *the purpose served* by different language games, explanations which can be fully naturalistic, expressivist, and content-free.

The idea now is this: we use different vocabularies in particular patterns in different language-games, and we can give a unified account of how these uses instantiate content – Brandom's inferentialism. But *why* we use *those* vocabularies, in *those* patterns, is what the expressivist accounts explain. The expressive-functionalist stories happen on a *pragmatic* level of analysis, taking a step away from the 'ground-level' assertion-practices about which we tell that unified inferentialist story. Price no longer has to try to understand linguistic practices themselves in non-intentional ways, i.e. explain meaningful and truth-apt uses of language without reference to meaning, content, or truth. Rather, he can take them at face-value – so long as he has Brandom's non-representationalist account of their content and status as assertions – and pitch his expressive-functional stories at the naturalistic, pragmatic level of what it is about us, as the animals we are, that gives our language-games the 'shape' they have such that they are of use to us. The expressivist focuses on what playing *these* games allows us to do that our natural and practical situation requires of us. Though we make assertions in a plurality of domains to serve a plurality of needs – 'functional pluralism' (2013, 32) – how assertions get to be assertions is the same, and when a practice has the appropriate structure (a game of giving and asking for reasons, as described by Brandom) it instantiates inferentially-articulated conceptual content.

So, Brandom's inferentialism tells us how 'conceptual content arises from pragmatic function,' and does so in a way that is compatible with 'pragmatic functional pluralism' (Price 2013, 34), and it is that recognition of functional pluralism that allows us to tell expressivist stories about the different pragmatic functions different language-games have. With this, Price can make use of expressivist resources for pragmatic analyses, without having to find a way to understand linguistic practices themselves apart from content. So, Price can maintain his commitment to anti-representationalism, seeing content as matter of what we *do* with language, not of representational relations to the world. By the lights of global expressivism, *content* and *correspondence* come apart (40).[23] The Pricean pragmatist thus hopes to have their expressivist cake, and content too.

[23]There's still a sense in which what we do and say is connected to our environment. Price distinguishes between two types of 'representation' (in a theoretically 'light' sense): 'i-representations', the conceptual or propositional content of our linguistic utterances, and 'e-representations', which are tracking, indicating, and feedback relations that causally link us and (some of) our utterances to the environment (2013, 36). For Price, distinguishing these is seeing how content and correspondence come apart without giving up the idea that a lot, but not all, of what we talk about is responsive to what is 'out there' in our environment.

2.4. From metaphysics to philosophical anthropology

Global expressivism, then, is the heart of Price's pragmatism, providing the tools with which we are to construct a pragmatist alternative to metaphysics. This alternative, working within the constraints and auspices of subject naturalism, replaces metaphysics with *philosophical anthropology*.[24] Anthropology, in this sense, is what you get when you make the subject naturalist shift from asking metaphysical questions about what in nature our concepts represent and talk instead about what our concepts say about us, as natural creatures. Such functionalist accounts explain how and why we use the vocabulary involving that concept; what need in our form of life a concept satisfies, and what 'habits of usage', in response to that need, underlie discourse with that concept.[25]

The focus, then, is on pragmatic 'functional diversity' (2013, 34) of what assertions using our concepts *do* – what they are good for, how they address needs of creatures like us. Each concept has a unique expressive-functional role in our lives as cooperative creatures, a role responding to the unique natural or existential conditions on the discursive practices which deploy the vocabulary corresponding to the concept. At the pragmatic or functional level, since assertions are 'a coordination device for social creatures', what they coordinate – what dispositions, attitudes, or behaviours – differs depending on the concept, based on what functional role having that concept plays (2013, 49). Since, as Price says, our 'welfare depends on collaborative action', as coordination devices, practices of assertion help 'reduce the differences among … behavioural dispositions, or other variable aspects of speakers' situations' (49). This, the coordination of the behaviour, and of beliefs, of a speech community, is the first dimension of coordination; the second is 'the functional variability' of the different assertion games. (40) 'What gets coordinated … [depends] on the practice …. Each case brings with it a new practical respect in which … it may make a difference to their collective lives whether they take steps to coordinate' (50, emphasis removed). Expressive-functionalist accounts thus attempt to describe just what it is that a language-game is for, what aspects of human life, as a natural creature, the pragmatic structure of the practice 'expresses' (Price 2019, 146).

[24]Though as a naturalist perhaps he wouldn't recognize a distinction between 'philosophical' anthropology and anthropology per se, except maybe in terms of methods and the problems each focuses on. I take it he'd think that here we have a continuum, not a sharp divide. Cf. (Price 2011, 11; 30) and (2013, 181ff.); see also §2.2 above.

[25]See (Price 2013, 48ff.), (2011, 188; 199; 208).

Price gives examples of how these pragmatist stories would go. We might analyse the vocabulary of physical modality in terms of the permitting and prohibiting of inferences required by assertions of law-like statements about physical objects ('If I were to place the salt in water, it would dissolve.'), seeing these statements as 'inference tickets' (2013, 48).[26] Rather than raise metaphysical questions about finding what in nature makes modal statements true, the global expressivist looks to what we do with these statements that enable us to interact effectively with the environment and each other (their truth-aptness, and content, being a matter determined according to inferentialism, not according to any correspondence to reality). Another intriguing example is Price's speculative analysis of probability statements: that they function to coordinate subjects' credences to believe, which are further analyzed as dispositions to betting behaviour (2013, 47–48). It's important to know that here 'betting behaviour' should not be seen as something *in contrast to* asserting, since one makes a bet by asserting one's commitment to the likelihood of an outcome. Price's point is that dispositions to bet on outcomes are the naturalistic, expressivist way of understanding the pragmatic function of language-games that contain assertions about probabilities. The pragmatic need for such practices and the coordination and cooperation they enable is what explains both our adoption of, and the pragmatic structure of, language-games in which we make assertions about probability.

The task of the Pricean pragmatist, engaged in philosophical anthropology instead of metaphysics, is thus to construct these expressivist-functionalist accounts – sometimes Price calls them 'genealogies'[27] – for our different language-games. In doing so, we learn something about *why* we 'go in' for the ways of talking that we do – 'how there come to be statements with particular contents, by thinking about the practical role of the particular instantiation of the assertion game that produces tokens with such contents' (2013, 51; emphasis altered). Further, we demystify what, from an object naturalist and metaphysical perspective, seem like problematic concepts. This is the replacement for serious metaphysics: naturalistic, expressive-functionalist genealogies of our most puzzling concepts. A fitting continuation, Price thinks, of the pragmatist suspicion of both representationalism and substantive metaphysical theorizing (2011, 304-6).

[26]Following Ryle (1950) and Sellars (1957). See also (Brandom 2015), and Michael Williams (2013, 128–144).

[27]Cf. the genealogies of 'knowledge' by Edward Craig (1990) and of 'truth' by Bernard Williams (2002).

3. Naturalism without a subject – nor subjects

Giving a naturalistic explanation of what a concept does for us requires that first we can say just *what* concept we're talking about. That's why content matters: a concept's function, what it does for us, depends on what concept it is, because we need to identify a concept if we're going to say what its purpose or benefit is. The two-level strategy I outlined above is a way for Price to do that – to put conceptual content at its own identifiable level, with the expressive-functional stories at the pragmatic level explaining where the appropriateness conditions on the assertions that instantiate that content come from. The success of Price's project, then, depends on whether it is even possible to construct, under subject naturalist constraints, expressive-functionalist stories about the particular discursive practices which instantiate particular concepts. In what follows I argue this is not possible: the restrictive constraints of subject naturalism mean that no vocabulary so constrained is expressively powerful enough to do that – no subject naturalist expressivist story is able to actually target the conceptual activity it is supposed to explain. This is a subject naturalist analogue of a placement problem, and its consequences for Price's pragmatism, and its proposed philosophical anthropology, are grim.

3.1. Global expressivism and pragmatic metavocabularies

Recall the relationship between the naturalistic 'pragmatic grounds' which are the functional basis of our different language games, and the content that is thereby instantiated in those discursive practices. 'Particular, contingent features of a creature's practical circumstances … provide the source of the variability,' Price says, of 'practical stances,' the 'practical situation or characteristic that a creature must instantiate if the language game in question is to play its defining role in her life. The variation in these practical stances is the source of the functional variation' of content (48). So, the different practical stances that a creature takes, due to its needs in its form of life, are the contexts in which concepts are put to work to address whatever practical circumstances characterize those stances. Further, 'the variability lies at the level of use conditions rather than truth conditions. The stance is … a practical precondition of the language games' (48). Most importantly, the stance 'provides an appropriateness condition for a particular utterance within the game' (48). So, a practical need in a creature's life – understood naturalistically – provides the

context for a linguistic practice that deploys a concept addressing that need. The proprieties of the practice, further, reflect that practical stance which the creature takes in response to a feature of its life and world. Thus it is that the natural-practical circumstances creatures like us face become the source of the pragmatic 'shape' of our linguistic practices – that is, the source of the appropriateness conditions on assertions within practices (2013, 48). To flesh this out further, I will employ Brandom's idea of 'pragmatic metavocabularies' (2008), seeing Price's pragmatist philosophical anthropology as the project of constructing subject naturalist pragmatic metavocabularies for our most puzzling concepts.

First, a quick introduction to pragmatic metavocabularies. We can distinguish between a *vocabulary* (a collection of words linked to a concept) on the one hand, and on the other the *practice* which uses that vocabulary, where those uses are what give the words of the vocabulary their meaning (and so the concept its content). This is part of the pragmatist shift from talking about how the content of a concept determines the use of language to how the use of language determines conceptual content. With this vocabulary-practice distinction, we can introduce the idea of a pragmatic metavocabulary: a vocabulary, V_X, sufficient to describe what participants in the practice P_Y must do to count as participating in that practice and thus successfully deploying vocabulary V_Y, the vocabulary which has its home in, and thus has its meaning in, the practical proprieties of P_Y – and thence the concept γ its content. If all this is true, then V_X is a pragmatic metavocabulary for V_Y (ibid., 10).[28]

Using this schema, we can re-construct Price's view that naturalistically-described practical stances determine the appropriateness-conditions for assertions. When saying what subjects must do to count as deploying the vocabulary of the concept in question, we must restrict the terms of the possible metavocabularies in which we describe the subjects to the terms of the scientific image – the vocabularies of the natural sciences. So, importantly for my argument to come, I see as equivalent Price's statement that a naturalistic practical stance 'provides an appropriateness condition for a particular utterance within the game' (2013, 48) and Brandom's idea that a pragmatic metavocabulary tells us 'what one must *do* in order to count as *saying* the things expressed by' a vocabulary (2008, 10).[29]

[28]In Brandom's technical terms, such a metavocabulary V_X is a vocabulary 'VP-sufficient' (that is, a *V*ocabulary that describes a *P*ractice) to specify a practice P_Y, where P_Y is 'PV-sufficient' (that is, a *P*ractice in which a *V*ocabulary is used) to deploy the vocabulary V_Y (2008, 9ff.). For ease of exposition, I won't use these terms here, using wordier but slightly less technical phrases to say the same thing.

[29]Emphasis in original. In response to Brandom (2008, 12), Price agrees that the two formulations are equivalent (2019, 146 n.27).

So, Price's pragmatist wants to give an account of a philosophically problematic vocabulary by saying in naturalistic terms what one must do to count as using that vocabulary. But what is it that one must do? Roughly, it is to play the game of giving and asking for reasons with that vocabulary: to make and respond to assertions which use the vocabulary in question, and to appropriately attribute and acknowledge doxastic commitments and entitlements based on those assertions. So Price's global expressivist-pragmatist want to describe, in a subject naturalist metavocabulary, what participants in a practice must do in order to count as playing the game of giving and asking for reasons with a particular vocabulary. We can call a practice and vocabulary for which one seeks a suitable pragmatic metavocabulary the 'targets' of the proposed metavocabulary.

Recall that Price thinks we can give a uniform account of assertions in general, locating the plurality that gives rise to our different concepts in the different 'pragmatic grounds' (Price 2019, 146) that generate the appropriateness conditions for assertions in that vocabulary. With this in mind, to make my argument in what follows I do not need to examine, individually, the whole plurality of practices and their candidate naturalistic pragmatic metavocabularies. Because all of the practices in question are assertion-practices, I only need to show that no narrowly naturalistic pragmatic vocabulary has the resources to specify anything which is truly a *practice* of *asserting*. That will show Price has no way to specify which concept fulfils what functional or pragmatic role in human life. Because assertion-practices are normative and intentional – assertions have *appropriateness* conditions and *content* – any pragmatic metavocabulary for a vocabulary deployed in an assertion game must be able to describe just those activities which are normatively and semantically evaluable, in the practice, as deploying the concept at issue. That is, the pragmatic metavocabulary needs to be expressively powerful enough to describe what the appropriateness conditions are, and insofar as it does, to describe the *right* appropriateness conditions for *that* concept. In other words, powerful enough to actually describe the practices that deploy the target vocabulary of the target concept.

3.2. Narrowly naturalistic vocabularies and discursive practices

On a pragmatist-inferentialist account of content, a linguistic or discursive practice is a norm-governed social process where speakers hold each other accountable for what they say and do in virtue of attributed and

acknowledged commitments and entitlements in the game of giving and asking for reasons. So speakers' assertions have normative consequences: in asserting 'p', a speaker commits themselves to the truth of p, and thus also to the truth of whatever material inferences the content of p obliges the speaker to make (for a simple example, 'that's green' implies 'that's coloured'). A speaker is criticisable if they do not make the appropriate material inferences required by a commitment to p, and may have their entitlement to assert 'p' revoked if they do not yield to criticism. Making assertions using a vocabulary only counts as a practice if there are right and wrong – appropriate and inappropriate – ways using the vocabulary which the participants in the practice enforce through the permission or sanction of performances within the practice, and further that we can say, for any given assertion, *what* was claimed. We can thus distinguish a practice of assertion from an accidental or matter-of-fact coordination: performances in a practice are *rule-governed* – which is to say, structured by a norm of appropriateness[30] – whereas matter-of-factual coordination might result in an outcome that is, from an external point of view, in mere accord with a specific norm or rule, but where the rule plays no normative role in the performances.[31]

As I've noted, Price thinks naturalistic practical stances determine appropriateness conditions for assertions. It follows then that these stances are the central variable in conceptual content: that these stances determine the appropriateness conditions on the practice of asserting using a vocabulary, and assertion-practices subject to appropriateness conditions is what, according to inferentialism, gets us conceptual content.[32] But, we can distinguish an *actual* norm-governed practice, where the norm structures the practice, from a matter-of-fact coordination which is an instance of a mere regularity. *Ex hypothesi*, narrowly naturalistic vocabularies cannot use any normative or intentional vocabulary. So, the expressive resources of such vocabularies are limited to coordinations, regularities, dispositions, and states of the organism and the environment, described naturalistically. It follows that a narrowly naturalistic vocabulary will be incapable of describing a *practice* of *asserting*, as opposed to matter-of-fact coordinations of mark- or noise-making. Its description of

[30]By the performances being subject to evaluation in the light of the rule, or by the rule being the thing participants in the practice are entitled to cite for justification.

[31]This breathless summary is indebted to (Brandom 2010) and (Peregrin 2014).

[32]Price commits to this when he says that such stances determine appropriateness conditions for assertions while also adopting Brandom's account of assertion, which gives appropriateness (normativity) centre-stage in the determination of content. Can Price just reject this aspect of Brandom's view? No: he needs a non-representationalist account of content in order to avoid the problems with his early, 'flat' version of global expressivism. So he is committed to whatever makes inferentialism work as an account of the uniformity of assertion which overlays our practices' functional pluralism.

the 'appropriateness conditions' on 'assertions' will make them 'appropriate' merely in the sense of conforming to a regularity, or enabling successful coordination, which is not the same as the full-blown normative sense of 'appropriate' of the game of giving and asking for reasons. In that case, such a candidate pragmatic metavocabulary cannot describe what one must do to deploy a vocabulary which instantiates one conceptual content as opposed to another. It follows that no subject naturalist vocabulary will be able to locate, among human behaviour, whatever practice is its target. In short: no narrowly naturalistic vocabulary could ever be a pragmatic metavocabulary for any concept-instantiating vocabulary, because no narrowly naturalistic vocabulary is be sufficient to describe any practice sufficient to be a game of giving and asking for reasons. To put it in the semi-technical terms I introduced above: no narrowly naturalistic vocabulary V_{NN} is sufficient to describe those performances which are a discursive practice of giving and asking for reasons P_X; thus, no V_{NN} is sufficient to be a pragmatic metavocabulary for any vocabulary V_X which, deployed in P_X, instantiates the content of concept C_X.

This is true for reasons long advanced in the literature on rule-following. No non-normative or non-intentional vocabulary is sufficient to describe a practice of assertion because non-normative and non-intentional vocabulary always underdetermines which norm or content is being instantiated – any one regularity of performance might be an instance of any number of more or less strange norms. Think of Wittgenstein's pupil who is completing the series '+2' ([1953] 2009, §185ff.). In writing '2, 4, 6, 8 … ' the student is indeed engaging in a regularity of behaviour which agrees with what we know is the correct way to write the series '+2'. But from the point of view of a *regularity*, these performances are compatible with any number of norms or rules, such as the strange one that Wittgenstein mentions: 'add two up 1000, then add 4.' Allowing themselves only the narrowly naturalistic vocabulary of coordination, regularity, or disposition, the Pricean pragmatist cannot describe what the student must do to count as engaging in the practice '+2', since all they can describe is a regularity which might be '+2' but might equally be any number of outré rules. One can thus 'gerrymander' a rule so that it ends up in accord with any performance, with the consequence that, as Wittgenstein says, 'there would be neither accord nor conflict here', destroying the distinction between seeming to follow a rule and actually following it (§§201-202).[33]

[33]The texts on rule-following most helpful to me (not to say I agree with them all) are: Baker and Hacker (1984, 2009); Boghossian (1989); Brandom (1994); (Hattiangadi 2007); (Hymers 2009); (Kripke 1982), and (McDowell 1998).

The upshot is that a description of coordinations or regularities cannot tell us which vocabulary is being deployed and thus which content is being instantiated – we can't pick out the right set of performances that is the *practice* P_A of *asserting* with V_A to *use* the *concept* C_A, rather than, say, the practice P_{A*} of asserting with V_{A*} to use the concept C_{A*}. Which means that from the subject naturalist perspective, we cannot actually say anything about concepts at all, because there is no way to tell when a concept's vocabulary is actually *deployed*, nor if one is, *which* concept it is.[34]

Notably, Price himself has argued that the naturalist must eschew the task of reducing semantic content to regularities of use (as attempted by [Horwich 1998]) in favour of specifying 'the function of talk about meaning' (Price 1997, 114f.). As I've shown, what Price did was shift the story about dispositions or regularities of use from the level of semantic analysis to the level of pragmatic metavocabulary. But this is no improvement, because the subject naturalist's resources for expressive-functionalist description, at the pragmatic level, are too meagre to describe the practice under consideration. The project cannot succeed without the resources to properly connect the content side of things to the expressive-functional side – in other words, those two levels *need* to be connected to each other – as Price well knows, given that he takes naturalistic practical stances to determine appropriateness conditions for language-games. But because they've been constructed out of narrowly naturalistic materials, the appropriateness conditions can't be connected to the content to which they are supposed to be appropriate for. Price's pragmatic level cannot get the content level in focus.[35]

Examples will help illuminate this. Think of the ordinary kinds of assertion we make all the time. I assert: 'Tracie ate dinner at the bistro.' What would be a description, in subject naturalist vocabulary, of the conditions for me to be entitled to that assertion? Perhaps something like: 'S makes the noise "Tracie ate dinner at the bistro", his peers let him do so, and make it themselves, as a result coordinating their behaviour whenever that noise is salient.' But what is the relationship of the *noise* represented

[34]A reviewer asked: Wouldn't this impugn any naturalist argument whatsoever, and isn't this too great a claim? Whether or not it *would* do so would need to be demonstrated; at the moment, I claim only that this argument pertains to Price's version of subject naturalism pragmatism—which is all my argument in this paper requires, since I'm focused on whether Price's view is a workable version of pragmatism.

[35]This also undermines Price's criticism of Brandom on this score (Price 2011, 315-21). However, Brandom's account may itself have a weak spot here in its use of only normative, but not intentional, vocabulary; see (Dennett 2010; Hattiangadi 2003; Rödl 2010). If so, however, it is not beyond shoring-up—something I hope to address in other work.

by 'Tracie ate dinner at the bistro' and the assertional commitment with the *content* TRACIE ATE DINNER AT THE BISTRO? The pragmatic grounds which create the need for ordinary empirical descriptive discourse are said to be the need for creatures to coordinate their activities. But this need for coordination has not created *appropriateness* conditions for the assertion. In the pragmatic metavocabulary, these conditions are something like: 'The noise "Tracie ate dinner at the bistro" is appropriate when making that noise leads to successful coordination of activity.' But this is *not* an appropriateness condition for an assertion with the content TRACIE ATE DINNER AT THE BISTRO; it could just as well be an appropriateness condition for the assertion TRACIE ATE DINNER AT HOME, or TRACIE ATE FISH AT THE BISTRO, in situations where the noise 'the bistro' means HOME or the noise 'dinner' means FISH.

In general, the successful coordination of activity around a noise 'p' is not an appropriateness condition for P any more than it is for P, or P*, or P**, *ad infinitum*, because matter-of-fact successful coordination is not sufficient to confer determinate content on a sound. But from the point of view of the subject naturalist pragmatic metavocabulary, all there is to deal with are sounds, not assertions with content; coordinations of behaviour, not commitments and entitlements. So what this expressive-functionalist analysis of assertion describes is not an assertion practice at all, even in the case of ordinary empirical description.

The same is true for any of the more specialized concepts which Price had hoped to use expressivist insights to explain. Take Price's proposed pragmatist genealogy of the concept 'probability' (C_{PROB}). Here we have the practice, P_{PROB}, in which the proper deployment of the vocabulary V_{PROB} instantiates the content of C_{PROB}. Recall that Price argues that the right pragmatic vocabulary will invoke the coordination of subjects' dispositions to betting behaviour (2013, 47). So, the coordination of dispositions to bet are supposed to create the appropriateness conditions for assertions in P_{PROB}; that is, create the conditions for correct use of V_{PROB}. But, per my argument above, describing what is required to coordinate dispositions will not be to describe the standards of correct use of V_{PROB} in P_{PROB}. Any such description will always fall short of the target.

But we are supposed to be concerned with why *that* concept with *that* content – C_{PROB} – answers to the pragmatic grounds prompted by a natural need, rather than some other concept with different appropriateness conditions, and thus different content, C_{PROB*}. The proposed pragmatic metavocabularies are not *just* attempted naturalistic explanations of why we have the language-games we do. They are also supposed to

be explanations of the pragmatic *structure* of the language-games; analyses not just of why we have a concept, but how what generates the concept's content – its appropriateness conditions – is a function of the naturalistic practical stance that creates the need for that practice and concept. We want to know *both* what use a concept has – use-as-useful-function – *and* how its function determines the correct use of the concept in practice – use-as-appropriate-usage.[36] But the insufficiency of narrowly naturalistic vocabulary to the task causes the accounts to founder at the point at which the two connect; if all we have is subject naturalist vocabulary, no account of the former can suffice for the latter. What results is a subject naturalist version of a placement problem – it is not possible to 'place' the right pragmatic metavocabulary with the right concept.

Price might respond to my charge here as so much nitpicking – that his expressive-functionalist analyses are still in order, since regardless of any technical indeterminacy we still know exactly which practice they are supposed to describe, and they still give us a non-metaphysical account of these concepts. This response is unavailable, however, because in limiting ourselves to subject naturalist vocabulary, for any case, we can't know if we've got the right genealogy! It might be true that assertions are coordination devices for social creatures, but what *else* might they be? What else could we say about them that we should want to say? As I've argued, even in the ordinary case, 'assertion' and 'noise which facilitates the coordination of dispositions' are not the same. And in the difference, perhaps, lies much of what we would want to understand about human beings and our discursive practices.

3.3. Indeterminacy and some rule-following considerations

Of course, Price is not ignorant of the relevance here of rule-following and content indeterminacy. From early on, he saw the connection between 'the rule-following considerations and Quine's thesis of the indeterminacy of meaning,' and thought that both can speak in favour of a 'global pragmatism' or 'response-dependence' (2017, 155). Reflecting on the 'ineliminable indeterminacy of meaning' (1988, 194), he agrees that 'no finite level of experience can determine the application of a linguistic term to all possible cases' (193). He goes on:

> The indeterminacy of meaning thus seems to be the basis for a form of universal non-factualism … [But it] should not be confused with the form that Quine himself extracts from the indeterminacy thesis: the view that there are no

[36](Williams 2013) is admirably clear on this distinction.

> genuine facts about meaning … Ignoring for a moment our scruples about [metaphysical ways of talking] we might say that the present view, in contrast, is that in virtue of the nature of meaning there can be no genuine facts about anything. (1988, 194–5)

Price does say that 'this was not by my lights an argument for global scepticism' (2017, 155). Rather, he thinks of it as 'an argument for the bankruptcy of a certain picture of language, within which the implications of the rule-following arguments appear to be sceptical' (155). But Price cannot evade scepticism so easily. For if I'm correct, on Price's view the indeterminacy at the level of pragmatic-functional analysis *is* global. It is not merely the context-bound possibility that two competent speakers might talk past each other (nicely analysed by Price as 'no-fault disagreements' [1988]). Rather, the indeterminacy is total in a way that *does* have sceptical consequences, because no assertions have sufficient appropriateness conditions to suffice for content.

I'll spell this out more in a moment, but I should give Price's take on the rule-following considerations their due. His view is similar to Philip Pettit's 'response-dependence' (Pettit 1990a, 1990b, 1991), in that it is also a kind of dispositionalism, but Price hopes to improve it by making it about *use* rather than *content*, unlike Pettit (content is to come later, per inferentialism). Price argues that what matters is getting a community's dispositions to make utterances in practical contexts into alignment (1988, 192ff.; 2011, 91ff.), and that the human propensity 'to "go on in the same way" in the *same* way' (2013, 62) is an ineliminable part of what makes this possible – and thus that *merely pragmatic* coordination of 'going on' – i.e. the alignment of regularities – is inevitable (2017, 155).

Could this give narrowly naturalistic vocabularies the descriptive resources sufficient to capture the rule-following normativity of discursive practices? If so, Price would after all be able to describe practices sufficient to make assertions, and be able to say which practices deploy which concept for what purpose. But there's no reason to think that this lets Price avoid the issue. He can only describe patterns of dispositions to utter, patterns which need to be described in non-normative, non-intentional terms. This means that a 'use' here is, rather than being a deployment of a meaningful term, more like an 'event of utterance' of a visual or auditory sign-design. But, as above, this thin notion of 'use' cannot distinguish between mere event-regularities and true rule-governed uses. These patterns might indeed have as their determining conditions certain practical stances or pragmatic grounds, as well as various contingent human tendencies to 'go on in the same way' in similar ways. But

the narrowly naturalistic vocabulary still cannot describe the appropriateness conditions such contexts generate in a way that distinguishes between 'appropriate' qua 'coordinated successfully' and 'appropriate' qua 'correct vis-à-vis the norm'. All it can describe are patterns of sound-making that line up in certain ways but for which we have no way of saying they instantiate a particular concept rather than another. We do not have *uses* of *language*.

In my endorsement of content determinacy and Price's tolerance for indeterminacy, it may seem that he is the more pragmatist. But this is not so. Determinacy need not be understood in terms so strong that no pragmatist could abide it – I am no semantic realist, and I share Price's aversion to the metaphysical nature of such a view. By 'determinate content' all I mean is that for any utterance, we be able to say what it meant, in context: that it meant P, from which follows Q, but not R, and that it did not mean P*, etc. In this I am joined by pragmatists old and new.[37]

Although Price disclaims scepticism, it seems he actually accepts a wide-ranging meaning/content indeterminacy; that in practice all that matters is, as Frank Ramsey said, we 'agree with our neighbours' in a way that facilitates our joint efforts (Price 2011, 161). This has a Humean sort of sceptical flavour – so long as we get along 'in the street', we can ignore the reality of the radical indeterminacy of meaning 'in the study'. But worse, when 'in the study' this view is not enough to underwrite genealogies of our concepts. One must be able to have in view, in the genealogy itself, a *practice* of using a *language*. If you cannot do that, then there is nothing available to talk about. The result is a subject naturalism without a subject matter.

As I alluded above, there is a more radical consequence of this global indeterminacy. A subject naturalist anthropology is supposed to be a *scientific* project, one that tells us something important about ourselves (2011, 31-32). Well, an essential part of being a discursive being – the kind of things human persons are – is having a set of inferentially-articulated doxastic and practical commitments. So, if Price's pragmatist cannot locate assertions nor contents, then they cannot locate *human subjects* either. We have, on the one hand, concepts, assertions, and subjects; and on the other, patterns of performance which are responses to naturalistic practical needs or stances. But Price cannot say which performances go with which practices; which stances with which concepts; which creatures

[37]See e.g. (Dewey [1938] 1986, 374) and (Brandom 2011, 26).

are discursive, sapient beings. So it's not just a naturalism with no subject matter, but a naturalism with no *subjects*, either. As a philosophical anthropology, it is not just humbling and potentially 'unsettling' (32), but downright disastrous.

4. Consequences of naturalism – and lessons for pragmatism

We pragmatists can learn something here. Price's subject naturalism has what amounts to the same restrictions on vocabulary choice as object naturalism, allowing only what's acceptable in the scientific image, but with the focus shifted from objects to subjects. This suggests that contemporary naturalism's problem is not (just) its focus on objects, but rather its incorrect privileging of the scientific image. But it's possible to be a subject naturalist without privileging the scientific image: 'liberal naturalism' is well-suited to the pragmatist project.[38] Liberal naturalism does not restrict the scope of 'nature' to the scientific image alone, arguing that there are significant aspects of human reality which are *natural but non-scientific*.[39] So there is already a naturalism that is both compatible with pragmatism and more capacious than Price will countenance – though there is still work left to do to flesh it out.[40]

As for anti-representationalism, Price invokes his similarity to Rorty.[41] This is telling, since Rorty was also averse to normativity, evident in his notorious – if often poorly understood – remarks that justification is 'what your peers let you get away with' and that language is a means for creatures to 'cope' with the environment (Rorty 1979). Both 'getting away with' and 'coping' are non-normative: one might get away with an assertion because you're justified in asserting it, or because nobody, in fact, contradicts you. And if language is just for 'coping' with the

[38]First suggested by McDowell (2004) and developed by others; see De Caro and Macarthur (2004, 2010) and Macarthur (2004).

[39]The category 'natural non-scientific' is from (Macarthur 2004). A caveat: it is not clear that the orthodox naturalist's restriction of what counts as 'science' to, basically, the natural sciences (or even just physics) is a legitimate restriction that the liberal naturalist will ultimately want to accept, thus calling into question the invidious distinction between 'scientific' and 'non-scientific' implied by 'natural non-scientific'. For the present, this need not concern us; however, I have taken up this issue in other work (Beasley 2019).

[40]One avenue to explore is the naturalism of the early pragmatists, specifically Dewey (although some disagree that Dewey's naturalism plays well with McDowell's; see [Godfrey-Smith 2010] and [Welchman 2008]). Price himself argues that McDowell's liberal naturalism faces a dilemma: either accept that a non-metaphysical 'external view' on linguistic practices is possible (the subject naturalist view) or be saddled with an extreme form of quietism even McDowell would reject (2015). If my argument in this paper is correct, then Price's argument against McDowell fails, since that argument relies on the idea that such an 'external view' is even possible, which, if I'm right, it isn't.

[41]Though in a nuanced way; see (Price 2013, 191–194), and (Price 2011, 319ff.).

environment, then it hardly matters if what we say is truly meaningful or contentful, so long as it helps us cope.

We hear the echo of this when Price says assertion is a 'coordination device for social creatures,' and in his endorsement of Rorty's slogan that human mindedness is about 'coping not copying' – that is, coping with living, not copying the world (Price 2011, 320). My point is not that we *should* favour copying over coping, but that this is a false dichotomy. Having only 'coping' in our philosophical and scientific picture radically underdetermines the conceptual contentfulness of discursive practice, as I've argued. Coordination of dispositions for successful coping with living is just not enough: assertions wouldn't be assertions, and we could not intelligibly speak of concepts, meaning, or content.[42] A Humean scepticism about Human beings is looming here, and I think any pragmatism for which this is true is not a pragmatism worth having.

Nonetheless, both Price's and Rorty's pragmatist hostility to representationalism is correct – we *should* understand content in terms of use and not the opposite. But it's a mistake to think our philosophical or scientific notion of 'use' needs to be *merely* practical or expressive, in terms of dispositions to utter and the coordination thereof. But that doesn't mean we should write off Price's and Rorty's anti-representationalism – rather we should *re-write* it to bring normativity and the intentional back into the picture. It is the difference between seeing the pragmatist project as trying to understand the conceptual *in terms of* non-conceptual practical behaviour, or, instead, understanding it as *a kind* of practical doing – that when a linguistic practice (*not* the same as coordinated behaviour) takes the right shape, engaging in it *is* what it is to be thinking, saying, and doing things with conceptual content.[43] In terms of a story linking normative practices to conceptual contents, there is already precedent in Brandom's pragmatism; though again, there is more work to be done. My point is that pragmatists ought not to adopt an anti-representationalism so strong that we lose anything intelligible as conceptual content in the process. As I've already indicated, that way scepticism, or worse, lies.

[42]Here again the issue of the relation between function and content arises—although it makes sense that the need for coordination among hominids could explain the *emergence* of assertion-practices, that's different from saying what assertions *are* insofar as they are *contentful* utterances. Thanks to Carl Sachs for helping me clarify this.

[43]Brandom sketches out how this might go (2008, 179), but whether it avoids the problems I impute to Rorty and Price is an open question I take up elsewhere. Regardless, he is clear about rejecting global anti-representationalism, preferring to pragmatically reconstruct the representational notions of ordinary descriptive discourse (Brandom 2013, 85–111).

These remarks are merely suggestive. But with work, we may yet see our way to both a satisfying pragmatist alternative to serious metaphysics and a naturalistic view of human beings that is not scientistically sparse. Replacing serious metaphysics with naturalistic pragmatist genealogies is a project I gladly take up, and he has done us all a service by creating the outlines of such a programme. But in the details, his own version won't do. Price likens representationalism to Rorty's 'mirror of nature' and hopes his own pragmatism can 'move the mirror aside' (Price 2011, 3) so that it no longer blocks the way of inquiry by generating intractable placement problems. To the representationalist mirror he prefers the global expressivist 'key', i.e. a tool which, unlike the passive mirror of nature, is an active item that is adapted to the user at one end and the world at the other (2013, 52). But even if we have no use for the mirror of nature, it is no victory to trade it in for set of keys that – if I may extend the analogy – fit into every lock but can turn none of them.[44]

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