

## I. Introduction

In this work I consider two trends within a more comprehensive orientation in the Anglo-Saxon and Continental philosophical movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Namely, I concentrate on two branches of what I call here non-representationalist paradigms of thought, namely, on pragmatic naturalism, and philosophical hermeneutics. In particular, I discuss the views of several representatives of these schools, those of John Dewey, Justus Buchler, and in turn, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Martin Heidegger. My aim is to position their approaches in the light of one another, and that can be done most readily along the issues of art, truth, and event.

This way of posing my topic has been inspired by John Ryder's recently published volume (2013) titled *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*. In this book Ryder develops the comprehensive idea as well as the metaphysical and epistemological implications of a contemporary version of pragmatic naturalism—a philosophical stance that reconciles, among others, pragmatist constructivism with naturalist objectivism—and he also demonstrates the explanatory power and fruitfulness of such an approach when applied to issues pertaining to “social experience,” namely, topics related to democracy, national and international politics, and education. Although Ryder explicates the proposed pragmatic naturalist standpoint mostly by referring to more or less contemporary issues and debates in philosophy, his endeavor is primarily informed by the views of two major representatives of The Columbia School Naturalism.<sup>1</sup> It is Justus Buchler's metaphysics of natural complexes and his thoroughly relational notion of nature that inspire most the metaphysical and epistemological sides of the version of pragmatist naturalism Ryder advocates, and it is John Dewey's thick conception of democracy that guides—beside the epistemological insights gained from Buchlerian naturalism—the author's approach to diverse aspects of social experience.

Nevertheless, the views of these two major philosophical heroes of Ryder's volume clash on one point with one another according to the author's presentation, and that point concerns above all the cognitive import of art, and by implication the issue of truth as event – two topics which, in turn, pertain to the very heart of the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, namely, to the ontology of art developed in *Truth and Method*. Dewey

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<sup>1</sup> The four major figures of Columbia School Naturalism were Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, John Dewey, John Herman Randall, Jr., and Justus Buchler.

figures here as having much more comprehensive notions of knowledge, truth, and human interaction with the world in general, than those addressed in most of the more recent—or, for that matter, more traditional—epistemologies, notions broad enough for comprehending the whole spectrum of human experience. Yet, Ryder also points to several aspects of his thought which are less satisfactory, especially when at stake is that truth which artworks are able to convey. In turn, Buchler is presented as having developed a theory of judgment which successfully improves on Dewey's conception of experience, in such a way that it is able to do justice to the cognitive dimension of art, among others. Although in his discussion of the issue of art and knowledge the author does not refer to Gadamer and his ontology of art, it is striking just in how many important respects the views he presents—following Buchler—converge with those of Gadamer, although the remaining crucial differences are not to be overlooked, either.

Thus, one of my primary interests in this work is to map, compare, confront with one another, and position the main features of these approaches, in particular the various ways they conceive the basic manner in which humans comport themselves toward their external world, and thereby achieve meaning in their life. This concerns first and foremost an issue regarding to which one can observe a clear affinity between the overall philosophical outlooks of the investigated approaches, indeed, a common feature of pragmatism in general, and philosophical hermeneutics. Namely, both attempt to overcome the traditional representationalist paradigms of conceiving the basic nature of the relation between humans and their environing world. As opposed to the strict line, of Cartesian origin, drawn between the subject and its objective world—which is to be bridged again via methodological means—both of these philosophical trends entertain a more elementary and much more comprehensive idea of how humans relate to the world. Such a non-representationalist orientation is carried out in both camps by appealing to the primacy of—although diversely conceived, nevertheless basic notions of—practice, over against the traditional representationalist privileging of methodologically secured theoretical world-comportment. Thereby they are also compelled to offer newly construed accounts of knowledge and truth, as in fact they do.

All these appoint the main issues I'll concentrate on. First I examine one-by-one the pertaining views of the two discussed representatives of The Columbia School Naturalism, namely, Dewey and Buchler. Here I'll address in particular their respective conceptions of interaction, cognition, and truth, all of them obviously being informed by their respective notions of practice. Since it is primarily Buchler's approach that shows considerable affinity

to that of Gadamer, I proceed by sketching and comparing their respective views on scientific inquiry and art. Furthermore, in order to map in more depth the similarities and differences between the mentioned two versions of pragmatic naturalism, on the one hand, and the hermeneutic philosophies of Heidegger and Gadamer, on the other, I offer a short historical genealogy of their non-representationalist paradigms of thought. Having done so, I concentrate on the two pivotal points on which these philosophical stances seem to converge with, and at the same time diverge from, one another, namely, on the pragmatist notion of nature, and in turn, on the fundamental Heideggerian concept—followed also by Gadamer—of the so called ontological difference. Since the pertaining considerations will lead us to different conceptions of spatio-temporal relations as well as to some sense of the notion of “event”, as a next step I insert a short discussion of a specific linguistic phenomenon, namely, the middle voice, by means of which some basic features of hermeneutic philosophy pertaining to the mentioned notions, and thereby its specificity within the non-representationalist paradigms, are to be highlighted. Finally, I conclude by focusing on and summing up the common and different traits of pragmatic naturalism and philosophical hermeneutics, especially with respect to the rather epistemological issues implied by them.