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A Critique of Metaphysical Thinking

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“Help us to live as those who are prepared to die.”

– Rev. Ed White

Forward

The title is an obvious allusion to Kant's masterpiece, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, and it will seem like the height of pretention to invoke his book in association with mine. But quite the contrary, the title is meant to signal that I am a mere follower—the present work is only a “translation” of Kant's core insights into a contemporary setting. Such an update seems warranted: If philosophy today seems void of lasting results, it is by neglecting what Kant established long ago. (And is no contrived Idealism I refer to. Instead of ‘Critical Idealism’, the label ‘Critical Realism’ might have better served his purpose.) The timing is also opportune, as Kantianism has more confirmation than ever from the sciences, as I plan to show.

But, just as a translation from the German might obscure some of Kant's meanings, so too a contemporary adaptation may distort his original intent. Indeed, what guided the effort was not a slavish commitment to his views (something Kant himself would have detested). It is rather an attempt on my own behalf to represent the philosophical issues accurately, and to reason well about them. But the point is that the basic orientation is hardly original to me. It is unmistakably Kantian.

Nevertheless, since I am guided by my own epistemic compass, not every conclusion is one Kant would have drawn. That is especially so, given that some contemporary debates are addressed that were non-existent in his time, e.g., concerning content externalism (ch. 9). What's more, many hallmarks of Kant's philosophy are omitted, e.g., the “categories” of the understanding. It is already too ambitious to recapture his basic metaphysics and its metametaphysical backdrop. All things considered, one might thus summarize what follows as a “revised Kantian” program for contemporary metaphysics.

The key components of the program are (i) Quietism about fundamental ontology, (ii) Fictionalism about non-fundamental ontology, and (iii) Fideism (or perhaps “Speroism”) about God. After an introductory chapter, the book divides into three parts, with each part devoted to one of these three components.

Besides Kant’s *Critique*, another influence is William James’ body of work. Unfortunately, James is not always clear—he sometimes chooses a tantalizing metaphor over a precise expression of his view. Concurrently, James strikes me as hit-and-miss, and the misses disincline me to see the book as defending a James-style “pragmatism.” Yet as the reader shall see, there are enough connections with James to obligate special notice of them.¹

My thanks to the following publishers for permission to include material previously appearing in print:

- Chapter 2 contains several excerpts from “Rule Following and Metaontology,” *Journal of Philosophy* 112.5 (2015): 247-265.
- Chapter 3 is a revised version of “Ontic Terms and Metaontology, or: On What There Actually Is,” *Philosophical Studies* 170.2 (2014): 199-214.
- Chapter 5 is a composite of two previous papers: “On the PROVER9 Ontological Argument,” *Philosophia* 43.2 (2015): 475-483, and “The Modal Ontological Argument meets Modal Fictionalism,” *Analytic Philosophy* 57.4 (2016): 338-352.

¹ I do not mean to minimize James, by the way. His work is more accessible, and thus will be more illuminating for most people. I, on the other hand, am writing mainly for eggheads, simply because their patience might not be completely taxed by my dense prose. There is currently a trend in academic philosophy to reach wider audiences, and I sometimes wish my writing was more readable. But I think it has its place. After all, even James’ readership is more limited than, say, that of Christopher Hitchens or Billy Graham. But this hardly shows that James’ work is less valuable. Still, the present monograph will appeal to an even smaller audience than James’, and I am enough of a “pragmatist” to lament that. But as in James’ case, that does not mean the work must be proportionally less valuable.

- Chapter 8 is a revised version of “Theory Dualism and the Metalogic of Mind-Body Problems,” in C. Daly (Ed.), *Palgrave Handbook of Philosophical Methods* (pp. 497-526). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2015.

N.B., some section-headings are marked with an asterisk (“*”). These sections pursue details which can be skipped by the more casual reader without losing the main plot of the book.

1. Introduction: How is Rational Theism Possible?

1.1 Facing Extinction

Nothing compels metaphysical thinking like death. Humans generally hope to make sense of their world, to discern an order in the cosmos, including a moral order. But, when losing a loved one for instance, the semblance of a moral order starts to wear thin. It is then natural to wax metaphysical, looking to the possibility of a benevolent God, so that life and death do not seem so pointless. More broadly, in the attempt to cope, we speculate that reality may be different from how it tragically seems—that some moral imperative may hold steady “beneath the turmoil of appearances,”¹ giving purpose to our suffering, and affirmation to our persevering.

Yet this looks like wishful thinking. If we adhere to empirical method, we shall proportion our belief to the evidence, and refrain from the comforting stories. But though this appears more epistemically rational, it can be psychologically intolerable. If life has never forced you to your knees, it seems you have either been mercifully sheltered, or are stoical to an unusual degree.² The rest of us may act as if the commitment to empirical method never falters. But admittedly, this is posturing.

And to the stoics, consider that our species may be facing immanent extinction, owing to climate change.³ This is by no means certain, and I dislike the doomsday sensationalism

¹ Nietzsche’s phrasing. (*Birth of Tragedy*, section 18)

² Facing life can be just as hard as facing death. Thus Benatar (2017) describes powerfully our “predicament” between death and the “living disaster” (as one Schopenhauerian has called it). We might chide Benatar for his bleak perspective, but it is hardly unique to him—besides Schopenhauer, there is the Buddha’s first “Noble Truth” that life is *dukkha*. Also, Chuang-Tzu: “Whether in conflict or in harmony with things, [a human being] always pursues its course like a galloping horse which no one can stop. Is this not pitiful indeed? To toil all one’s life without seeing its success and to be wearied and worn out without knowing where to end—is this not lamentable?”

³ An alarmist piece, which caught the attention of many, is Wallace-Wells (2017). Of course, climate change is not the only threat to our species’ existence. Indeed, we will almost certainly go extinct eventually, as is true of 99% of species that have ever lived on Earth (Stearns & Stearns 1999, p. x). Perhaps, following Nietzsche, we may hope to evolve into a different and better species. But in the long term, there is at least the heat death of the universe to put a

associated with the matter. Nonetheless, the threat is real. In confronting extinction, the question then arises almost involuntarily: What was all our suffering, striving, breeding, fighting, living, dying *for*?⁴ An answer seems conspicuously absent from the scientific image.⁵

What should be done? I shall be assuming, naturally enough, that some *philosophy* should be done. But to be quite honest, I am no longer sure that this assumption is correct. If the aim is to cope, then it is unclear whether the best means to this end is to *cogitate vigorously* about our troubles. However, for some personalities, it may be a necessary step toward something more effective. If the intellectual conscience can be persuaded that hope can be made rationally respectable, then that might free up the individual to pursue better therapies, ones that capitalize on such hope. But this work is limited to making hope rationally respectable.

1.2 Three Kinds of Pragmatism

1.2.1 Tender- versus tough-minded pragmatism

Facing our own extinction, one philosophical option is “tender-minded” pragmatism, borrowing terminology from William James. The view is defined by the idea that no matter how wonderful epistemic rationality may be, it is ultimately subservient to practical rationality. Thus, scientific thinking is governed in the end by what makes good practical sense.⁶ Accordingly,

cap on things. (Though Michio Kaku 2004 has identified a loophole even here, suggesting that intelligent life might escape via wormhole to an alternate universe. But leave that aside.)

⁴ Extinction makes the question especially urgent, but it would still matter even if the species lived forever. What would be the point of our unending existence? Cf.: “The temporal immortality of the human soul... will not do for us what we always tried to make it do. Is a riddle solved by the fact that I survive forever? Is this eternal life not as enigmatic as our present one?” (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.4312).

⁵ This reference to the “scientific image” is to indicate that the present work is a “Neo-Sellarsian” project of reconciling science with the “manifest image,” i.e., (roughly) the everyday world as we contemporaries experience it. I detail such Neo-Sellarsianism in the Preamble of *Parent* (2017).

⁶ This sort of view has enjoyed a surge in popularity recently. See Hazlett (2013), Sharadin (2016), and Rinard (2017). See also Rescher (1987, ch. 1). Though it is unclear whether any of these authors would really jettison scientific thinking when anxiety about futility becomes too acute. They seem to allow for the possibility however.

when scientific thinking creates anxiety about our ultimate futility, the view recommends retreat. (From a practical standpoint, non-futility is seen as non-negotiable).

Yet this stance would allow escape from the cold, hard facts whenever they prove sufficiently vexing. Those with a low threshold might then be regularly excused. (And before long, we get “creation science” taught in public schools, etc.) In reply, the tender-minded view might acknowledge that such coddling is impractical, and so, use a practical norm to restrict her pragmatism. But where to draw the line exactly? It seems dauntingly unclear.

This might bolster the alternative, “tough-minded” pragmatism. The idea here would be to remain vigilant in our commitment to empirical method, as much as possible. We can of course be forgiving to ourselves when lapses occur. But we perhaps should not assign much significance to the lapses themselves. Instead, we should maintain the course of austere naturalism, and not deny the apparent futility of life and death—though we should manage any demotivating effects. (Such management is the “pragmatism” in tough-minded pragmatism.)

This commitment to the truth, no matter how psychically destabilizing, is highly admirable in many respects. But, after living inside this worldview for 20 years, it now strikes me as unsustainable, and not just because of the emotional fortitude required. It also creates cognitive dissonance. Let me explain.

The basic conundrum concerns realism about value, including the value of our lives, for both the individual and the species. Since Mackie (1977), it is a familiar thought that value seems metaphysically odd (or “queer”). But there is one respect in which the oddity has not been appreciated. One might draw an analogy with the cosmological argument. Briefly, the cosmological argument regards an infinite series of *causal* explanations as metaphysically odd. Thus, it is rejected in favor of a finite series, in which there is an “unmoved mover.” Now

regardless of your take on that argument, there seems to be a parallel regress of *metaethical* explanations,⁷ once we ontologically commit to value. Consider for instance:

Base Claim: “Donating to Oxfam is valuable.” (But why is that?)

Explanation #1: “Oxfam is an effective charitable organization” (Why is that valuable?)

Explanation #2: “Such organizations help people in need.” (And why is that valuable?)

Explanation #3: “Helping people in need promotes human flourishing” (Yet why is human flourishing valuable?)

Naturally, our activity of *providing* explanations must end—but does reality itself “bottom out” somewhere, when it comes to value? A regress in this case seems metaphysically odd as well, and so a “bottom” often appears invoked, e.g., when it is said that human flourishing is “valuable in itself” or “intrinsically valuable.”⁸ Such things are *axiological* “unmoved movers.” Yet the irony is that (like God in the cosmological argument) these unmoved movers are also metaphysically odd.⁹

Despite my talking of “moving,” the oddity is not that intrinsic values would be unconditionally motivating (as Mackie, *op. cit.*, stressed). Rather, it is that they would be *explanatorily brute* in a way that is foreign to scientific thinking. After all, if something has

⁷ I will be using ‘explanation’ in a purely ontological (and not an epistemic) sense. Where *p* and *q* are states-of-affairs, if *q* explains *p*, then *q* is the “actual sufficient condition” for *p*. Explanations in this sense *can* be invoked to justify a claim—but again, that sort of epistemic function is not the essential thing.

⁸ The metaphysics of intrinsic vs. extrinsic properties raises independent puzzles; see Lewis & Langton (1998). But the issues there would not seem to affect the substance of the present ones. Also: The unclarity in ‘flourishing’ is deliberate, since I do not want to prejudge moral matters. Granted, on one interpretation, the term it is already morality-laden (where it concerns “moral excellence”), but I do not mean to use it in this way. (Hopefully my talk of “flourishing” MRSA bacteria makes that clear.) If anything, “flourishing” here just concerns biological and psychological health. (And it is not as if sheer numbers demonstrate flourishing—there is such a thing as overpopulation, after all.)

⁹ My argument resembles the regress of reasons familiar from epistemology, and the regress of moral reasons is a special case which goes back at least to Aristotle (see *Nichomachean Ethics*, Bk 1, sect. 2). But the regress presented here does not consist of *justifications*, but rather metaphysically sufficient conditions (cf. note 7). As a metaphysical regress, it is thus more akin to Nozick’s (1981, pp. 603ff.) regress about meaning in life—yet our problem is how *anything* could have value (though the value of human life is of particular concern). Besides, following other writers, I would distinguish the value of a life from its meaning, for a variety of reasons.

intrinsic value, what would explain that? Not just anything is intrinsically valuable—the flourishing of MRSA bacteria, for instance. (And in a misanthropic mood, we might even doubt the value of human flourishing.) So, if some things are intrinsically valuable, what makes for the metaphysical difference?

In truth, the qualifier ‘intrinsically’ suggests that *nothing* explains why a thing would have this kind of value, beyond itself. Suppose that human flourishing is intrinsically valuable, and yet suppose that its value could be explained by some *other* facet of reality. Then, the value of human flourishing would not seem “self-contained” in human flourishing per se. Its value would depend on an *extrinsic* relation to some other thing. But then, in what sense is the value of human flourishing *intrinsic*?¹⁰

Could the intrinsic value of a thing explain itself? That flouts the general injunction against circular explanation. (And how could intrinsic value emerge from itself?) Apart from that, the remaining alternative is for intrinsic value to be metaphysically primitive, without any explanation, circular or otherwise. It is then seen as a fundamental property of reality, akin to spin for gauge bosons. It would be as if the foundations of the scientific image needed help from the manifest image; the standard model of particle physics would require a metaethical addendum.

In fact, it is worse than that. Spin is not *metaphysically* primitive—spin is unexplained only relative to the current model of particle physics. It is merely a *theoretical* primitive in that model, and there is the real possibility that physics will explain spin in some future model. But

¹⁰ It may be argued that human flourishing is intrinsically valuable yet is explained by the value of its proper parts. For instance, suppose human flourishing has world peace as a proper part. Then, the intrinsic value of human flourishing could be explained by the value of world peace (along with the value of its other parts). Let me grant that there may be these kinds of “aggregates,” where their “intrinsic” value can be explained in this way. Still, it means that intrinsic value is no longer a regress-stopper in the series of metaethical explanations. Yet that was why the intrinsic value of human flourishing was suggested in the first place. So either one needs to contend with the regress again, or accept that the value of human flourishing has no further explanation.

“intrinsic” value *cannot* be explained by anything else. Otherwise, its value would be explained by its relation to something else, contra the idea of being intrinsic. Intrinsic value is thus inexplicable *in principle*.

We can summarize the issue as follows. Assume that the variables range over possible states-of-affairs. Then, the following three premises generate a vicious regress:

- (1) *No Metaphysical Brutes*: If p is valuable, then some fact q explains its value.
- (2) *Adequacy*: q explains why p is valuable only if q is itself valuable.
- (3) *No Circularity*: Explanation cannot be circular.

Eventually, different interpretations of (1) will be identified, and it will be accordingly rejected on some readings. Yet without any qualification, (1)-(3) indicate that there cannot be anything intrinsically valuable. Also, (2) and (3) imply that the value of p must be explained by the value of something else (and these explanatory chains cannot circle back on themselves). Hence, in order for p to be valuable, there must be infinitely many valuable, explanatory ancestors—which seems absurd. The regress thus can function as a *reductio ad absurdum* on the claim that something is of value. Nihilism is the result.

Proposition (2) was not explicitly invoked earlier, but we were guided by it implicitly — e.g., when explaining the value of donating to Oxfam. There, it was clear enough that to explain the value of the act, one needed to cite something *valuable* about that act. The explanation was that it promoted an effective humanitarian organization—but then the question arose why *that* had any value. And the sense was that this *must* be valuable, if it was to adequately explain why donating to Oxfam was valuable. Such was the appeal of (2) at work.

To clarify, this is not just pushing the (somewhat tired) idea that “you cannot derive ‘ought’ from ‘is’.” The problem does not depend on the premise that there is some fundamental

division between fact and value. Quite the contrary. The regress arises from the assumption that *values are among the facts*. After all, the issue concerns a putative *ontological fact*, viz., that there *is* such a thing as value, and that is where the problem gets started. Again, the metaphysical conditions required to explain this would either be oddly regressive, or stop in some metaphysically odd way. Perhaps the argument could be used to push that the realm of value *should* be seen as fundamentally distinct from the realm of fact, but I am not concerned to do that. My aim is first to identify a problem in the (entirely natural) assumption that there is such a thing as value, that values are among the facts.¹¹

Analogous to Mackie, one might reject the existence of values on the basis of the regress argument. But without qualification, I submit that such a view is *not a view we can really believe*. As I put it elsewhere:

even the most die-hard moral anti-realist is inescapably committed to answers regarding “What should I do?” And with these answers comes an ontological commitment to norms. The anti-realist may explicitly deny that any of her answers are “normatively charged.” But in the end, *this is a species of bad faith*. At the most basic level, the individual engages reality in a way that makes “What should I do?” a distinctly *normative* question... [where the] answers come with the unavoidable ontological commitment to norms. This is not to say that there really are norms. It is rather to illustrate that an ontological commitment to norms is inescapable. (2017, p. 18)

Indeed, when the tough-minded pragmatist adopts her stance, she herself adopts it with the idea that one *should* be a tough-minded pragmatist, that there is something *wrong* with adopting any

¹¹ This marks a difference between the present approach and Dworkin’s (2013). Dworkin starts from the “is-ought” gap and thus worries that no fact has inherent value (nihilism). I have reservations about the so-called is-ought gap, but cannot debate the point here. Suffice it to say that the text above is not simply rehashing Dworkin’s problematic.

Similarly, I am not just echoing Reichenbach’s (1951) statement that “Science tells us what is, but not what should be” (p. 287). Again, my argument assumes that values are among the facts—and if a completed science described all the facts, then a completed science *would* tell us what is valuable. Still, the assumption that values are among the facts is what creates trouble. But clearly, the regress problem has more content to it than Reichenbach’s axiom. (For related discussion, see note 15.)

other sort of stance.¹² But the values she presumes in this are metaphysically odd. If there is no regress of explanation, they seem to bottom out in “unmoved movers” which are quite foreign to scientific thinking.

Besides this, I must also return to the more humanistic point. Mackie’s view implies a nihilism that has us face extinction without recourse. Even if the human endeavor is futile, to see it thus is no way to live, if it can be at all avoided.¹³ This is not to say that one may be excused from scientific thinking whenever the mood strikes. But if value *per se* is excluded from the scientific image, then in this one instance, let us try exploring other options. Nothing is more important than value—it is the condition on which anything has value. (In fact, this exception to our scientific scruples is not really so, once we better understand what those scruples rest on. More of this later.)

**1.2.2 Further remarks on tough-mindedness*

Before continuing, there is a loose end. A tough-minded pragmatist may try to deny that she ultimately assumes the value of her own view. Granted, she prefers that view over its competitor views. But she may regard her preference as somewhat hedged. Her preference just reflects that *if we assume* that human flourishing has value (as we are naturally inclined to do), then tough-minded pragmatism also has value. That is so, insofar as it is the view that best

¹² This is really just generalizing a point from Sayre-McCord (1988), section 5. Sayre-McCord observes that scientifically-minded nihilists explain human behavior without appeal to values, on the grounds that this is a *better* explanation. And such explanatory values are contra nihilism. Above, I extend this so that *any* claim to the effect that nihilism is “better” is at odds with nihilism. (Sayre-McCord and I are also similar in focusing on value and explanation, but his *explanandum* is specific behaviors, whereas mine is value itself.)

Let me here add my apologies for (unintentionally) not citing Sayre-McCord (1988) in the Preamble of Parent (2017). His piece is a forceful expression of the clash between the scientific image and morality (*qua* part of the manifest image), and though I read it years ago, I have no doubt that it influenced my thinking greatly.

¹³ Kahane (2014, 2017, etc.) rightly observes that if nothing really matters, then it doesn’t really matter that nothing really matters. There would be no real reason to be upset over the truth of nihilism. Even so, one hopes for some *positive reason to affirm life*, and not just lack of a principled reason to reject it. There is a palpable need for affirmation, moreover, when life bears down hard. It is perverse, at a time of crisis, to rehearse that one’s suffering doesn’t really matter, given that nothing really matters. (In fact, it can make things worse; it naturally leads to the idea that whether one commits suicide doesn’t really matter.)

comports with scientific thinking (which in turn, promotes our flourishing). She thus naturally accepts the value of tough-minded pragmatism, since she naturally assumes the value of human flourishing. But, she may add, this is not to say that anything *really* has a value.

There is something strange in this, however, for the pragmatist admits that she is prone to assume the value of her pragmatism, even though she also asserts that there are no values. So according to her own position, she is prone to indulge in assumptions that she believes to be false. Now this may not be too damning—everyone succumbs to pretense now and then. But unfortunately, this gaffe of practical rationality generalizes in a disastrous way. The problem is that, on the assumption that there are no values, *no* choice ultimately has a rationale—not just concerning what to believe, but also concerning what to do (including a choice to do anything at all). The tough-minded pragmatist implies that she often *assumes* her choices have a rationale. But she also sees herself as knowing better, or at least, as believing truly that her choices do *not* have a rationale. For she sees the world as containing no values by which a rationale could be given. So, there is ultimately no reason for any action of any sort.

The point here is important enough to repeat more carefully. Where S is a subject, and Φ is any act whatsoever (whether it be an act of believing, or a more prototypical “bodily” action):

(4) S has a good reason to Φ only if Φ has an intrinsic or extrinsic value. [Assume]

(5) There are no intrinsic or extrinsic values. [As per the regress argument above]

(6) So, it is not the case that S has a good reason to Φ . [From (4), (5)]

Since S and Φ are arbitrary, it thus follows that no one has a good reason to do anything. To be clear, this does not demonstrate that S has a good reason *not* to Φ , for any given Φ . To lack a pro-rationale is not the same as possessing a con-rationale (cf. note 13). But it is left to non-rational forces whether one Φ s. And what if one is gripped by mood where no Φ appeals? (A

Nietzschean Übermensch can always find the will to act in an otherwise valueless world. But if the pragmatist is human, all too human, the fire in her soul may not burn so consistently.)

Clinical psychology has made impressive advances in the past 20 years, even apart from advances in psychopharmacology. So if one is gripped by such a mood, let me reassure the reader that treatment is available.¹⁴ Nevertheless, there at least remains a *philosophical* problem: If the tough-minded pragmatist follows the consequences of her view up to the nihilism at (5), then she is left without a good reason to do anything. And that, of course, includes being a tough-minded pragmatist.

1.2.3 Instrumentalism

Metaphysics—can't live with it, can't live without it. That might be the mantra of tough-minded pragmatism, or rather, an expression of the discord it creates. Despite the vigorous commitment to empirical method, the tough-minded pragmatist still finds the world blanketed with an inexplicable layer of values.¹⁵ Must it be this way?

There is a different way to adjudicate scientific thinking with the metaphysical urge. This, unfortunately, has also been called “pragmatism” on occasion. However, a more informative term is ‘instrumentalism’ (as long we do not flatly presume that an instrumental

¹⁴ I am by no means a therapist, but for the non-religious, one helpful framework is the “secular Buddhism” of, e.g., Robert Wright (2017). Yet though Wright identifies as a “naturalist,” it is unclear whether he is truly an atheist, strictly speaking. Regardless, his book can offer a strict naturalist a powerful way of living, a sort of “everyday therapy” bundled with an “everyday ethics.” (But I cannot quite rest content with it myself, as his naturalism still breeds a cognitive dissonance by assuming existence of “values,” as per the regress argument below.)

¹⁵ Some may be impressed by the *unobservable* status of values, as something at odds with scientific thinking. But as noted by several writers (including Sayre-McCord, op. cit.), science indeed deals with unobservables, e.g., gauge bosons. And the theory-ladenness of observation, and the technological contingencies in what counts as “observable,” strike many as obstacles for a principled observable-unobservable distinction.

Others may reject the existence of values by appeal to Occam’s razor (a.k.a. parsimony). Such an appeal may seem compelling, even if intrinsic values were explicable in principle. But my view is that the justificatory force of Occam’s razor has been exaggerated. See chapter 11 for details.

theory is more likely to be true).¹⁶ The difference between instrumentalism and the other “pragmatisms” is that, instead giving a *prescription* for scientific thinking, we instead recognize science under a different *description*. The earlier pragmatisms were prescriptive: They advised for (or against) a restriction on scientific thinking, because of (or despite) the fragile human psyche. Yet perhaps our troubles stem from a wrong-headed *description* of what science amounts to in the first place.

Instrumentalism finds expression in James’ statement that “*Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas in which we can rest.*” Yet James here is characterizing the view he calls “pragmatism,” and he does not always do this clearly. Indeed, in the same region of text, he also describes pragmatism as a method conjoined with a theory of truth. And though a true theory is seen as a maximally instrumental theory, none of this implies, nor is it implied by, the view that *any* theory is ultimately a (more or less effective) instrument. After all, one might say that theories are primarily instruments, while denying that maximal usefulness is the condition on which a theory is ‘true’. Truth might consist in some other property (even a “correspondence” with reality), even if our activity of theorizing is better explained by the instrumental value of our theories.

This general view (that theories are instruments) is what I wish to dub “instrumentalism,” keeping it separate from James’ other “pragmatist” doctrines.

[The remainder of the chapter is omitted]

¹⁶ ‘Instrumentalism’ is a good term for getting introduced to the basic idea—but later I will prefer the term ‘fictionalism’ (though this has misleading connotations at this stage). Eventually, the view will be supplemented in various ways, resulting in a successor I refer to as the “revised Kantian” position.

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