

Dangerous Dualisms in Siegel's Theory of Critical Thinking: A Deweyan Pragmatist Responds

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Harvey Siegel's conception of critical thinking is riddled with unnecessary and confusing dualisms. He rigidly separates 'critical skill' and 'critical spirit', the philosophical and the causal, 'is' and 'ought', and the moral and the epistemological. These dualisms are easily traced to his desire to defend an absolutist and decontextualised epistemology. To the Deweyan naturalist these dualisms are unnecessary. Appealing to the pragmatist notion of beliefs as embodied habits of action evincing emotion, I show how language, meanings and the mind, including the mind of the critical thinker, emerge from our biological being.

Many are enthusiastic regarding the educational promise proffered by the ideal of critical thinking. One of the most popular contemporary theories of critical thinking is that advanced by Harvey Siegel. According to Siegel (1997), the critical thinker is one 'who is *appropriately moved by reasons*' (p. 2). Appropriate movement has two distinct aspects, according to Siegel. First, 'reasons have *probative or evidential force*' (p. 3). Skill in evaluating probative force constitutes 'the reason assessment component of critical thinking' (p. 2). Critical thinkers proficient at evaluating the probative force of reasons are *appropriately moved by reasons*. Second, reasons have '*normative impact*: they guide rational belief, judgment and action, and the critical thinker must be so guided if she is to be *appropriately moved by reasons*' (p. 2). This involves what Siegel calls the 'critical spirit' component. My paper begins with a discussion of the mind versus body dualism hidden within Siegel's separation of critical skill from critical spirit. It is the *body* not the spirit, critical or otherwise, that moves us. What is required to overcome this and other dualisms in Siegel's theory is a robust naturalism, something Siegel resoundingly rejects.

Critical spirit and skill are simply two aspects of the same integrated function. For the Deweyan naturalist, this rigged separation makes no sense at all. To put the point in Darwinian terms, bodies interact intimately with their environmental context. They breathe, eat, drink

and mate. Of course they do much more; for instance, they create novel meanings, values and children. Recognising that the mind and body are one body-mind helps us see that rationality and critical thinking are strongly contextual. My paper begins by overcoming the mind versus body dualism, thereby placing the critical thinker firmly in the *naturalistic* world of everyday practice. From there we will move on to discuss John Dewey's naturalistic theory of language, meaning, and the mind (including critical thinking). This will allow us to identify and overcome other dualisms in Siegel's theory. Eventually, we will completely dismiss his epistemological absolutism and accompanying rejection of strong contextualism.

Siegel notes that a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for being a critical thinker is the skill needed 'to evaluate the evidential or probative force of reasons' (1997, p. 14). Skill alone is not enough to appropriately motivate the thinker; for example, the physician that smokes. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle insists:

Thought by itself... moves nothing; what moves us is thought aiming at some goal and concerned with action.... Now desire is for the goal. Hence decision is either understanding combined with desire or desire combined with thought; and what originates movement in this way is a human being. (1139a–1139b7)¹

This passage indicates the intrinsic connection between being moved by reasons, eros (passionate desire), and goals (some, values, ends, or ideals). Siegel's 'critical spirit' has an ancient origin. He defines this spirit as 'a complex of dispositions, attitudes, habits of mind, and character traits' (pp. 6, 27, 35 and 55). There is a residual dualism in Aristotle, but because Siegel ignores the body and its desires altogether he must struggle even harder to move reasoners to action.

I have two serious concerns about Siegel's account. First, the critical spirit remains too ethereal to move anyone. 'Habits of mind' are not habits of the body and the body is what moves us. Dewey (1932) echoes Aristotle in noting that '*mere* thinking would not lead to action; thinking must be taken up into vital impulse and desire in order to have body and weight in action' (p. 190). Siegel's theory of rationality lacks body and weight. Dewey notes, 'There can be no separation morally [the normative component] of desire and thought [the skill component] because the union of thought and desire is just what makes an act voluntary' (p. 189). Siegel owes us an account of how the mental act of evaluating probative force is translated into normative and physical force; how do we get from what evidently 'is' to what normatively 'ought' to be done. What is required is embodied desire, but the more embodied and emotional critical thinking becomes the more difficult it is for Siegel to resist naturalism.

Second, I believe Siegel constructs his mind versus body dualism as a buffer against what he considers the unpleasant implications of rationality being strongly contextual. Siegel (1997) rejects strong

contextuality because, as he understands it, 'there is no room on this view for actual activities, decisions and judgments to fail to be rational, for there is no role for criteria to play in assessing specific activities, decisions and judgments' (p. 105). Pragmatists, who reject neo-scholastic criteriology, point out that one may determine the rationality of activities, decisions and judgements by their ordinary everyday consequences.

Siegel, though, wants criteriology because he wants to defend the ideal of absolute rationality, an ideal that strong contextuality would shatter. He concludes:

We must think there are criteria, binding upon all reasoners, in accordance with which the strengths of reasons and arguments are appropriately determined, and we must think that it is a good thing for students to master and utilize those criteria... So critical thinking is incompatible with, and must defeat relativism. (p. 20)

Siegel is committed to rationality as criteriology and epistemological absolutism.

Dewey (1938a), by contrast, declares, 'Rationality is an affair of the relation of *means and consequences*, not of fixed first principles as ultimate premises or as content of what the Neo-scholastics call *criteriology*' (p. 17). For Dewey, all reasoning is practical means-consequences reasoning, or contributes to it. Since goals, values, ends, and ideals are among the consequences sought, pragmatists have no trouble connecting skill with norms of action, the evidential 'is' and the normative 'ought' (ideals of action), or giving the critical thinker's desire for normative ideals body and weight.

I defend Dewey's claim that all rationality is means-ends (means-consequence is more accurate) reasoning elsewhere (See Garrison, forthcoming). There I suggest that imagination, desire, perception and creativity are all part of reasoning well. Since, however, I want to concentrate on the role of embodied habit in critical thinking, I will only hint at the role of some of these aspects of rational thought in what follows. For the Deweyan pragmatist, then, rational deliberation amounts to nothing more than means-consequence reasoning. Siegel, though, is committed to epistemological absolutism, so he wants decontextualised criteriology. This commitment involves him in other strange dualisms we will discuss later. First, though, let us see how all thinking, including critical thinking, is embodied.

THINKING AS EMBODIED HABITS OF ACTION

'Rationality' is the presumed essence of the mind in the West. Critical skill, for Siegel, is the ability to apply absolute, though fallible, rational criteria. It performs the function of mind in Siegel's scheme, while the critical spirit, if it could become embodied, would perform the somatic functions. One longs for an account of how critical skill and the critical

spirit interact; Siegel offers none. That is what I mean by his mind versus body dualism.

Making distinctions is often functionally useful. Dewey, though, rejected any dualism between the activities of thought (critical skill) and the disposition to act. For Dewey (1932) the same habits involve thinking, feeling, and acting. Together they constitute a single, unified, organically functioning self:

Habit reaches...down into the very structure of the self; it signifies a building up and solidifying of certain desires; an increased sensitiveness and responsiveness...or an impaired capacity to attend to and think about certain things. Habit covers...the very makeup of desire, intent, choice, disposition which gives an act its voluntary quality. (p. 171)

For Dewey, skill and ability at assessing the probative force of reasons as well as the 'critical spirit' are aspects of the same habit. He gives critical thinking body and passion. Rationality as ability and skill is an embodied trait of character, a disposition to act and an attitude evincing emotions. Habits are also forms of interpretation and response. Educating intelligent habits so that one makes better voluntary choices is, therefore, part of teaching critical thinking.

All the early pragmatists, including Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, as well as Dewey, insisted that beliefs are habits. Early on, Peirce (1878), the founder of pragmatism, insisted, 'The essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise' (pp. 129–130). Note that here the connection between a belief, habits and actions is so immediate and intimate that different beliefs distinguish different modes of actions. Skillful habits embody character traits that predispose the agent to action. Indeed, while habits are habits of mind for Peirce (1885), he understands them as having a physiological, even protoplasmic, basis (pp. 264–266). There is no need to tack on anything like 'critical spirit'. If one has the belief (for example, skill at assessing probative force of reasons) they have the habit and the habit predisposes them to act. Indeed, forming rational judgements is the highest function of belief-habits. Peirce (1880) concludes:

A cerebral habit of the highest kind...is called a *belief*. The representation to ourselves that we have a specified habit of this kind is called a *judgment*...The process of this development, so far as it takes place in the imagination, is called *thought*. A judgment is formed; and under the influence of a belief-habit this gives rise to a new judgment, indicating an addition to belief. Such a process is called an *inference*. (p. 201)

Arriving at new judgements from old ones is itself a form of action (see Peirce 1892, pp. 327–330). Presumably skill at evaluating evidential or probative force involves thought, belief and inference in the formation of

the final judgement. Note, also, the role Peirce assigns imagination in forming epistemological judgement.

Interestingly enough, Siegel (1997) insists, 'The skills and criteria which constitute a portion of the reason assessment component are partially generalizable... The *epistemology underlying critical thinking* — is fully generalizable' while the normative impact of 'the critical spirit is also fully generalizable' (p. 28). For Peirce (1892), 'Habit is that specialization of the law of mind whereby a general idea gains the power of exciting reactions' (p. 328). Habits are general, though falsifiable, for Peirce. In many ways this fits Siegel's purposes well, except that such neurophysiological habits are not separable into two kinds of habits, skill and spirit, only the latter of which is generalisable. Further, habits universally generalisable within their habitat of acquisition may or may not be generalisable to other contexts.

When Dewey (1932) writes, 'The only truly *general* thought is the *generous* thought', he is making a logical as well as moral point (p. 270). In this he may have moved beyond Peirce. Surprisingly enough, Peirce (1903) eschewed naturalism in favour of what he called 'scholastic realism', that is, the belief in the reality of abstract universals (pp. 180 and 183). Meanwhile, James clung to a residual dualism, spiritual acts and even paranormal phenomena.² It fell to Dewey to fully naturalise pragmatism. For the naturalist, habits are not necessarily detachable from the habitat that shaped them. Moreover, any general thought that holds within my habitat may not hold for other habitats, or even other inhabitants of the same habitat. Deweyan naturalism admonishes us to attend carefully to differences, especially those of people different from us. This moral admonition is also a restriction on logical universality. I will make much of this later.

Siegel (1997) states that 'the character traits constitutive of the critical spirit, like all character traits properly so called, are general and not restricted in application' (p. 36). This assumes that habits are entirely detachable from the habitat (context) that conditions and maintains them. Ask yourself, is your critical spirit (or even your rational 'essence') the same when you are in your classroom as when you are with your lover, or when you are with your parents and siblings? Should it be?

Dewey (1922) contends, 'Man is a creature of habit, not of reason nor yet of instinct' (p. 89). By instinct Dewey meant innate neurophysiological impulses. Such impulses are too unco-ordinated to be called responses, but they do give us the motive power to act. An agent's learned habits of response channel and refine her innate affective impulses. They are modifications of the agent's neurophysiological system acquired from her prior experiences as a participant in a biological environment, and especially in the customs of some socio-cultural tradition. It is impossible to adequately comprehend habits apart from their function in some environmental context. They are, nonetheless, generalisable in that they allow persons to respond intelligently to subsequent situations resembling those that shaped the original habit.

Habits are also social functions. 'Customs persist', writes Dewey (1922), 'because individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by prior customs. An individual usually acquires the morality as he inherits the speech of his social group' (p. 43). The questions of customs, conduct and habits are not in themselves moral ones. Dewey concludes, 'Conduct is always shared; this is the difference between it and a physiological process. It is not an ethical "ought" that conduct *should* be social. It *is* social, whether bad or good' (p. 16). To acknowledge oneself as controlled by habits and conditioned by social customs is simply to recognise that one's uncritically held beliefs are largely predetermined by scripts and plot lines that comprise our social context. This context includes the dominant cultural texts of a given historical epoch. Becoming critically aware of one's social construction is an important step toward freedom. The second step consists in reflecting on the consequences of leading prescribed lives. The third step is to form communities of critical reflection. Acquiring the habit of intelligent, self-aware, critical thought is extremely difficult. It is so difficult because social conditioning, including formal schooling, has the power to control the development of emergent minds, and the canons of rationality themselves.

Habits are social and somatic dispositions to act. Dewey rejected any dualism between the mind and the body; for him, habits composed the 'mind':

Concrete habits do all the perceiving, recognizing, imagining, recalling, judging, conceiving and reasoning that is done. 'Consciousness', whether as a stream or as special sensations and images, expresses functions of habits, phenomena of their formation, operation, their interruption and reorganization... Yet habit does not, of itself, know, for it does not of itself stop to think, observe or remember. (p. 124)

Habits are intelligent, even 'rational', but they are not reflective, critical or knowledgeable. For teachers, tennis players or critical thinkers good performance requires large repertoires of solid, well-practised habits. In practice, in situations in which the right response must come quickly, too much critical or creative thought may even be dangerous.

BELIEFS, HABITS OF THOUGHT, AND CRITICAL DELIBERATION: THE EMBODIMENT OF EMOTIONALLY CHARGED IDEAS

'Reason pure of all influence from prior habit', wrote Dewey (*ibid.*), 'is a fiction' (p. 25). Disruption of prior habitual functioning initiates reflective and critical thinking. Indeed, disruption should become an integral part of the critical thinking curriculum. Dewey described the search for the right idea or hypothesis to relieve the felt tension of some disrupted situation this way:

The habit denied overt expression asserts itself in idea [goal or ideal]. It sets up the thought... This thought is not what is sometimes called

thought, a pale bloodless abstraction, but is charged with the motor urgent force of habit... It has its source in objective conditions and it moves forward to new objective conditions. For it works to secure a change of environment... A habit impeded in overt operation continues nonetheless to operate. It manifests itself in desireful thought, that is in an ideal or imagined object which embodies within itself the force of a frustrated habit. (p. 39)³

Embodied desire for some ideal propels thought. 'Desireful thought' seeks to restore a stable working harmony between the individual and the environment. Students need to acquire the habit of critical thinking. Such a habit, like any habit, is an embodied, passionate disposition to act a certain way in certain circumstances.

In his essay 'Affective Thought', Dewey (1926) concluded that 'reasoning is a phase of the generic function of bringing about a new relationship between organisms and the conditions of life, and like other phases of the function is controlled by need, desire, and progressive satisfactions' (pp. 105–106). Critical reasoning involves ameliorating a disrupted situation. We experience disruption of habitual functioning as felt need and cognitive doubt; it also involves a passionate desire to restore smooth, harmonious functioning. Framing a hypothesis or *idea* about what caused the situation transforms it into a pronounceable cognitive problem so formal inquiry may begin. Inquiry begins to move toward specific consequences when an individual can frame a hypothesis or *ideal* for ameliorating the situation. Inquiry concludes with the actualisation of some ideal that resolves the situation and restores habitual functioning.

Dewey's (1938a) most complete definition of inquiry declares: '*Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole*' (p. 108). Elsewhere Dewey identifies situation with 'a contextual whole'. For Dewey, human nature is a part of nature; thus rationality is strongly contextual and involves creative action to transform a situation. Dewey's is a naturalistic and participatory view of rationality; it is not the dispassionate spectator's view. As we have seen, such a stance explicitly rejects Siegel's criteriological concept of rationality and critical thinking.

Dewey (1922) defines critical deliberation in terms of imagination, embodiment, and action:

Deliberation is a dramatic rehearsal (in imagination) of various competing possible lines of action. It starts from the blocking of efficient overt action, due to that conflict of prior habit and newly released impulse... Then each habit, each impulse, involved in the temporary suspense of overt action takes its turn in being tried out. Deliberation is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like... But the trial is in imagination, not in overt fact... An act overtly tried out is irrevocable, its consequences

cannot be blotted out. An act tried out in imagination is not final or fatal. It is retrievable. (pp. 132–133)

A cornerstone of the conventional critical thinking edifice is the notion that we should, ideally, hold all of our beliefs only as a result of dispassionate rational reflection. The ideal distrusts imagination because it is adventitious whereas, for Dewey (1925), ‘The striving of man for objects of imagination is a continuation of natural process’ (p. 315).

For Dewey, “‘Reason’ is not an antecedent force that serves as a panacea; it is a laborious achievement of habit needing to be continually worked over’ (p. 137). The kind of labour this achievement demands is suggested by the following contrapuntal prescription:

The conclusion is not that the emotional, passionate phase of action can be or should be eliminated in behalf of a bloodless reason. More ‘passions’, not fewer, is the answer. To check the influence of hate there must be sympathy, while to rationalize sympathy there are needed emotions of curiosity, caution, respect... Rationality... is not a force to evoke against impulse and habit. It is the attainment of a working harmony among diverse desires. ‘Reason’ as a noun signifies the happy cooperation of a multitude of dispositions. (p. 136)

A rational person is someone with an expanding number of ever-more refined thoughts, imaginations and passions that are diverse yet dynamically harmonised in creative action that co-ordinates means with desirable consequences. The same holds for rational communities. To fully appreciate what Dewey is prescribing it is essential to comprehend the embodied, passionate nature of belief (that is, habit) in his theory of inquiry.

A NATURALISTIC THEORY OF LANGUAGE, MEANING, AND THE MIND: THE CONTEXT OF THOUGHT

My argument thus far is distressingly simple. All I am saying is that human nature is a part of nature, not a God above or devil below, but a ganglion within a cosmological whole. Dewey’s Darwinian view is that we are participants in an ever-evolving, unfinished and unfinishable universe, not spectators of a fully developed world picture. Human beings are natural biological beings that, like other such beings, exist not in but through an environment. We move through it and it moves through us; hunting, gathering and digestion being examples. We are more than that, of course. We eat and drink and turn the results into human waste; we also turn it into language, meaning, thought, ideas, ideals and creative action that transforms the world. Dewey writes (*ibid.*):

Of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful. That things should be able to pass from the plane of external pushing and pulling to that of revealing themselves to man, and thereby to themselves; and that the fruit of communication should be participation, sharing, is a wonder by the

side of which transubstantiation pales. When communication occurs, all natural events are subject to reconsideration and revision; they are re-adapted to meet the requirements of conversation, whether it be public discourse or that preliminary discourse termed thinking. Events turn into objects, things with a meaning. (p. 133)

Dewey comprehends thinking (including critical thinking) after the manner of the ancient Greeks, that is, as a form of discourse. Furthermore, he conceives conversation as creative. Our interactions with each other and the rest of nature are transformational for everything and everyone involved in an evolving Darwinian universe. In communication evolving events become objects, things with meaning. 'Meanings are rules for using and interpreting things', writes Dewey, 'interpretation being always an imputation of potentiality for some consequence' (p. 147). Further, for Dewey, 'Meanings are objective because they are modes of natural interaction' (p. 149). Wittgenstein's 'slab game' near the beginning of *Philosophical Investigations* is a fine example of what Dewey has in mind.⁴

Dewey believed that all meanings originated in language, and language originated in co-operative behaviour among biological creatures. He held a naturalistic and emergent theory of language. For Dewey (1925), 'the interaction of human beings, namely, association, is not different in origin from other modes of interaction' (p. 138). It is through human interaction that language emerges:

Gestures and cries are not primarily expressive and communicative. They are modes of organic behavior . . . Language, signs and significance, come into existence not by intent and mind but by overflow, by-products, in gestures and sound . . . But they become language only when used within a context of mutual assistance and direction. The latter are alone of prime importance in considering the transformation of organic gestures and cries into names, things with significance, or the origin of language. (*ibid.*, pp. 138–139)

Language for Dewey emerges out of lower order animal behaviours in the context of mutual assistance. All language, all meaning, is contextual, for Dewey who insists, 'Such is the essence and import of communication, signs and meaning. Something is literally made common in at least two different centres of behavior. To understand is to anticipate together' (p. 141). In this way biological beings come to have a mind.

For Dewey, to have a mind is to possess socially constructed shared meanings. 'Through speech', Dewey declares, 'a person dramatically identifies himself with potential acts and deed; he plays many roles, not in successive stages of life but in a contemporaneously enacted drama. Thus mind emerges' (p. 135). When the interacting organisms no longer have to be in immediate contact the individual minds begin acquiring the capacity for abstraction, generalisation and inference (p. 207). The acquisition of language, the ability to have and manipulate meaning, a

mind, the ability to manipulate abstract meanings via inference (including skill in assessing probative force as well as the normative impact found in the critical spirit) all *emerge* from lower-order biological functioning (including habits) in an organic and social context. Siegel's theory of critical thinking loses contact with the natural world in ways Dewey's does not.

Dewey took the linguistic turn before Heidegger or Wittgenstein. Let us turn to one of Dewey's disciples to acquire a richer appreciation of his position. W. v. O. Quine (1969) begins his essay 'Ontological Relativity', the first of the John Dewey Lectures at Columbia University, by admitting: 'Philosophically I am bound to Dewey by the naturalism that dominated his last three decades. With Dewey I hold that knowledge, mind, and meaning are part of the same world' (p. 26). Quine continues:

When a naturalistic philosopher addresses himself to the philosophy of mind, he is apt to talk of language. Meanings are, first and foremost, meanings of language. Language is a social art which we all acquire on the evidence solely of other people's overt behavior under publicly recognizable circumstances. (pp. 26–27)

Quine also insists that 'there cannot be, in any useful sense, a private language. This point was stressed by Dewey in the twenties... "Language is specifically a mode of interaction of at least two beings, a speaker and a hearer; it presupposes an organized group to which these creatures belong, and from whom they have acquired their habits of speech. It is therefore a relationship"... When Dewey was writing in this naturalistic vein, Wittgenstein still held his copy theory of language' (p. 27).⁵ Note the reference to 'habits of speech'. Habits of speech are the mode by which meaning, minds and habits of critical thinking are constructed.

Biological habits are all dependent on organic contexts. For Dewey (1938a) naturalism means 'there is no breach of continuity between operations of inquiry and biological operations and physical operations. "Continuity"... means that rational operations *grow out of* organic activities without being identical with that from which they emerge' (p. 26). Cognitive habits emerge out of biological habits. Dewey remarks:

One ambiguity attending the word 'naturalistic' is that it may be understood to involve reduction of human behavior to the behavior of apes, amoebae, or electrons and protons. But man is *naturally* a being that lives in association with others in communities possessing language, and therefore enjoying a transmitted culture. Inquiry is a mode of action that is socially conditioned and that has cultural consequences... Every inquiry grows out of a background of culture and takes effect in greater or less modification of the conditions out of which it arises. (pp. 26–27)

Perhaps human nature's interactions with its own cultural and technological inventions (for example, natural creations such as

genetic engineering) may lead to the emergence of cyborgs whose habits of functioning transcend anything of which human nature alone is capable. This much is sure, though, if human nature is a part of nature then all aspects of our functioning, including higher cognitive functions such as critical thinking, are intimately contextual. Finally, this context includes the social, political and economic aspects of context, like it or not.

Deweyan pragmatists are wary of some of Quine's inclinations, however. Quine's naturalism sometimes tends toward reductionism, physicalism (or at least physics), and scientism; Dewey's is emergent, holistic and historicist.⁶

SIEGEL'S DUALISTIC DEFENCE AGAINST STRONG CONTEXTUALISM

Siegel proclaims epistemological absolutism. So while Siegel (1997) agrees that we 'get at' the truth 'by assessing warrant' and justification is 'a sign of truth', truth itself, nonetheless, functions 'as Kant might say, as a *regulative ideal*' (p. 23). It is here that Siegel's absolutism begins to turn into something strongly resembling Kantian transcendental idealism. Surely, Kantian regulative ideals have no empirical content and commit him to a complete rejection of any kind through going naturalism or contextualism.

Siegel, though, does concede that in educational *practice* rationality involves context. For the pragmatist there is nothing beyond practice of one kind or another. To protect his absolutistic Kantian ideals from contextualist contamination, however, Siegel is forced to construct a dualism between what he calls weak and strong versions of contextuality. Siegel endorses the first and condemns the second. In many ways this is just the old pure (or theoretical) versus practical reasoning dualism.

Siegel constructs this dualism in response to Nicholas C. Burbules's argument that the very core of rationality strongly involves context. Siegel concedes weak contextualism, the idea that there are contextual factors involved in the practical application of rationality, including educational practice, and that rationality 'takes shape' in such contexts (p. 105). If Dewey and Quine are right, the way natural organic and social contexts shape anything is all there is to say about any meaning construction, including the construction of critical thinking, truth and rationality. Siegel, however, completely rejects the 'strongly contextual' claim that rationality is 'constituted by' or in any way 'determined by the actual activities, decisions and judgments which people make' (p. 105). This is a remarkably strange statement, for it says that pure rationality entirely transcends the domain of human action. Naturalists find such statements incomprehensible; what in this world do they mean? To naturalists, the answer is that they appeal to something supernal and otherworldly; something like Platonic or theological heaven, or perhaps neo-Kantian transcendental ideals.

Siegel rejects Burbules's claim that questions concerning the development of the virtues of reasonableness are 'inherent in the identification and justification of the [rational] ideal itself' (pp. 107–108). Siegel passionately desires to preserve the ideal as a distinctly philosophical norm, so he claims Burbules 'confuses *causal* questions concerning the fostering/impeding of the virtues of reasonableness with *philosophical* (in this case epistemological and moral) questions' (p. 108). I wonder what causes Siegel to make such a distinction? What Siegel is rejecting is the notion that the ideas, ideals, virtues, desires or dispositions of individuals or communities in any way constitute the *philosophical* ideal of rationality. For pragmatists all ideals emerge imaginatively by reflecting on the consequences of actions taken in the concrete naturalistic context of practice, so of course existential causal factors are constitutive of rational ideals. For Siegel, the ultimate source for ideal rationality is neo-Kantian regulative ideals subsisting in some supernal real outside the field of natural causation, space and time.

Elsewhere Siegel defends his causal questions versus philosophical questions dualism at greater length. According to Siegel, philosophical questions are conceptual rather than causal questions. Siegel elaborates:

Philosophers frequently make claims using this sort of language. When they do, they typically take themselves to be making not causal claims, but constitutive ones. Consider:

1. In order to be a physical object, an entity *must* have extension.
2. Democracy *requires* a free press.
3. Justice *demand*s treating like cases alike.
4. Critical thinking *requires* the comparing of alternative theories in light of their evidence.

... These claims suggest rather that these properties are necessary (and sometimes sufficient) conditions for the relevant states to be successfully realized ... What is asserted, that is, is that the property is constitutive of the state ... I am not claiming that these assertions are correct. I am claiming only that this is the most plausible interpretation of these claims (p. 69).

Siegel concludes, 'Conceptions are not causes' (p. 70). No doubt philosophers frequently distinguish constitutive concepts from causes, especially idealist philosophers such as Kant. That does not mean such distinctions make much sense.

Kant (1781) proclaimed it is impossible to 'transcend the limits of possible experience'; nonetheless 'what necessarily forces us to transcend the limits of experience and of all appearances is the unconditioned, which reason, by necessity and by right, demands in things in themselves as required to complete the series of conditions' (p. 24). Beyond the conditions of empirical understanding that are '*constitutive* of the object, that is, of the appearances' are ideals that are '*only regulative*' (p. 211). This is Siegel's Kantian '*regulative ideal*'. It is an ideal because the

unconditioned object never appears. We may never secure epistemological certainty, but we do secure the metaphysical comfort that derives from the assurance eternal and immutable ideals do exist. Siegel's constitutive philosophical concepts are little more than neo-Kantian constitutive conditions, just as his absolutism is little more than neo-Kantian idealism.

For naturalists nothing exists outside the realm of natural space, time and causation. Platonic heaven or Kantian transcendentalism seems like supernatural nonsense to them. For the neo-Darwinian pragmatist, it is easy to understand why in an ephemeral, constantly changing universe many seek eternal and immutable concepts and ideals in other worlds. Dewey (1929) called this 'the quest for certainty'.⁷ The origins of the quest reside deep within human vulnerability to the natural world. Dewey declares:

The quest for certainty is a quest for peace which is assured, an object which is unqualified by risk and the shadow of fear... For it is not uncertainty *per se* which men dislike, but the fact that uncertainty involves us in peril of evils. (p. 7)

He understood well that it is real existential need that calls forth illusory promises from philosophy.

It is easy to restore Siegel's constitutive concepts and regulative ideals to the natural world from whence they came. Consider Siegel's 1–4 above. These are all stipulative definitions. Like operational definitions they are a particularly precise way for those that interact in a community of inquiry to *make* something, some meaning, common among centres of action such that everyone may understand each other and anticipate together. They function as plans or dispositions to act shared by a community of inquirers. The examples Siegel proposes are especially attractive because almost all his readers share these habits of speech. These definitions are highly abstract and far removed from their context of origin, but that does not mean we should hypostatise them and then place them in some supernal realm of neo-idealistic constituting concepts beyond space or causation. Concepts are social creations embodied in the habits of action and tools (instruments, technologies, and social structures) of a community. As Dewey (1925) put it, 'utensils and uses, are bound up with directions, suggestions and records made possible by speech; what has been said about the role of tools is subject to a condition supplied by language, the tool of tools' (p. 134). As Wittgenstein showed, we can do many things with language. What we cannot do is escape the context of the natural world, including society.

One place Siegel (1997) is at pains to reject strong contextualism is in his response to Mark Weinstein. He recognises that Weinstein offers a sound argument for the primacy of communities in the foundation of reasoning (p. 124). Weinstein, according to Siegel, holds that 'contextualist judgment can be legitimately critiqued, from the point of view of

criteria upheld by some other community' and by 'pragmatic utility' (p. 126). Siegel, of course, thinks this stance eventually yields relativism. Siegel thinks only neo-Scholastic rationality can resolve conflicts between disparate communities:

We need to appeal to criteria, not question-beggingly internal to either of the communities in question, with which we can evaluate the merits of the proffered critique... While the existence of some alternative perspective may be sufficient for possibly successful critique, it is not sufficient for actually successful critique. That is, we need some perspective from which the critique can be fairly evaluated. Here we find the limit of epistemic contextualism. Without some criteria with which, or perspective from which, we can fairly assess the merits of critiques and alternatives, our epistemic judgments will be powerless, arbitrary, or worse. With them we go beyond an inert epistemic contextualism (p. 126).

While Weinstein's phrase, 'pragmatic utility' is somewhat unfortunate because it confuses pragmatic consequentialism with utilitarianism, still, Deweyan pragmatists think he is on the right track.

Recall Dewey's (1932) comment, 'The only truly *general* thought is the *generous* thought' (*op. cit.*). Generosity may restrict any universal's domain of applicability logically as well as morally. A more generous theory of rationality and critical thinking would attend carefully to particularities and differences to see if they make a difference. Universality, in any event, is possible without criteriology; consider Dewey's (1934) comment:

The 'common' is that which is found in the experience of a number of persons; anything in which a number of persons participate is by that very fact common. The more deep-seated it is in the doing and undergoing that form experience, the more general or common it is. We live in the same world; that aspect of nature is common to all... The 'universal' is not something metaphysically anterior to all experience but is a way in which things function in experience as a bond of union among particular events and scenes. Potentially anything whatsoever in nature or in human association is 'common'; whether or not it is actually common depends upon diverse conditions, especially those that affect the process of communication. (p. 291)

Siegel's Kantian regulative ideals function 'as something metaphysically anterior to all experience', they stifle creative conversation among diverse forms of experience, and are not generous. Commonality is emergent; things, meanings, and norms are made common as a *consequence* of creative conversation and inquiry, often across vast differences, and not because of some *antecedently* existing, abstract and supernal ideals of rational criteriology.

If we remember that logic comes from the ancient Greek *logos* meaning word, speech or dialogue, we could even say that all we require is good communication among the fields. Good conversation creates

understanding, identifies errors, establishes shared norms, creates possibilities, and, yes, criteria. Even transubstantiation pales next to such creative communication. It is not necessary, though, that understanding exists as a regulative ideal *antecedent* to shared inquiry; all we require is that understanding exist afterward as contingent *consequences* of the communication. Understanding is the ideal goal for which communication is the means; language being the tool of tools. It is easy to grasp the *logos* naturalistically as an extension of biological functioning in a linguistic community wherein something is literally made (created) common in at least two centres of behaviour such that all parties may learn to anticipate together. Such creative understanding does not require antecedently existing criteriology. If prior inquiries have discovered or created useful criteria, then of course we should at least start by trying them out to see if they work. In any event, though, it is not necessary that criteria or understanding be present at the start, as long as they are there at the end.

Instead of ascending a hierarchy of ever more general criteria, all we really need is to collectively *create* webs of better understanding by means of communicative action. Such creation does not require the neutral standpoint of a spectator in serious contemplation above the fray. What we need in contexts of, say, paradigm incommensurability is not criteriology but open-mindedness, and original hypotheses.

MORALITY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND DIALOGUES ACROSS DIFFERENCES

To preserve his preference for that 'Old-Time Enlightenment Metanarrative', Siegel (1997) constructs a dualism between moral ideals and epistemological ideals (Chapter 9). He argues that inclusion in a 'discourse frame' is a moral virtue but not necessarily an epistemological one. It is here that his philosophical absolutism takes a potentially cruel twist.

Siegel argues discourses that silence, marginalise or otherwise fail to treat participants justly are morally reprehensible. However, he rejects the notion that this moral failing is necessarily an epistemological failing. He states:

Is this failure a(n epistemologically) substantive as well as a procedural one? Not necessarily. A dialogue in which all have full access, and in which all are treated equally, with respect, may nevertheless result in agreement on beliefs which are false or unjustified. On the other hand, a dialogue to which certain people or groups are excluded may nevertheless result in beliefs which are true or justified. So procedural justice is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for substantive rationality (or epistemic worthiness more generally). (p. 133)

Siegel (1997) acknowledges the moral failure of exclusion might result in epistemological failure because those excluded may have had better

insight, a less distorted view, or better warranted beliefs (p. 134). Still, according to Siegel, a fully inclusive dialogue is neither necessary nor sufficient for substantive rationality nor epistemic worthiness. Siegel argues stridently that normative epistemology cannot be naturalised.⁸ Actually, it is not hard at all.

Siegel's argument only works for those already committed to epistemological absolutism, antecedently subsisting transcendental ideals, and eternally fixed rational criteriology. Absolutists think truth is a matter of propositions corresponding to, becoming fulfilled by, or somehow fitting antecedently existing regulative ideals. His absolutism leads him to think he must separate process (procedure) from product (substance). Some means (processes) are separable from the consequence or end (product) while some are not. One may remove the scaffolding from a building once completed, but the bricks, mortar and labour must remain. The same holds for the methods used as means to warrant the consequences of inquiry.

Because the only general thought is the generous thought, inclusion is a necessary (though not sufficient) part of the methodological means of warranting of any knowledge claim. Let us see how. We begin by considering Dewey's remarks on universalisability, meaning and method. Dewey (1925) asserts:

Thus every meaning is generic or universal. It is something common between speaker, hearer and the thing to which speech refers. It is universal also as a means of generalization. For meaning is a method of action, a way of using things as means to a shared consummation [consequences], and method is general, though the things to which it is applied is particular. (p. 147)⁹

Remember, in communication evolving events in a Darwinian universe becoming objects, objective things with meaning. Also recall that meanings are rules for interpreting things to determine the consequences of using them. Furthermore, 'Essence', Dewey observed, 'is but a pronounced instance of meaning' (p. 144). For Deweyan pragmatists, all meanings, including the essences that emerge in methodological inquiry, are *made* common, they *emerge* in discourse, they are *created* from natural events. Objectivity involves, in part, intersubjectivity and universalisability and is, in part, a social achievement. Therefore, the larger and more diverse the community of inquirers that accept an essence of inquiry, the stronger the warrant.

The Popperian could draw two conclusions from the foregoing discussion of objectivity, universalisability and the community of inquiry. First, as more people participate in an inquiry's creation of meanings, essences or knowledge claims, the greater the quantitative possibility of falsification. Second, as ever more diverse peoples that participate in different social practice (including, perhaps different ways of warranting knowledge claims) enter an inquiry's conversation, the greater the qualitative possibility of falsification. Any knowledge claim

not falsified in an ever-expanded ever-more diverse conversation is better collaborated. Deweyan pragmatists would say the only general thought is the generous thought; therefore, the warrants for any such knowledge claim are being continuously reinforced. Either way, it seems strange that a falsificationist such as Siegel does not see inclusion as a necessary, though insufficient, condition of epistemic worthiness.

Siegel constructs a second argument in defence of his dualism between moral and epistemological norms. Siegel (1997) claims that those who would mix the two norms argue as follows:

1. Inclusionary frames are morally superior to exclusionary ones — dialogue ought morally be conducted in conditions of full access and equal respect.
2. Therefore, agreements and conclusions reached in dialogue conducted under the auspices of exclusionary frames are epistemologically less worthy — less justified, or less likely to be true — than those reached through inclusionary ones.

This pattern of reasoning is similar to one which has been penetratingly dubbed by Susan Haack as attempting to derive an 'is' from an 'ought'. To recognize this as the structure of the proposed argument is immediately to recognize its inadequacy. No such epistemological (or ontological) conclusion follows from the (true) moral premise. (p. 134)

The astute reader will note that Haack's critique is simply an instance of what G. E. Moore called 'the naturalistic fallacy'. It is here that the spectator view of reality, rationality and critical thinking comes into clear contrast with the action oriented participant view of the Deweyan pragmatist.

Human nature is a part of nature for the naturalist; so too are what human beings believe in, their ideas and ideals. Recall that for Deweyan naturalists these beliefs are embodied dispositions to *act* evincing emotions. When moral ideals of what ought to be become the consequences sought by practical means-consequence reasoning, the normative and the rational are unified in a single pattern of action.¹⁰ It is not a matter of formally *deriving* the 'ought' from the 'is' or the converse. It becomes a matter of artfully transforming the world through creative action. For the pragmatist regulative ideals *intervene* within the world rather than *supervene* from some supernal realm without.

Let us meet Moore's, Haack's and Siegel's anti-naturalist claims head on. The problem is that their propositional, supposedly pure, logic lacks imagination and is missing in action. Dewey (1891) once remarked:

the 'ought' always rises from and falls back into the 'is,' and . . . the 'ought' is itself an 'is,' the 'is' of action . . . We may, by an abstraction, which is justifiable enough as a means of analysis, distinguish between what is and

what should be; but this is far from meaning that there is any such separation in reality. (p. 105)

Having constructed a useful analytical distinction *de dictu* the supernaturalistic quasi-idealist hypostatizes the resulting abstraction into the fictional *de re* dualism. Ironically, what the analyst cannot derive in pure thought the naturalistic realist may accomplish, sometimes with ease, by worldly action. Siegel's hyper-intellectualised theory of rationality trips itself up repeatedly when confronted with the context of action because it is lost in thought.

What follows is a counter-example to the argument that one cannot derive an 'ought' from an 'is'. The point is that pragmatists are not trying to derive anything; they are trying to transform the world through creative action.¹¹

Consider the following two statements:

- (1) How *ought* we to arrive at our beliefs?
- (2) How *is* it we do arrive at our beliefs?

The first question is presumably in the domain of normative epistemology, much as the following question is presumably in the domain of normative ethics:

- (3) How *ought* we to act?

The second question is presumably in the domain of scientific theory, especially psychological or sociological theory, much as the following question is in the domain of descriptive ethics:

- (4) How *is* it we do act?

Most naturalists make the mistake of attempting to reduce (1) to (2). Deweyan pragmatists reject *reductionism* generally because they commit themselves to naturalistic *emergence* instead. For instance, rather than reducing communities to biological individuals, biological life to chemistry, chemistry to physics, and physics to matter in motion (a form of naturalism called physicalism), Deweyan pragmatists ponder how communities emerge from biological individuals, and so on. They think emergent entities have properties not always predictable by lower levels of functioning, hence are non-reducible.¹² Likewise they do not think (3) reducible to (4) or (1) to (2); they do, though, ponder how (3) sometimes emerges from (4) and (1) from (2). The basic answer is through the exercise of imagination and creative action involving practical means-consequence reasoning.

Consider the 'I have a dream' speech of Martin Luther King, Jr. That speech *is* how he thought race relations *ought* to be. In itself it appears an imaginative fantasy. King, though, had means for achieving his ideal consequence (for example, the technique of civil disobedience). Through creative action King ameliorated his community's (his

nation's) situation. His creative actions altered the norms of society in the end (including explicit legislated laws and often implicit folkways). Deweyan naturalists believe that a community's norms of justification emerge and alter in much the same way King altered the norms of moral justification. Such emergence does not require any supernatural ideals, norms or criterion antecedent to action, any more than communities need to exist antecedent to chemical processes; they are the emergent *consequence* of processes already in motion. Loving our children remains in the realm of space, time, and causation, but is irreducible to them. Norms of aesthetic, moral and cognitive justifications emerge and idealise the natural world through actions directed by intelligent practical inquiry and fuelled by passion. In comparison, Siegel's idealisation of the world through pure reason alone seems an escapist fantasy from much hard, even dangerous, work.

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NOTES

1. Aristotle is referenced by section numbers; translations may vary. For the extensive influence of neo-Aristotelianism on Dewey, especially by F. J. E. Woodbridge, see Ralph W. Sleeper (1986, pp. 7, 92), Robert B. Westbrook (1991, p. 119, 321), Steven C. Rockefeller (1991, p. 362).
2. For a critical discussion of Dewey's attempt to naturalise and 'despookify' James, see Gale (1997). While Gale champions James's spookiness, I do not. Similarly, I worry about the spookiness of Siegel's 'critical spirit'.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 39. Cognitive 'ideas' emerge developmentally from less to more exact. Dewey asserted, 'An idea is first of all an anticipation of something that may happen; it marks a *possibility* . . . Because inquiry is a progressive determination of a problem and its possible solution, ideas differ in grade according to the stage of inquiry reached. At first, save in highly familiar matters, they are vague'. See Dewey (1938a), p. 113. Critical thinking involves offering hospitality to the vague, inexact and indeterminate.
4. It is worth noting that the slab game is pedagogical; it concerns 'the teaching of language'. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4ff.
5. The reference to Dewey is from Chapter 5 of *Experience and Nature*, p. 145.
6. For a fine paper that illustrates the many differences between Quine and Dewey very well see John Capps (1996).
7. Elsewhere Dewey (1938b) states that 'the eternal and immutable is the consummation of mortal man's quest for certainty' (p. 99).
8. See, for example, Putnam (1982), Siegel (1984, 1989). Many forms of naturalism do have serious problems. Fortunately they are easily corrected. For a robust Deweyan naturalism see Garrison (1995).
9. It is worth remarking that meanings as methods of action are quite distinct from Siegel's notion of constitutive concepts.
10. It is worth remembering that the major premise of the so-called practical syllogism of Aristotle reads 'I desire V'. Here 'I' is a flesh-and-blood human being with habits of action. Desire is eros while 'V' is a value. Practical reasoning is reasoning for a value, or an ideal, of what we think ought to be and desire to secure. See W. D. Ross (1971).
11. Dewey's theory of creative action is explicated in detail by Hans Joas (1996).
12. See Dewey 1925, Chapter 7, "Nature, Life and Body-Mind".

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