Still Searching for a Pragmatist Pluralism

Our argument in "Why Pragmatists Cannot Be Pluralists" can be stated succinctly. Any view that deserves to be called pragmatist is broadly meliorist in that it aims at the resolution of conflicts by means of methods that can be plausibly held to be intelligent, rational, open, and non-violent. Among pragmatists there are two general styles of pursuing this meliorist aim.[1] According to what we called *inquiry pragmatism*, conflicts are to be *resolved* by the thoroughgoing application of proper methods of inquiry; this would require not only processes of ongoing experimentation but also efforts to maintain the conditions under which inquiry could continue. According to what we called *meaning pragmatism*, conflicts are to be *dissolved* by a pragmatic reconstruction of the terms in which the conflict is cast; this means that, when confronted with apparently interminable disputes, we ought to revise our vocabularies in ways that, as William James advised, "bring in peace" (1977, p. 349).[2] In both cases, pragmatic practice presumes that (1) conflicts are resolvable by intelligent means, and (2) it is better to resolve conflicts intelligently than to let them stand. There is a family of views popular among contemporary philosophers, political theorists, and policymakers that is called *pluralism*. Although pluralism comes in several versions, ranging from Berlin-style ontological pluralism to later Rawlsian epistemic or procedural varieties, all pluralisms deny (1) or (2), or both. Our conclusion is that pragmatists cannot be pluralists.

Of course, this obvious demonstration would be of no interest were it not for the fact that contemporary pragmatists working in the classical idiom are fond of characterizing themselves as pluralists. It would be uncharitable to conclude simply that all such pragmatists are caught in a simple confusion, so these theorists must mean by 'pluralism' something else. But *what?* Our survey of the contemporary literature found, despite frequent if not excessive use of the term, no explicit analysis of the concept and no comparative engagement with the alternative versions of pluralism in currency. We thus took up the task of trying to discern for ourselves what pragmatists mean by 'pluralism'. This led us to the view that by 'pluralism' pragmatists typically mean a *principled* commitment to admirable habits of openness, inclusion, tolerance, anti-hegemony, and experimentalism in all aspects of moral, political, and intellectual life.[3] We share

these commitments, but challenge the value of the pragmatists' terminology.

Our case against sustaining the pragmatists' habit of employing 'pluralism' as a blanket for the above commitments is itself straightforwardly pragmatic. As the pragmatists' commitments are incompatible with the range of views called 'pluralism' in broader, non-pragmatist arenas, the pragmatists' habit of characterizing their commitments as 'pluralism' can only invite confusion and encourage insularity. As both confusion and insularity are blocks to the kind of ameliorative social and political programs advocated by pragmatists, we conclude that pragmatists should drop the language of pluralism.

However, we do not see our argument as simply recommending increased semantic discipline among contemporary pragmatists. The oft-cited but much less often followed Deweyan injunction to surrender the "problems of philosophers" and pursue "the problems of men" (1980, p. 46) applies equally to the problems of *pragmatist* philosophers. We today confront a social, political, and moral landscape that invites analyses according to which deep and pressing conflicts are the manifestation of incommensurable world views and as such are beyond intelligent or rational amelioration.[4] Pragmatists must oppose these tendencies; accordingly, they must *oppose* views commonly known as pluralism. When pragmatism's aspiration to be a fully public philosophy is conjoined with its fallibilism and experimentalism, such opposition must manifest itself in direct confrontation with pluralist arguments. Thus, we conclude that insofar as pragmatists are *not* undertaking the project of critically engaging pluralists, they are betraying their own doctrine.

In the spirit of open inquiry, self-criticism, and cross-sub-disciplinary dialogue, we delivered versions of "Why Pragmatists Cannot be Pluralists" to pragmatist audiences on two occasions. Our arguments withstood objections raised in these arenas. Here, we are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the foregoing critical essays. We shall argue that none of these overturns our fundamental position: we still hold that pragmatists cannot be pluralists. In order to ensure that we attend to each line of criticism with the necessary care, we shall address each response in turn. Before beginning, we should like to thank our interlocutors for taking the time to craft their replies, and Peter Hare for organizing this symposium. We share with Hare the hope that this exchange will open the way for new work among pragmatists and encourage engagement with contemporary non-pragmatist theorists.

Sullivan and Lysaker: Yes, We're Talking to You

Michael Sullivan and John Lysaker (hereafter, S&L) challenge our thesis on three fronts. First, they maintain that our choice of definitions of 'pluralism' is idiosyncratic and ill-fitted for our purposes. Second, they hold that our argument that shallow pluralism is pluralism in name only is unsound. And third, they contend that our argument against *modus vivendi* pluralism on the basis of its instability misses the fallibilist heart of the pragmatist enterprise. Their essay is

rhetorically forceful and pointed, but they are mistaken on all fronts. The polemical tone of S&L's paper invites a response in kind, and we shall oblige.

With regard to the first challenge, both in our original paper and above we provide a rough sense of what we take pragmatists to mean by the term 'pluralism', and argue that it is inconsistent with the pluralisms in currency in the wider philosophical arena. Apparently, S&L reject our characterization of the pragmatists' use of the term.[5] This normally places the dialectical onus on the purportedly pluralist pragmatist to provide a procedurally viable pluralism that is not one of our options and is consistent with pragmatism. If we have overlooked or missed some feature of the pragmatic tradition's explicit formulations of the view, we ask that it be brought forth. The challenge is to formulate a pragmatic pluralism that is not shallow. S&L make no attempt to do so.

Instead, S&L press their supposed analogies between our argument and Lewis's restricted notion of democracy and the benighted soul who objects to Kant's transcendental philosophy because it is not like Indian mysticism. But these purportedly analogous circumstances are cases where there are clear differences between the two contested uses of the terms; that is, they are cases of demonstrable and uncontroversial equivocation. Like James with the squirrel debate, one addresses such conflicts by pointing out the difference between two senses of the same word. So the Kantian will say to the mystic, "By 'transcendental' I denote a method of philosophizing from a certain perspective where we say something is actual, and then ask how it is possible." Or with regard to 'democracy', we say to Lewis that there are different forms of democracy such that the United States is not a direct democracy, but a constitutional democracy. According to S&L, then, we have made a simple mistake; hence a simple response should be in the offing. So where is it? Is it so obvious that S&L don't need to give it, or even provide citations to work in which it can be found? Or are they bluffing? A bluff is as good as a full house even in philosophy ... except when you get called on it.

S&L's second challenge is that our argument that shallow pluralism is pluralism in name only is not sound. They argue that we are wrong to contend that monists may exemplify all the descriptive and procedural components of the shallow pluralist program. In our original essay, Plato and Descartes were our examples of tolerant monists. S&L concede that although these philosophers meet the *descriptive* criteria for shallow pluralism, they reject the idea that Plato and Descartes are sufficiently committed to the *procedural* criterion of *toleration*. S&L present two notions of how monists might meet the former criteria but fail to satisfy the latter. They argue that although one may meet the descriptive requirement of granting a variety of views access to public debate, one may nonetheless fail to be tolerant if one argues that all views other than one's own are bunk or if one seeks to persecute those who promote opposing views.

S&L are correct to think that the suppression of dissent by raw force is not a tolerant procedure, but it is *not* clear that the enterprise of demonstrating that

others' views are false constitutes intolerance. What, after all, is the properly tolerant response to deep disagreement? Would S&L have it that tolerance requires us to allow those with whom we disagree a place in the debate, but never engage them by offering criticisms of their views? Or do they hold that tolerance requires that we agree? Surely tolerance can exist only where there is disagreement, and toleration *qua* mutual disinterest is no toleration at all. There is no intolerance in thinking that those with whom you disagree are wrong; there is, however, a serious form of intolerance in *acting like you've already shown, or don't have to show, where they are wrong.*

There is nothing in our view of toleration that a Cartesian or Platonist could not abide. But perhaps the thought driving S&L's point is that there is no *positive* case for toleration made by these thinkers? Maybe this is true, but it is of no consequence since the case that shallow pluralism is consistent with monism about value nonetheless stands. To see this, consider as another historical example John Stuart Mill. In *On Liberty* (1991), Mill argues for a robust theory of individual liberty on the basis of a monist theory of value. Mill's argument is, roughly, that a society which protects a broad range of individual liberties and which cultivates in citizens a positive appreciation of diversity is best at maximizing that which is of intrinsic value, namely pleasure. It would be difficult to name a thinker more strongly committed to the values of toleration and diversity than Mill. And yet, as he regards "utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions" (1991, p. 15), he is an unabashed value monist. And so our original position remains: Shallow pluralism is consistent with value monism, and thus not really pluralism at all.

S&L further charge that our version of shallow pluralism is incomplete. In addition to our admittedly limited list of procedural requirements constitutive of the shallow pluralist enterprise, S&L propose that a further requirement be added, namely, that one should forego searching for criteria for categorically resolving disputes. The requirement is posited on the close connection between dogmatism and intolerance — namely, that if one dogmatically holds a view, one is inclined to be intolerant of those who do not share it. We do not dispute this connection; however, it is unclear that the pursuit of categorical solutions must yield either dogmatism or intolerance.

Surely one could believe that there is but one correct answer to an ethical conflict, look for it, but nonetheless take a fallibilist attitude concerning one's current answers and be willing to recognize that at least in the short-run several mutually exclusive positions are well justified. What motivates this fallibilist attitude is the thought that when confronted with conflict, one should inquire. On the fallibilist story, the value of openness to diverse viewpoints and the willingness to countenance reasonable disagreement consists *precisely* in that such attitudes are necessary for proper truth-seeking. Hence S&L get the point entirely backwards. It is not the *search* for categorical, definitive, and final resolutions to problems that generates dogmatism, but rather the *unwarranted*

confidence that one has such answers. To explain: Imagine someone unwarrantedly believing herself to have the final answer to some issue. Is she dogmatic because she'd been searching for that kind of answer? We contend that it is the *unwarranted confidence* in the finality of her answer that is constitutive of her dogmatism, not *her search* for such an answer! Further, it is precisely in the ongoing process of pursuing such answers that false stopping points and dogmatism are held at bay.

A second procedural difficulty with S&L's proposal is evident when we ask the question, What role would a Cartesian foundationalist have in the pluralist conversation were S&L's proposal in place? No Cartesian could abide the requirement that we give up on the search for criteria for categorically resolving disputes. Are S&L proposing — in the name of tolerance and anti-dogmatism! — that we ignore or exclude foundationalists? But this is inconsistent with the fallibilist component of the shallow pluralist program because, after all, it may be that there are some beliefs that are incorrigible or immediately justified. Suppose that some foundationalist proposed an argument that there are such beliefs and that they provided the kind of criteria that S&L deny are possible. Would S&L propose that we are not to countenance such arguments precisely because we are pluralists? The prohibition seems then to treat the rejection of categorical solutions as itself a categorical solution. Such a prohibition is procedurally anti-fallibilist, and is, as a consequence, in tension with the other components of shallow pluralism. Consequently, S&L's proposal is unstable. Yet, *contra* S&L's anticipations, the instability does not consist in the tenuousness of *modus vivendi* power balancing; rather, it is unstable because it is *procedurally incoherent*.

S&L's third challenge is that *modus vivendi* pluralism is more acceptable to the Deweyan fallibilist program than we appreciate. Note, though, that this is beside the point, as our case against a Deweyan shallow pluralism derives not from the dangers of the *modus vivendi*, power-balancing model, but from its own structural flaw.

Regardless, S&L reject our argument against *modus vivendi* pluralism. They pose three challenges. First they claim that since we do not have 'perfect foreknowledge' of future events, our predictions of the model's instability are unwarranted. Second they contend that the instability of a model is not yet detrimental to the program because fallibilists aren't looking for final answers. Third they maintain that our review of valuational solutions to the instability — namely, indifference and recognition — is insufficiently clear.

S&L's perfect foreknowledge objection is nothing more than a smokescreen. Peace that is secured by the relative balance of power between two factions who would each annihilate the other should the chance arise will dissolve when the balance of power dissipates, or appears to shift even slightly. Given that environments change and the fates are fickle, such truces are unstable. We take it that we need not catalogue the historical evidence for this position. Does this require perfect foreknowledge? No. At least no more than is required to make

good decisions when making seating arrangements for a wedding reception. Or for one to lock one's car doors when parking downtown.

We agree that the fallibilist attitude S&L take toward *modus vivendi* instability is an appropriate attitude to take toward political solutions. Often political quick fixes are all we can expect. But we deny that this could be the end of the story with Deweyan politics. How is a Hobbesian truce between conflicted parties supposed to yield the way of life that constitutes Deweyan democracy? On this picture democracy presents no "task before us."

S&L propose that their model for Deweyan *modus vivendi* pluralism is stable enough and proffers these goods. They propose, further, that our sketch of *modus vivendi* pluralism is too thin, and it is with a more nuanced notion of *recognition* that the model may be saved from our criticisms. However, their proposed notion of recognition also fails to address our argument.

Our claim is that recognition, as a background requirement for securing the peace (and other goods) past the threat of annihilation is a requirement (regardless of its specific content) that cannot be presumed by a *pluralist* program. S&L propose the Habermasian notion of recognition as one we do not sufficiently address. But note that this Habermasian requirement is entirely conditional: S&L say recognition is "a precondition for meaningful debate." Yet this is to presume that the opposed parties are *already committed* to communicating with each other rather than to simply *fighting it out*. Accordingly, S&L's point is, again, backwards: The requirement is supposed to *motivate* the commitment to recognition, not *be motivated by it*. On the one hand, unless both parties are already committed to speaking non-coercively with each other, the claims of recognition are beside the point. Again, this is because Hobbesian peace is precisely the kind of peace where those commitments do not obtain. On the other hand, recognition may be a value that the parties *ought to have*. But if this is the case, then there are some overriding values to countenance when facing value conflict, and this amounts to the falsity of pluralism. It follows, then, that recognition is a structurally flawed and, in the end, anti-pluralist means for saving *modus vivendi* pluralism.

Finally, let us address the general criticism that we do not provide the pragmatist with sufficient motivation for bothering with what non-pragmatists mean by pluralism. S&L contend we do not say what is at stake for pragmatists such that they should heed our recommendations to even consider dropping the term so that they may more fruitfully debate with pluralists. But in both our original essay and in our introductory remarks above we in fact *do* make a case for the kind of engagement we are calling for, and we think that this case is *pragmatic* in character. To repeat: Current social and political conditions invite pluralist analyses. Such analyses contend that familiar conflicts between cultures, religions, ethnic and economic groups are irremediable except by power and coercion. The suggestion that processes of collective inquiry could help to ameliorate such conflicts is rendered sadly naïve if not covertly tyrannical. If the

pluralist analyses are allowed to stand unchallenged, the prospects for the kind of society envisioned by pragmatists worsen; if the pluralists are correct, then pragmatists must abandon their doctrine. Insofar as pragmatists wish to avoid error and promote the goods they hold dear, they must engage those with whom they disagree; insofar as pluralism is a prominent and publicly engaged opposing philosophical view, pragmatists should join the debate.

Such is, for the third time, our pragmatic case for dropping the term. S&L do not acknowledge, let alone address, this argument in their response. Nor do they give any indication of what they take to be the pragmatic value of retaining the term 'pluralism'. And so once again they fail to meet typical dialectical burdens. In this way, their title, which alludes to the unsettling scene in Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* of Travis Bickle standing alone before a mirror while merely pretending to confront an adversary, is especially apt.

Eldridge: Pragmatism in Mixed Company

In his characteristically reserved and reflective contribution, Michael Eldridge expresses his continuing allegiance to the term 'pluralism' even though he is willing to concede our arguments. Eldridge's piece is especially helpful in that it confirms our position regarding what pragmatists typically mean by 'pluralism'. Describing a view he eventually calls "soft pluralism," Eldridge both acknowledges the inevitability of conflict, disagreement, and dissent across society, and affirms the value of practices that seek to transform intelligently these forces into means out of which might develop resolutions, improved conditions, and better practices. He upholds the values of toleration, openness, inclusiveness, and experimentalism, and, in the end, allows that the practice of these values must extend not only to pragmatists who reject pluralism but also to philosophers who reject pragmatism. We share Eldridge's attitudes, and promise to do our best to repress cringes when he refers to himself as a "soft pluralist" in our company.

Eldridge's contribution occasions a thought not developed explicitly in "Why Pragmatists Cannot Be Pluralists." As Eldridge's discussion suggests, pragmatists are committed to the values of openness, toleration, and the like *for instrumental reasons.* That is, these commitments are justified not by way of some theory of intrinsic value, but rather because they are appropriate *means* to some end. What is this end? Eldridge gives a good pragmatist answer: he upholds these values because he wants to live in a Deweyan democratic polity that can intelligently transform experience and reconstruct society. He correctly believes that the practice of these values is necessary to that end. But this kind of argument implicitly entails that there are no rational-yet-irreconcilable conflicts at the level of these ends. Pragmatists are tolerant and open *because* their social ends require these attitudes; so what looks like a pluralism at one level is really only the practical requirement of a deeper anti-pluralism at the level of ends.

This point is exemplified by Eldridge's willingness to "include in [his]

pragmatist tent all sorts of people who call themselves 'pragmatists' but who disagree with one another about a whole variety of issues." Of course, the pragmatist tent Eldridge alludes to is a loosely-spun web of practices and principles that is ever in progress and always revisable. But the point is nonetheless that the tent is the *pragmatist's* tent, and the invitation is to join processes-in-progress by which these principles and practices are transformed. It is worth emphasizing that this tent, though it is a Quinean patchwork and not a fixed canopy, is nonetheless *not* value neutral and impartial. The invitation into Eldridge's tent will constitute to some an invitation to abandon their most central and cherished commitments. For example, consider the Catholic who believes that certain pronouncements of the Pope are literally *infallible* and the reformed epistemologist who holds that the epistemic authority of certain texts trumps any countervailing evidence, observation, or experiment. These individuals *cannot* join the pragmatists' project of subjecting all claims to the test of ongoing inquiry. So the pragmatist's soft pluralism can serve as an invitation only to those who already share the most fundamental pragmatist commitments. Eldridge's soft pluralism seems to us not unlike the view we called "shallow pluralism," and it is not a pluralism at all.

More importantly, we hold that Eldridge's soft pluralism is in fact at odds with the pragmatist social aspirations that Eldridge endorses. If we are to pursue a more perfect democratic practice along Deweyan lines we must see our social obligations as requiring more than a gracious invitation to others to adopt our aspirations and join our club. To be sure, many persons not in the pragmatist tent are thoughtful, intelligent, and reflective. Many do not merely *not share* the Deweyan aspirations, they *reject* them, and some who reject them offer powerful *arguments* against the Deweyan project. Here the pragmatist's fallibilism cuts both ways; it is not merely a weapon for criticizing others' quest for certainty, it is an instrument of *self-criticism*. And the means of this self-criticism consist in part in *confronting* the arguments, objections, reservations, and criticisms of those with whom we disagree at the most fundamental levels. In this way, the pragmatist aspiration to craft a social world more closely responsive to the best processes of intelligent inquiry *requires* that circle-the-wagons soft pluralism give way to a more contentious and activist pragmatism, one that openly seeks out mixed company and unreceptive interlocutors, one that thereby accepts the risks inherent in any living philosophy.

Misak: Pluralism and the Practice of Inquiry

Cheryl Misak accepts part of our thesis, but backs away from the full conclusion that pragmatists cannot be pluralists. She agrees that insofar as pluralism is the thesis that value incommensurability is the proper default meta-ethic from which our philosophical deliberations about value are to proceed, pluralism and pragmatism are at odds. This is so, she argues, because such pluralism is at odds with the regulative assumptions of proper inquiry. Following

Peirce, Misak maintains that inquiry is the attempt to get the right answer to some question. Accordingly, inquiry proceeds upon the regulative assumption that the questions to which it is applied admit of some right answer. The phenomenology of moral experience — particularly the experience of moral disagreement — leads us to inquire into moral questions by exchanging reasons, arguments, and considerations. That is, moral experience leads us to moral inquiry and moral inquiry proceeds on the assumption that pluralism is false.

So no pragmatist can be, as Misak puts it, a "principled pluralist." We take it that Misak means by "principled pluralism" the thesis that we can know *ex ante* that certain moral disputes are irresolvable, and thus that inquiry into those disputes would be futile. However, Misak also holds that the pragmatist cannot be what we shall call a "principled anti-pluralist." Principled anti-pluralism is the thesis that we can know *ex ante* that every dispute admits of inquiry and can be resolved at least in the long run. Put another way, the principled anti-pluralist holds the quasi-Hegelian view that all conflicts are transitory bumps along the road of inquiry, necessary obstacles on the way to a truth that we cannot help but realize. Hence Misak contends that a pragmatist must allow for the *possibility* that inquiry could lead to pluralist conclusions with regard to certain domains of opinion. She offers two types of case in which inquiry could lead to pluralism.

First, Misak asks us to consider a classic tragic conflict of the *Sophie's Choice* variety: at the insistence of a Nazi guard, a Jewish mother must choose one of her two children to send to the gas chamber. Misak holds that this kind of case reveals that some moral conflicts are such that "no decent solution" is possible. No solution is decent, we suppose, because every course of action involves an irreparable and unacceptable loss, a "wretched compromise." We concede that such cases are possible, and that when they do occur they mark a genuine tragedy for the agents involved. Yet this is not in itself enough to entail the pluralist conclusion. Certainly, there is no decent solution *for the mother,* no course of action will seem to *her* acceptable. But this is consistent with there being a single and morally optimal solution to her conflict.

To see this, consider that if any of the going utilitarian theories is true, there could be a single, decisive, and correct answer to the question, "What should the mother do?" Admittedly, such an answer may be of little consolation to the mother, and even a knock-down proof of utilitarianism may be insufficient to convince her that the prescribed action is morally proper. Moral philosophy is different from moral psychology in at least this respect. Nonetheless, that there is no action available that would seem proper to the mother does not entail the pluralist meta-ethical view that the conflict is "impossible."

In part, the question turns on what one takes the tragedy of the case to consist in. A utilitarian could argue, plausibly in our view, that the tragedy consists not in there being no correct choice (where would the tragedy be in *that?*), but in the fact that the mother, *even if she does the right thing,* must suffer terribly and must suffer as much as she would were she to do the morally wrong

thing. Put another way, the tragedy of the case consists in that no action could seem decent, *even the morally proper one!* In any case, the point is that a monist value theory can countenance the tragic nature of such cases. The pluralist conclusion follows only if it can be shown that monist ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, are false. But surely *this* is a matter into which there is still much inquiry to be done.

Second, Misak invites us to consider cases in which there are "a number of equally good and culturally specific ways of answering a moral question." The thought here is that inquiry may lead to the conclusion that there are *several* distinct but well-justified answers. It seems especially likely that in cases involving cross-cultural and cross-sub-cultural comparisons we may find that "different answers will be equally acceptable."

It is unfortunate that Misak does not offer an example of the kind of case she has in mind. It seems she is thinking of cases in which a group, A, comes to recognize that some other group, B, engages in moral practices that are quite different from and in conflict with its own. Inquiry into the matter could yield the result that the respective practices of both A and B, though inconsistent with each other, are nonetheless consistent with good reasons, evidence, and argument.

We are prepared to admit with Misak that inquiry into a given question can result in this kind of rational stalemate among competing options. However, unlike the pragmatist, the pluralist is committed to the *permanence* of this condition: the deep pluralist maintains that such stalemates reveal a brute fact about value ontology, and the *modus vivendi* pluralist is committed to practices that restrict the spheres of engagement among A and B. In both cases, the result is to deny or restrict occasions for further inquiry. Surely *this* is inconsistent with the pragmatist's fallibilism, for it is to suppose that some particular outcome of inquiry — namely, that A and B, though incompatible, are equally acceptable — is beyond revision.

So we take it that where the pragmatist countenances such stalemates, she must see them as short-run indeterminacies, conflicts that in principle could be resolved by further inquiry. Of course, this does not commit the pragmatist to the practical task of refusing to let stalemates persist. Sometimes, "live and let live" policies are the best responses to conflict. However, the pragmatist *is* committed to leaving open the channels by which further inquiry regarding a stalemate could commence, and is further committed to actually pursuing those channels should circumstances require. In this respect, the pragmatist must reject deep and *modus vivendi* pluralism, and, as we have argued, these are the only genuine pluralisms.

This is not to commit the pragmatist to a program that seeks to "level all difference" in any insidious sense. In fact, we contend that the pragmatist's injunction to never abandon inquiry is a necessary component of a proper theory of difference. To explain: it is precisely because the project of continuing inquiry

constantly places before us the rationality of those with whom we disagree that we come to respect and non-repressively tolerate deep differences. Put otherwise, it is in the process of *engaging* our differences — exchanging arguments, voicing criticisms, and responding to objections — that we come to see each other as reasoning and reasonable agents. By contrast, where processes of inquiry are *disengaged*, straw men, as well as other, more pernicious distortions, thrive.

Thus we can accommodate Misak's points. Pragmatists must indeed recognize the possibility that moral inquiry, even when properly conducted, might fail to produce a single decisive resolution to a given conflict. But this concession is not sufficient to block the more general conclusion that pragmatists cannot be pluralists. What would be required to get *that* conclusion would be an argument to the effect that pragmatists may hold that, with regard to certain moral conflicts, inquiry would be *in principle* futile.[6] But no pragmatist can hold such a view. The pragmatist is committed to the revisibility of all outcomes of inquiry, including those outcomes that led her to previously judge a certain conflict a stalemate. This fallibilism, moreover, leads the pragmatist to adopt a state of readiness to re-engage inquiry when new experience or evidence so requires. This in turn entails a receptiveness to new experiences and evidence from diverse sources. So, again, it seems that the pragmatist can be a shallow pluralist. But a shallow pluralist is not a pluralist at all. And so pragmatists cannot be pluralists.

Jackman: A Noble but Unsuccessful Proposal
In his careful and well-argued contribution, Henry Jackman takes up directly the challenge set forth in our paper. Jackman not only asserts, with S&L and Eldridge, that indeed pragmatists can be pluralists, he actually attempts to *construct* a pragmatist pluralism. Accordingly, Jackman also goes further than Misak. He does not present pluralism as a lamentable but possible outcome of inquiry for which pragmatists must be prepared; instead, he presents pluralism as a positive entailment of his pragmatism. The result of Jackman's endeavors is a fascinating constructivist-pragmatist version of value pluralism. However, as we shall argue, Jackman's pragmatist pluralism suffers an internal inconsistency.

Jackman contends that our argument in "Why Pragmatists Cannot Be Pluralists" is based upon a false trilemma between deep, shallow, and *modus vivendi* pluralism. He maintains that a constructivist pluralism based in a Jamesian story about value is a fourth possibility that escapes our objections. However, in the end, Jackman's constructivist program is either a *modus vivendi* pluralism, or it is anti-constructivist and anti-pluralist.

Jackman's proposal confronts a dilemma that can be derived from three of his constructivist commitments. Jackman holds that:

(1) "[V]alues are *produced* by our practice of valuing."
(2) "Value judgments aspire to be truth-apt, and

because of this, any set of valuations can be
criticized for being inconsistent."
(3) "Valuations must be brought into 'wide' reflective
equilibrium, and they succeed only by being true if
they eventually do so."

Note, first, that (1) is subject to two interpretations. On the one hand, one could
take (1) to mean that there is nothing more to value than the practice of
individuals making value judgments. That is, (1) could be taken as the claim that
the fact that some subject values x makes x valuable. Call this the *phenomenalism*
interpretation. On the other hand, one could take (1) to mean that value involves
not simply the practice of making value judgments, but also the process of
coordinating such judgments. On this view, the practice of valuing also entails
making value judgments about how values are to be arranged, which ones can be
sacrificed, how they may be optimally ordered, and so on. So, on this view, the
practice of valuing is at least implicitly intelligent and deliberative. This is, after
all, the point of (3) — that the reflective equilibrium of values is constitutive of
the truth of value judgments. We call this the *coordinating* interpretation.

Jackman attributes (1) to William James, and he cites specifically James's
essay on "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life." James's own formulations
of (1) favor the phenomenalism interpretation. Consider the following two
passages from James:

Moral relations have their *status*, in that being's
consciousness. So far as he feels anything to be good, he
makes it good. (1977, pp. 145-6)

[W]e see not only that without a claim actually made by
some concrete person there can be no obligation, but that
there is some obligation wherever there is a claim. (1977,
p. 148)

James's constructivism is posited on the thought that *taking a thing as valuable* is
sufficient for a thing's *having value.* He overtly makes an analogy to the
phenomenalist doctrine: "Its *esse* is *percipi*, like the *esse* of the ideals themselves
which it sustains" (1977, p. 147). The aim of philosophical theorizing, then, is to
trace the *oughts* of these values, not to the coordinating principles between them,
but to the *de facto* constitution or temperament of the consciousness from which
they arose.

In contrast with James, Jackman's use of (1) favors the *coordinating*
interpretation.[7] The norm constraining coordination is
specified in (2): the values must be consistent. Certainly the consistency
requirement is due not only to the truth-aptness of the values, but it is also a

requirement of practical reason. The values must, when organized properly, form a set that does not entail that some values are undermined when put into practice. That is, the values must collectively constitute a plan that will work. It seems, especially from the perspective of the *pragmatist* constructivist, that the grounds for the consistency requirement come from the practicability of the values. Thus the reason why inconsistent values are objectionable is not because of any specific metaphysics, but because *having* cake and *eating* it are plans for action that are not jointly satisfiable.

It is precisely because of the practical ground of value-coordination that the norm identified in (3) arises. And the practical ground is also why the coordination is not just a *subjective* (or solitary) practice, but a *social* practice. The practicability of values not only must be assessed from the perspective of an individual's values but from the values individuals have as a community. Jackman notes that what forces this is that so long as individuals do not live in "twin solitudes," recognition and interaction involves trying to bring the combined yet conflicting sets into reflective equilibrium.

So, in light of the need to occupy a shared space and use the same resources, individuals must coordinate their values. But notice that this practical story is no different from our description of *modus vivendi* pluralism. Jackman has also suggested that the indifferentist form of pluralism is a non-starter, and so he seems to be making the case for a recognitionist model. Hence Jackman notes that "[R]ecognition and interaction involves [sic] trying to bring the combined set of demands into equilibrium." Yet this presumes that the two individuals or groups *already want to* and *ought to* interact and recognize each other. However, this requirement is not entailed by Jackman's consistency requirement in (2). To be sure, tolerance and recognition are indeed the operative values behind (3), but it is not clear that they are operative in cases of real value conflict. Consider that in cases of serious conflict, people who take an attitude of tolerance towards the other side are often considered traitors by their own. Notice the way that the doctrine of appeasement with Hitler's Germany is now viewed. Or the way the gay marriage and abortion debates proceed. In cases of deep conflict such as these, it is often thought that the very *acknowledgement* that there is a position on the other side to be reckoned with, or even *responded* to, is to *betray* one's own position.[8] When we encounter those with whom we disagree over fundamental and important values, we do not see them as people with *different* or *conflicting* values, we see them as people with the *wrong* values, or *no* values at all. And the response here is that when people with the wrong values threaten our way of life, we do not go to the bargaining table with them right away. We stand up to them, we resist them, and if we can, we defeat them. It is only in cases where the prospects of successful resistance are slim that we go to the bargaining table.

Jackman's strategy hence presumes that attitudes of goodwill, tolerance, and peaceful interaction are the default. But this presumption about humans who

value and feel vulnerable in the face of real conflict is unwarranted. The principle of consistency in (2) still obtains, but it provides no direct support for (3) on the social level. That is, as a matter of practical reason on the individual level (2) underwrites (3), but this is not the case on the social level. The move from consistency to equilibrium at the social level requires that another norm be operative.

We can now state the dilemma confronting Jackman's pluralism. Either the value of recognition is one that is simply presumed to be part of the each member's value-set or it is a norm that regulates the social coordination of individual values. If it is the former, then Jackman is committed to the same background premises for stability that drove recognitionist *modus vivendi* pluralists. But, as we have argued, these commitments are not empirically sustainable. Real value conflict does not typically yield tolerance, but rather resentment and hatred. On Jackman's constructivist derivation of (3), there must be cases where values *must* be brought into reflective equilibrium because the parties *want* them to be so. The fact of the matter, however, is that in cases of genuine value conflict, the parties positively resist the idea of being brought into equilibrium. If (1) is true for these cases of value conflict, then (3) is false.

If, alternatively, Jackman takes the latter horn of the dilemma, then there are norms that constrain the coordination of values and subjects. This entails that when we disagree, we ought to do something, call it *x*, in response to the disagreement, regardless of how we feel or what we want to do. Accordingly, on this view, those who hate their opponents and are unwilling to make concessions are simply wrong to do so. This is because there are right and wrong (or better and worse) ways to coordinate the different values. But if this is so, then the process of coordinating the values does not generate all the requisite norms; that is, there are some norms that govern the coordination independently of our individual acts of coordinating. On this reading of (3), the constructivism of (1) is false.

Therefore, Jackman is committed to either a recognitionist *modus vivendi* pluralism, or he must abandon the constructivism that drives his Jamesian story about value. But in neither case can he sustain his pragmatism: *modus vivendi* pluralism is pragmatically untenable because it is unstable in practice, and to reject constructivism about value is equally at odds with pragmatism. And so, again, pragmatists cannot be pluralists.

Vanderbilt University
Robert.Talisse@vanderbilt.edu
scott.f.aikin@vanderbilt.edu

REFERNCES

Barber, Benjamin
    1995   *Jihad Vs. McWorld*. New York: Ballatine Books.

Crowder, George
    2002   *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*. London: Continuum Books.

Dewey, John
    1980   *The Middle Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 10. Jo Ann Boydston (ed.), Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Galston, William
    2002   *Liberal Pluralism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gray, John
    2000   *Two Faces of Liberalism*. New York: New Press.

Mason, Carol
    2002   *Killing for Life*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

McDermott, John (ed.)
    1977   *The Writings of William James*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mill, John Stuart
    1991   *On Liberty and Other Essays*. John Gray (ed.), New York: Oxford University Press.

Mouffe, Chantal
    2000   *The Democratic Paradox*. New York: Verso.

Talisse, Robert
    2000   "Two-Faced Liberalism." *Critical Review* 14.4: 441-458.
—— 2003   "Can Democracy be a Way of Life?" *Transactions of the C. S. Peirce Society* XXXIX.1: 1-21.
—— 2004   "Can Value Pluralists be Comprehensive Liberals?" *Contemporary Political Theory* 3.2: 127-139.

NOTES
    1.   We should emphasize that we do not contend that these two styles are mutually exclusive. In fact, most versions of pragmatism employ elements of both.
    2.   Citations to James's work throughout will be keyed to McDermott 1977.
    3.   We hasten to note that pluralists may indeed be tolerant, open, inclusive, and experimental. Our point is that pluralists, unlike pragmatists, cannot uphold these as values that can be brought to bear upon conflicts among other values. That is, pluralism rejects the very idea of such prioritizing or rank-ordering of values. Pragmatists, by contrast, hold that at least with regard to a given conflict, certain values can trump those in conflict. Clear statements of the pluralist position can be found in Crowder 2002, Galston 2002, and Gray 2000. Galston is criticized in Talisse 2004 and Gray is criticized in Talisse 2000. For a discussion of pluralism as it relates to Deweyan democracy, see Talisse 2003.
    4.   The pluralist who most explicitly endorses this kind of view is John Gray (2000). It can also be found in agonistic pluralists such as Mouffe (2000). A milder version can be found in Barber's (1995) image of "Jihad vs. McWorld."
    5.   A point that we make below should be noted here: Despite S&L's

apparent rejection of our characterization, Michael Eldridge's contribution to this symposium confirms our view of what pragmatists mean by the term.

6.   We add the qualifier "in principle" because we are willing to admit that pragmatists may hold that in certain contexts inquiry may be futile for *other* reasons: one might not have the time to complete the inquiry, or the moral costs of inquiry might be prohibitively high, etc.

7.   Given that James and Jackman employ different interpretations of (1), we take issue with Jackman's claim that the pluralist constructivist program he develops is Jamesian. Hence, if the program works, Jackman should get credit for it and in any case we should not be charged with overlooking it in the classical corpus.

8.   With respect to the abortion debate, see Mason 2002.

9.   The authors would like to thank D. Micah Hester for helpful discussion. Talisse would like to acknowledge that this essay was written with the generous support of the Center for Ethics and Public Affairs of the Murphy Institute for Political Economy at Tulane University.