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Continuities of Pragmatism, Settling Metaphysical Disputes
and the Analytic-Continental Divide
Part II*

Преемственность прагматизма, разрешение
метафизических споров и аналитическо-
континентальный раскол
Часть II**

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена истории прагматизма. В ней утверждается, что классический прагматизм, неопрагматизм и современный прагматизм имеют тематическую преемственность. Эта преемственность может быть в целом охарактеризована как интеграция теории и практики: опыт определяет содержание теории, и деятельность направляет формирование знания. Тезис о преемственности имеет четыре следствия. Прагматисты изучают отношения людей в связи с процессуально-ориентированной и эволюционирующей концепцией природы. Прагматисты отказываются рассматривать убеждения как пропозиции, отображающие независимую от нас фиксированную реальность. Их истинность вытекает из привычек, порождаемых убеждениями. Прагматизм исходит из открытости к возможностям, поскольку наша связь с миром опыта опосредована множеством отдельных интересов, интеллектуальных историй, различных лингвистических и дискурсивных практик. Прагматисты сосредоточены на социальных и

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политических проблемах, с которыми ежедневно сталкиваются люди. В статье также рассматривается, как Джеймс понимает термин «метафизика» в связи с его утверждением, что прагматизм является методом разрешения «метафизических споров». Экзистенциальный плюрализм Джеймса подразумевает максимизацию возможностей, удовлетворяющих всех в наибольшей степени, не препятствуя и не нанося ущерба чужой способности приобщиться к богатому новому миру. Автор анализирует подход Тодда Мэя к аналитическо-континентальным противоречиям и заключает, что если эти противоречия разрешать на основе концепции опыта Джеймса, то онтологический плюрализм является наилучшим решением, и эта приверженность к плюрализму подразумевает преодоление тех исключających практик, которые философски «легитимируются» существующим аналитическо-континентальным расколом.

Ключевые слова: прагматизм, Уильям Джеймс, аналитико-континентальный раскол, метафизика, радикальный эмпиризм, антифундаментализм, опыт, плюрализм, мелиоризм.

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Continuities of Pragmatism, Settling Metaphysical Disputes and the Analytic-Continental Divide Part II

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Summary

The author examines the history of pragmatism and maintains that a thematic continuity runs through the classical pragmatists, neopragmatists and contemporary pragmatists. This continuity can be vaguely characterized as an integration of theory and practice, but experience gives theory its content such that action is always guiding the formation of knowledge. There are four implications of this continuity. Pragmatists are centrally concerned with the human relationship to a process-oriented and evolving conception of nature. For pragmatists, our beliefs are regarded not as propositions that map onto a separate and fixed reality, but instead their truth emerges out of the habits beliefs generate. Pragmatism emphasizes an openness to possibility since our access to the world of experience is mediated by a variety of selective interests, intellectual histories, varying linguistic and discursive practices. Pragmatists are deeply concerned

with the social and political problems that confront us on a daily basis. The author also examines the manner in which James understands the term “metaphysics” given that pragmatism is a method for settling “metaphysical disputes.” Jamesian existential pluralism implies to maximize all possibilities that can satisfy everyone as much as possible without impeding and harming another’s capacity to experience a rich and novel world. The author analyzes Todd May’s approach to the analytic-continental divide and concludes that if settlement embraces James’s thick conception of experience, then the resulting ontological pluralism is the best settlement possible, and this commitment to pluralism requires dissolving the exclusionary practices the analytic-continental divide suggests philosophically.

Keywords: pragmatism, William James, analytic-continental divide, metaphysics, radical empiricism, anti-foundationalism, experience, pluralism, meliorism.

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2.2 A Method for Settling Metaphysical Disputes

James offers two claims in his *Pragmatism* that will be the focus of this essay. The first is his *Methodological Claim*, and the second are his *Procedural Claims*. The former entails the latter, and the latter entails the other since they are both parts are mutually reinforcing. This presentation differs slightly from the two part distinction James draws between pragmatism as “first, a method and second, a genetic theory of truth” [James 1998, 37]. *Methodological Claim*: “The pragmatic method is primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that are otherwise interminable” [James 1998, 2].

The Procedural Claims appear in two varieties as a thesis about beliefs and its second part is the application, which is pragmatic procedural test claim. These are:

1) *Pragmatic Belief Claim*: “our beliefs really are rules for action” [James 1998, 29] and

2) *Pragmatic Procedural Test Claim* “to develop a thought’s meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce,” or better put,

To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve – what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the

whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all [James 1998, 30].

We should keep in mind a few things. First, when James mentions “metaphysical disputes,” James has in mind the limits outlined by his radical empiricism and that *vision of the whole* metaphysics critique thus explained so far. In this way, we should understand the methodological claim as a positive statement of what can be done by engaging in the study of metaphysics. A *partial vision of the whole* is possible. In other words, we can only return metaphysical disputes to the moments of lived-experience and test whether or not they matter. James calls into question the very history of philosophy that forgets the world and our experience of it in *Pragmatism* as he famously did in “The Will to Believe” essay. He playfully characterizes metaphysics as “a very primitive kind of quest” in which “men have always hankered after unlawful magic” attempting to learn words that would allow them “to possess the universe itself” such as “God,” “Matter,” “Reason,” “the Absolute,” and “Energy,” to name a few [James 1998, 31].

Second, James’s application of pragmatic method while initially understood as a way to address classical metaphysical problems becomes his conception for all philosophy. For this very reason, I think it is appropriate to think that any Jamesian may weigh in on what has become the dispute between analytic Anglophone philosophers and Continental European philosophers, which I will detail later.

Third, James is not advocating a form of nominalism here in which the pragmatic ideas have no corresponding reality in the world, but rather James’s work on radical empiricism presupposed his neutral monism. James is claiming that the collapse between act and object, thought and thing, suggest a procedure of treating the content of our beliefs in a neutral way. This neutrality still allows us to test our beliefs, even if those beliefs concern some aspect of thought or thing exclusively, but not regard them as absolutely reporting definitive and final determinative truths about any belief whatsoever. The medium of experience is of primal stuff, thought and thing, and no final interpretation (whether Christian Platonist or Naturalistic Realist) can win the day for all time just as much as no religious worldview (Christian, Buddhist, or Hindu for example) can be settled once and for all [James 2003, 8–9].

Next, in fact, the procedural claims are more important and inform James’s entire conception of what it means to philosophize. “The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me” [James 1998, 30]. James suggests “ought to be” since his pragmatic method is an empirical orientation to listen to possibilities of experience in the world apart from *visions of the whole* like a priori rationalist conceptions of law or thinking of metaphysics as first philosophy. Medieval scholasticism, Aristotle, and Descartes are all types of formalistic and rational philosophers to which James’s conception of a

new name, pragmatism, for an old way of thinking will conflict. James's pragmatism trades a formalistic and delusional *vision of the whole* metaphysics of experience for a *partial vision of the whole* metaphysics. This change cuts all the way down for James. In fact, philosophical theories should resemble all theories according to James. For him, "*Theories, thus, become instruments, not answers to enigmas in which we can rest*" [James 1998, 32] (italic belongs to James). By contrast, the discoverers of the first mathematical, logical, and natural uniformities (or laws) "were carried away by the clearness, beauty, and simplification that resulted, that they believed themselves to have deciphered authentically the eternal thoughts of the Almighty" [James 1998, 33]. In fact, we still might say that anyone who thinks they can have access in the way of these *vision of the whole* philosophers do is very much mistaken.

James is advocating for a type of philosophical modesty, one that treats our beliefs and ideas as parts of experience, but does not seek to transgress a limit such modesty underlying the empirical orientation to the world and experience at large. We can methodologically only know parts and look to the consequences of those parts and perhaps what they imply. However, the question arises: If Jamesian pragmatists are looking to the practical consequences of their beliefs, then what distinguishes this claim about beliefs from a type of subjectivism?

Before I answer this question in terms of James's *Pragmatism*, I must first explain the distinction between recording cases and contributing cases that James Campbell outlines in his *Experiencing William James* (2017). For Campbell, there are two types of truth operating in James's corpus. First, Campbell states that recording cases are "(a) truths or facts that are what they are independently of what we do and what we believe," and second, contributing cases are "(b) truths about those things that are dependent on our actions for their existence" [Campbell 2017, 102]. The former he calls *recording cases*, the latter *contribution cases*. Initially, James made this distinction in his "The Sentiment of Rationality" in which practical action always outstrips scientific evidence, yet many conflate James's discussion for truth as if all cases of knowledge for him are simply contributing cases, especially when dealing with often cited passage, "The trail of the human serpent is thus over everything" [James 1998, 37]. This is not an endorsement for complete subjectivism, but noting that human beings contribute to the sense of meaning and value to their world by how they often choose to relate to it. Let me explain.

Contribution cases are the places where faith and values enter into the picture, and it is the fact that being a subject means having shared inter-subjective experiences, and noting that we all collectively have a role to play in the determination of value. Much of the truth we find is made by us, and that is where Jamesian pragmatic philosophy aids us the most whereas by contrast most dogmas in the history of philosophy occur when we reify

these dogmas, pretending that these reifications are just the way the world is irrespective of the true social nature beings play in determining the shape, texture, and ultimate meaning of our world. In this way, contribution cases constitute human reality. When philosophers deny this, they are guilty of the intellectualism we saw in James's reading of Hegelian rationalists in his *A Pluralistic Universe* from before, or as he puts it intellectualism in *Some Problems of Philosophy*. Intellectualism is "the belief that our mind comes upon a world complete in itself, and has the duty of ascertaining its contents" [James 1979, 111].

The answer is, perhaps, that insofar as an idea does generate consequences, it can be assessed with the pragmatic procedural test, but we should understand that this assessment is. An assessment is how well an idea or belief harmonizes both with our overall individual stock of beliefs *and* the beliefs with other. These beliefs (also called ideas by James) help us "so long as you get about particulars [with ideas] aid and they carry you somewhere" [James 1998, 40]. According to James, "*ideas (which themselves are but parts of experience) become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of experience*" [James 1998, 34] (italic belongs to James). In this way, forming instrumentally true beliefs must navigate an interpenetrating social reality in which truth is verified between our own experiences of ourselves and others – all at the same time while also admitting the complete revisability of those same beliefs and ideas. In this way, our individual and collective responses are contributing cases that shape the very meaning of the world apart from the recording cases that do not shape the tissue of experience. In fact, through these various processes of contribution and the inherent social reality of our ideas, we might see that others ideas are better for us all to adopt. Built into James's application of the procedural claim and its two parts is a commitment to the sanctity of individualism and an implicit democratic conception of what it means to be an experienter. We contribute and build to a more hopeful world that can nourish us together.

Thus, pragmatism is the freedom to form instrumentally true ideas such that they may become habits, and help coordinate our impeded access to reality itself. From those habits, then, we can construct new pathways, threads, values and connections in our experience and others. As we have seen, some of these new constructions become real in the very process of experiencing irreducible contents of meaning and significance. The sadness of a grieving widow is very much the felt reality of those around her in all personal relationships, and thus everyone re-feels and co-experiences the same content of grief. Some of these will be new discoveries of recording cases, new scientific advancements where others will be new ways of valuing and feeling and thus be contributing cases. In some cases tension will arise between the social reality of private individual belief, and the

demand of the pragmatic test to change our ideas in light of the larger social picture. Try as we might, we preserve as much as we can of the old stock of our ideas and opinions, and change what little newer truths can offer us. For this reason, then, James writes, "New truth is always a go-between, a smooth over of transitions" [James 1998, 35].

However, if there is little if any tension such that nobody is harmed in holding their ideas, then Jamesian pragmatism results in a *de facto* existential pluralism, which results both from the limits of experience and also from the fact that we can add to the content of other people's experiencing the world. Despite this weakness of incorporating new truth into the stock of our ideas, we must realize that our beliefs are plastic, capable often of satisfying some and not others in contributing cases. We can experiment when we see our actions as shaping the content of other people's lives. Mistakes happen when we regard contributing cases merely in recording case terms. At that point, we become the absolute dogmatists we have already described from before. For this reason, we should, as it were, adopt Jamesian existential pluralism and maximize all possibilities that can satisfy everyone as much as possible without impeding and harming another's capacity to experience a rich and novel world. This is the guiding insight of the Jamesian spirit behind my response to the Analytic-Continental Divide. Before doing so, I will relate my own individual perceptions and experiences with the Divide from my own life.

2.3 My Own Experiences with the Analytic-Continental Divide

The Divide has been with me for a long time. The Divide is one thing I feel I have experienced personally (for good and for bad as a professional philosopher). As far as I know, I may be the only one of my colleagues who was obsessed with it to the point of personal choice in graduate education. I chose to attend Simon Fraser University to get an analytic MA after withdrawing for personal reasons from the University of Essex's MA in Continental philosophy. At the University of Essex, I lasted two months studying Kant with Espen Hammer and really awful and rather unclear graduate seminar with Peter Dews on the history of a moral world order. At the time, everyone was obsessed with Alain Badiou's and his book *On Ethics: An Essay on Understanding Evil*. I found myself not focusing on the technical jargon common in Continental discourses.

After meeting my wife back in the United States, I applied to Simon Fraser University and decided to give philosophy graduate school another chance. At Simon Fraser, I worked with Evan Tiffany closely as he mentored me on how to write more effectively and clearly. For some time, I was in tension with either studying Kantian metaethics or becoming a phenomenologist as much as attempting to master the foreign ways of speaking, writing, and understanding analytic philosophy. In this way, I had found myself in the

same position as before ironically. My undergraduate degree in philosophy had been geared more towards Continental philosophy with professors educated at Fordham, Chicago, Leuven, and Duquesne. For this reason alone, I have often praised what SFU did for me. SFU made me a better writer and provided opportunity to learn more about ethical theory and the history of analytic philosophy more generally to the point that I can navigate two very difficult philosophical traditions to this day.

After SFU, I decided to work in phenomenology and write on Husserl who I had been reading more earnestly than I would let on with my colleagues at Simon Fraser. In fact the personal alienation I was made to feel and felt with the snide comments about “Continental philosophy” very much made me want to leave SFU more quickly than I realized. On a personal level, however, my wife and I enjoyed Vancouver and Canada immensely. Despite the analytic biases and proclivities of my peers, Professor Tiffany was the best part of that experience. Rather than deny my inner-Continental, he formed a plan whereby my professional paper, entitled “The Transcendental Correction to Existential Phenomenology,” would be vetted by Andrew Feenberg, a Continental philosopher of technology who had a Canadian research chair outside the philosophy department, and Ian Angus in the Humanities Department joined my committee. I wrote a series of propositions underlying the transcendental phenomenologist’s position and showed how the existential phenomenologist would address each proposition. I can only imagine how Southern Illinois University’s philosophy admission committee regarded that writing sample. That writing sample, however, had been extremely polished and Professor Tiffany did his best in soliciting help from the outside to motivate and mentor us together about the direction I decided to pursue. Nobody else in the SFU Philosophy Department at the time would have taken such a mentoring role.

In Canada, I was not the only other graduate student interested in Continental philosophy, you simply had to find them in other departments at SFU and at the University of British Columbia where the same pretensions of anti-Continentalism of the philosophy graduate students were held just as prevalently. I had a hard time convincing our graduate director to count J.D. Fleming’s Literary Theory Seminar on Gadamer as part of my MA course load. When I was in that class, I felt my heart ricochet off the moon. Professor Fleming has been a source of inspiration and additional motivation over the years, and the many same presuppositions about philosophy in philosophical hermeneutics very much resembles Jamesian pragmatism. Next, I even made contact with a group of philosophy graduate students at *Think Cafe* in Point Grey (just outside UBC’s main campus) who had formed “the Continental Underground.” They met off campus to read Continental philosophy and freely discuss those thinkers without the prying eyes of their fellow faculty mentors and graduate student peers. Free from the onslaught of their colleagues, the anti-Continentalist dogma was pretty

bad on both the Western and Eastern ends of Vancouver in both graduate programs. After that, I had applied to Southern Illinois University to study Husserl with Anthony Steinbock.

When I had come to SIU, the dogma was in reverse, but not as prominent. Instead of partisan displays against Continental philosophy, my experience at SIU merely substituted analytic philosophy for Continental philosophy. During my first year, the philosophy department debated about whether or not they would require the PhD students to continue taking a graduate seminar in "Analytic Philosophy." They soon abandoned it realizing that our department graduated students more in line with what it meant to be a Continental PhD, revealing once more that the Divide shaped our shared understanding of our place within the larger professional philosophical community. At this time, Steinbock was the Executive Director of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, the second largest philosophical organization outside the American Philosophical Association and soon thereafter founded the Phenomenology Research Center. Having the Executor Director in our department and so well connected also meant that the politics of these organizations and their practical consequences of those social realities, active or illusory, constituted our shared reality in relation to the larger philosophical world. In other words, we all responded – like it or not – as partisans, and contributed to sustaining the existence of the Divide.

Still, SIU was liberating in ways that SFU was not. I took almost exclusive course work in Phenomenology and all Ethics courses. My first few years I wanted to wage war against analytic pretensions but soon found myself also "not Continental enough" and "too analytic" for many of my colleagues. My decision to go in one direction with my education also meant that some found me as an outlier when I changed to SIU, especially when I would display sympathies with metaethical projects. For two years, I had argue with a colleague that Jamesian pragmatism committed a form of psychologism, and that being a student of Husserl, I could see this as clear as day. Interesting that I am writing this piece, and consequently now think that many Husserlian claims are empty through the very pragmatism I initially denied. Next, I am pretty sure that Steinbock thinks it odd to put Scheler into conversation with metaethics, yet this seems (still to this day) to be an exciting way to engage Scheler's ideas since both Scheler and metaethicists are responding to similar if not the same concerns.

Little did I acknowledge how the academic interests and histories in which these battles had long been fought. SIU faculty had long shared in these institutional histories that have been waged for the soul of pragmatism (not only Continental philosophy), yet I ran into them personally and in my scholarship (e.g., see my reactions to Robert Talisse and Scott Aikin or Cheryl Misak's horrible reading of James to which I must respond to eventually). These institutional and professional histories constituted perhaps some

of the reactions to my analytic upbringing I got from colleagues that have forever filtered their perceptions of me and what contexts I did not know I was navigating when I arrived. In pragmatism, the legacies were Peirce and Dewey, especially Dewey since we had the entire archive of Dewey's writings and some of the best Dewey scholars on the planet. When the SIU Administration removed Larry Hickman as Director of the Dewey Archives and removed the archives from our philosophy department to SIU Morris Library, SIU's Philosophy Department never recovered.

Eventually, I found myself working with Kenneth W. Stickers. Stickers, studying at DePaul University, had been Manfred Frings's research assistant, and perhaps there's nobody more qualified in North America currently to truly know Scheler's thought in and out. Frings had brought his expertise and continued to publish and work on Max Scheler's writings during his lifetime (1925-2008) and Frings himself is solely responsible for introducing Scheler's thought into English. Rather than attempt to reinvent moral phenomenology through Husserl (which I felt inclined to do), I found myself motivated to write on Scheler's phenomenological ontology of values, and work out exactly what their ontology amounted to in Scheler's philosophical writings. In these conversations, Professor Stickers's insight about pragmatism and phenomenology have been forever influential so much so that out of my dissertation, tangential published essays, and personal discussions, I managed to publish and refine my thoughts regarding the possibility of a value ontology synthesized through both Scheler and James in my latest book, *Persons and Values in Pragmatic Phenomenology: An Exploration in Moral Metaphysics* (2018). Professor Stickers wrote the Foreword to my new book.

Since SIU, I have corresponded with many the world over about the analytic and Continental Divide, but it is always somewhere in the back of my mind. As a background condition, it informs my hermeneutic position within philosophy and anytime I philosophize. As I look out onto PhDs my age and from other departments, I was rather hopeful that the Divide did not matter anymore, and that its importance had faded into the background. For the most part, my experience is that it does not matter. Then again, my analytic friends are all from that very analytic SFU experience who are sympathetic sometimes even if they do not philosophically agree with anything I say. The Divide is really only a concern now for those Analytics where prestige bias and those legacies matter (fueled forever by the politics of Brian Leiter's Philosophical Gourmet Report no less) and maybe the placement officers from very Continental schools that are not gatekeepers in the profession or may have access to alternative placement networks in which other more analytically-inclined school often differ. For all intensive purposes, the Divide is a matter of a living tradition and sociological groupings internal to philosophical interests and institutionalization of labor. I will pay attention to more of this below.

2.4 Applying Jamesian Pragmatism to the Divide

Now that I have detailed aspects of James's thought that may bear on the direct question of settling disputes and my own experiences to draw from, we are in a good position to see how I interpret James's thought as it could affect our understanding of the analytic and Continental Divide. First, some caveats must be explained.

Given that James's *Pragmatism* applied pragmatism as method to metaphysical disputes, my points are not entire an argument by analogy. What holds for settling the status of metaphysical disputes is also what should hold for settling the disputes in the analytic and Continental Divide. In order to do this, however, some adjustments to the analogy should be noted. Continental philosophy includes some metaphysical claims, and a host of varying traditions with which no real unifying threads binding them. The commitments of a Lacanian psychoanalyst, Derridean deconstructionist, and a Husserlian phenomenologist are so different that they really should not be grouped together uncritically in much the same way that an expressivist and moral realist should be grouped under the category of "British philosophy." Certainly ethical theory or metaethics are better categorizations for both the expressivist and the moral realist, but to simply group these varied philosophical theses under something like "British philosophy" betrays any real explanatory power. To speak plainly, Continental philosophy is more useful as a category that tells analytic philosophers what they like to ignore (not read, not hire, not publish in their journals) than it is an instrumentally useful category for explanation of what type of philosophy it is. The vice versa is true of analytic philosophy as well for those that understand themselves as Continental philosophers (or the more fashionable term of Continentalists nowadays). At this point, I do not know if we can say the Divide is practically useless, but I feel it should be shed. It facilitates no real conceivable effect except for antiquated attitudes about the professionalization of philosophy in the 20th century and into the 21st century (I). Insofar as the concern is with settling philosophical disputes, I will understand the Divide philosophically, not sociologically.

Put pragmatically, the Divide is more a *family resemblance term*, and not any one determination adequately grasps the current philosophical work apart from the history and habits of associating some analytic and Continental thinkers together. According to James, I think the distinction should be shed, but also open to the possibility of building bridges across the great Divide. If you were to pin my views in the long literature on the analytic and Continental Divide, then the Jamesian conclusion would actually just be a restatement of Todd May's views expressed in his "On the Very Idea of Continental (or for that Matter Anglo-American) Philosophy" [May 2002]. In that work, May goes through ten theses about how to understand what exactly is Continental philosophy and what might constitute the conceptual content of the Divide. Accordingly, each thesis fails. In his words, the theses

“fail to capture the work being done on either side of this so-called Divide” [May 2002, 402]. There does not seem to be any explanatory power philosophically in maintaining the view that there is a Divide when such cross-fertilization occurs, and we could pin our hopes that such cross-fertilized projects continue since there may be greater practical consequences in their pursuit. If the blurring of the lines has intensified since 2002, then this only advances the claim that there is little if any conceivable effect in maintaining belief in the Divide. Neither I nor May provide exhaustive treatment on this topic. I do agree, however, that it is pragmatic “to shift the burden of proof onto anyone who would like to maintain such a distinction” [May 2002, 404]. They would have to tell us why this distinction should matter for all of us, what conceivable effect it should have, and what useful habits and possibilities may come from sustaining it in some way.

To be clear, the theme under discussion is then how to understand the Divide through James. The idea of the Divide should be devalued because belief in it is a contributing case in which the social and political realities of ideas in the academy are shaped. The analytic and Continental Divide is, therefore, a pragmatic idea (though some might want to regard it as a narrative). As a pragmatic idea, the Divide is continually being remade as we experience our own academic identities and intellectual habits through it. The less helpful the Divide is philosophically, the less explanatory power it has – in James terms, the less true it is. However, each time the Divide is remade and re-constituted by the persons in their decision to value it in some small and minor way, such the idea of the Divide justifies exclusionary social practices of one-side over the other. Working in both directions across the Divide, these exclusion narratives might police the possibility of dialogue with one side such as familiar linguistic policing norms of “rigor, and clarity” in judging Continentalists from a positive analytic valuation or the lack of concern with the relevant histories in judging analytic philosophers from a positive Continental valuation. Through the Divide, a philosopher is justified in excluding one-side over the other (2).

This attention to history is one of May’s ten theses, and I would like to turn to it as an example of illustrating the Divide has little if any conceivable effect upon how people proceed in philosophy. Under this interpretation of the Divide, Continental philosophers “still work within a framework that endorses appeal to major figures in the history of philosophy,” and by contrast, Anglo-American analytics “under the influence of positivist approaches to philosophy, have largely jettisoned those figures” [May 2002, 417]. If this characterization and dearth of history on the part of self-styled Anglo-Americans is accurate (and I have encountered in some small anecdotal degree), then Anglo-American philosophers would undervalue concern with central figures in the history of philosophy. However, this is certainly not the case. May shows that the Anglo-American tradition is replete with examples of concern with Aristotle in developing virtue ethi-

cal themes in John McDowell, Alisdair MacIntyre, and Bernard Williams, and some like Wilfrid Sellars and Robert Brandom inherit the same central preoccupation with Kant [May 2002, 417]. What, then, motivates this quip of the Continental philosopher constantly painting the Anglo-American philosophy into a corner? What about the Anglo-American philosopher painting the Continental philosopher into a corner?

The reverse moment happens when an Anglo-American philosopher is engaged in direct conceptual analysis of a problem or theme and universalizes that direct conceptual engagement with what it means to do philosophy. As one UBC philosophy graduate student once told me, "I am going to graduate school to think for myself, not whatever somebody else thought." In a hermeneutically-inclined approach, problems cannot be divorced from the historical connections to other thinkers, yet the caricature finds its mark: Anglo-Americans are simply engaged in ahistoric thinking all the time. In truth, they are not as ahistoric logic-choppers as Continentalists have or often pretend in much the same that many Continental philosophers are not just engaged in historical-literary analysis of philosophical texts, but often thinking about concepts directly. For instance, Merleau-Ponty is engaged in an analysis of operative intentionality in the lived-body. There are times in his *Phenomenology of Perception* in which there is no hermeneutic awareness of embodiment and intentionality, but only the direct phenomenological analysis of these themes. In this way, since phenomenology is engaged in describing the world, much can be said about conceptual analysis and phenomenological description resembling each other in certain degrees, and maybe James's concern with objects and the conceivable effects they engender in his vastly rich and qualitative medium of experience can help more than hinder solving some disputes across the Divide.

However, James does not provide an exhaustive solution, and many solutions are possible. True to form, I am a pluralist and think insofar as there are negative practical consequences that follow from an idea, like the Divide, that the Jamesian might favor shedding it more than keeping it. There is a Jamesian proviso, however remote, that still applies to this rejection. The minimal good the Divide will do us also invites ideas about remaking and refashioning the Divide into something new. I am fully prepared to embrace the fact that some practical consequences could be achieved in remaking some version of the Divide. As it currently stands, however, my hope is that the pragmatic attitude in philosophy can erode the instrumental purpose for which the Divide has served. It has served to exclude and ignore others in a time when philosophers professionally cannot be divided in defending the liberal arts from an imperious neoliberal order that has taken over all Western universities in some degree.

My hope is a source of meliorism, and that this meliorism will give rise to unanticipated insights into the pure possibilities of philosophy. Then, the disappearance of the Divide, I feel, would renew those possibilities to entice

the philosophical imaginations of future scholars to move beyond even our own categories. For each generation of philosophers has a responsibility to rethink and engage the impetus of its past, and we could very well see that little purpose is served anymore by the institutionalization of the Divide.

NOTES

(1) I want to be understood. I am not saying that people should not sustain an awareness to how this Divide is understood or concretely realized by others, especially for young job candidates who should learn to read the commitments of their search committee members during an interview or any other professional and concrete problem that might arise from the concretion of the Divide.

(2) I am not paying attention to the complex history of American philosophy's relationship to either Continental or Analytic philosophy.

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