Pluralism, Pragmatism and American Democracy

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A Minority Report

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Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

—Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, 1776.

Perhaps it is a universal truth that the loss of liberty at home is to be charged to the provisions against danger, real or pretended from abroad.

—James Madison, Letter to Jefferson, May 13, 1798.

The meanings delivered by confirmed observation, experimentation, and calculation, scientific facts and principles, serve as tests of the values which tradition transmits and of those which emotion suggests. Whatever is not compatible with them must be eliminated in any sincere philosophizing. This fact confers upon scientific knowledge an incalculably important office in philosophy. But the criterion is negative; the exclusion of the inconsistent is far from being identical with a positive test which demands that only what has been scientifically verifiable shall provide the entire content of philosophy. It is the difference between an imagination that acknowledges its responsibility to meet the logical demands of ascertained facts, and a complete abdication of all imagination in behalf of a prosy literalism.

—John Dewey, "Philosophy and Civilization," 1927.

Jefferson was not an "individualist" in the sense of the British laissez-faire liberal school. Individual human beings receive the right of self-government "with their being from the hand of nature." As an eighteenth century deist and believer in natural religion, Jefferson connected nature and Nature's God inseparably in his thought.

—John Dewey, "Presenting Thomas Jefferson," 1940.

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PREFACE

The recent revival and on-going reevaluation of American pragmatism has required our going back to understand and evaluate the thought of John Dewey (1859-1952) in particular. Dewey is an important, late figure of the classical pragmatist tradition who had perhaps the best opportunity to appreciate, gain from, and augment the tradition. The evaluation of Dewey's work is no easy task, however, in view of the shear size of the corpus of Dewey's writings and, no less, in view of his mid-twentieth-century (quasi-corporatist) politics. Given the aim of any faithfully Deweyan reading of Dewey, we are faced with the task of locating Dewey's writings in relation to his times and the events of his times. It is a quite different and additional task to relate Dewey to our own times. The present assemblage of essays is my own, short, "minority report" on the revival. Overall, I remain skeptical of the social and political import often attributed to Dewey and Peirce. As a social and political philosopher, William James is more appealing and, overall, has a better grasp of American social and political reality.

A preliminary to the larger objectives of evaluation is to understand Dewey and contemporary pragmatists in relation to the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), William James (1842-1910) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)—chief figures of American thought and of the pragmatist tradition. I hope that the brief series of essays assembled in this book, including some attention to the recent European reception, will contribute to the larger tasks by providing insight and overview on the relationships among these important figures of American thought.

Of the 19 papers here assembled, most were first published as ongoing contributions to the revival and re-evaluation of the pragmatic tradition—though I found myself more skeptical than many other contributors. Two of the papers were published in the United Kingdom, one in Canada, and the others in the United States. They are republished here with permission of the original publishers. Of the five papers first appearing in print here, "Science and Religion," turns on a

contrast between William James (and M.L. King) on the one hand and John Dewey on the other—regarding the roles of religion in American society. The view I take on this theme is, I believe, the common-sense view that religion and religions are a social force preserving and conveying values and value commitments across the generations. I see Dewey as weak on the significance of religion and religions in American society; and the point strikes me as emblematic of Dewey's weakness on American social-cultural pluralism. He sometimes places excessive emphasis on political and moral-intellectual unification; and in the contemporary political and institutional contexts, this facilitates excesses of ideology and power politics. The paper which directly follows, also new in this volume, "How to Effectively Defend the King Dictum," is a more recent foray in a similar direction—illustrating a methodological naturalism.

The opening essay, "Emerson as Educator," builds on a talk given at the Institute for American Thought, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis in March of 2005. In the present, expanded form and setting, accompanied by two shorter papers on Emerson, the aim is to provide a concise perspective on the American background to pragmatism. Emerson had some influence on each of the chief thinkers of the pragmatist tradition and was the central figure of the New England Renaissance of the mid-nineteenth century. He represents central elements of the prior moral and religious background against which pragmatism developed. Part of the point of including Emerson in this volume is that his work provides historical context. He would surely have viewed our contemporary relativisms—and the intrusions of "vulgar pragmatism"—as symptoms of moral decline.

"What's Wrong with Relativism?" first appearing in print here, interprets the prevalent academic doctrines of moral and epistemic relativism and skepticism as a matter of destructive, quasi-Hegelian institutional-political stratagem. Also new, "Habermas, Apel and Discourse Ethics," builds on published reviews of a German volume introducing Karl-Otto Apel's work. In the paper here printed, I also include some comparison to related views of Apel's colleague Jürgen Habermas. Developments in contemporary German philosophy have had some influence in the recovery and re-evaluation of social and

political aspects of the pragmatist tradition; and this is part of the reason that my review of sociologist Hans Joas, on "Pragmatism and Social Theory" is also reprinted in this volume.

There is much more to the pragmatist tradition than social and political philosophy; and some readers may expect greater attention to more theoretical issues in logic, theory of knowledge and inquiry, the work of C.S. Peirce, etc. But the present book has grown thick; and I have preferred to address other philosophical concerns in more analytic style. I recommend to interested readers my 2008 collection of essays, *Meaning without Analyticity, Essays on Logic, Language and Meaning*. See also the more philosophical themes in my 2010 book, *Memories and Portraits, Explorations in American Thought*; and regarding Jamesian pluralism, which encompasses both social-political and epistemological themes, see my 2008 annotated, and critical study edition of *William James, A Pluralistic Universe*.

INTRODUCTION: AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY, PLURALISM AND DEMOCRACY

1. Autobiographical reflections: philosophy between Trenton and Princeton

In my last two years in graduate school at Temple University (1974-1976), I was awarded a University Teaching Fellowship on the basis of my performance on the examinations; and at that time and for a couple of years thereafter, I taught philosophy at Temple University and at local colleges and universities in the Philadelphia area, including Drexel University's Evening College, a local campus of Penn State and at Rider College in Lawrenceville, New Jersey—on the road between Trenton and Princeton. The work at Drexel and Penn State came to an end after I was called to teach a graduate seminar on work of W.V. Quine at Florida State University in the Spring of 1978, but connection with Rider long persisted.

It was at Rider College (later Rider University) in 1978 that I first met Guy Weston Stroh (1931-2013). Guy became a colleague and friend for many years, though toward the end of his life, the friendship and collegiality which I had long experienced deteriorated—under institutional pressure I take it. Guy was a native of a small Pennsylvania town, near Allentown, where he would often visit family, and he took his Ph.D. at Princeton University with a dissertation on the philosophy of George Santayana (1863-1952).[1] He first accepted a position at Rider College in 1956 (the college was then in Trenton) and was asked to organize the philosophy department. I first taught evening courses at Rider College in Lawrenceville, NJ from 1978 to 1980.

1. Guy W. Stroh 1958, *An Analysis of Santayana's Ontology in the Light of his Distinction between Essence and Existence*. Princeton dissertation. See also Stroh 1968, *American Philosophy from Edwards to Dewey* and Stroh 1979, *American Ethical Thought*.

Guy Stroh had long been Chair of the philosophy department—an administrative appointment—when I first met him; and as part of this work, he had developed a considerable departmental focus on the history of American philosophy. Guy taught the classic figures of American thought regularly for undergraduate students over a period of more than 40 years. Over that period, he retained a considerable focus on the long philosophical debate between Santayana and John Dewey (1859-1952).[2] I had been aware of pragmatism and work of C.S. Peirce (1839-1914) in particular, chiefly due to the presence of Philip P. Wiener (1916-1992) and Douglas Greenlee (1935-1979) at Temple University during my graduate years.[3] But my work focused on topics in analytical philosophy: the theory of reference and interpretation plus topics in the philosophy of mind.

I became more interested in the history of American thought after Stroh asked me to teach some related courses. Guy Stroh much enjoyed debating philosophy; and this we often did, over many years, at the department, on frequent outings for lunch and on many a Saturday morning trip to the Princeton University bookstore. I first became interested in the work of John Dewey in relationship to Santayana and Guy's related criticisms of Dewey. For Stroh, Santayana provided a conservative, philosophical counter-position to Deweyan liberalism. As I came to understand the theme, the contrast of Dewey and Santayana arose as a popular, quasi-political, philosophical motif in the late 1940's due in part to the influence of Dewey's most famous student, Sidney Hook (1902-1989), and Hook's personal relationship to Santayana. As a general matter, liberals and reformers eventually need to bring the more conservative thinkers along.

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2. For an introduction to the Dewey-Santayana debates, see my review article, "The Electronic Dewey," reprinted in Callaway 2008, *Meaning without Analyticity*, pp. 177-182. See also, "Emerson and Santayana on Imagination," pp. 33-45, below.
3. See, e.g. Philip P. Wiener 1949, *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism* and Douglas Greenlee 1973, *Peirce's Concept of Signs*. Though I wrote an M.A. thesis under Greenlee, on internal relations (1974) and took a graduate seminar with Wiener on Peirce, neither convinced me of the importance of Peirce for my own work.

I had been turned down early-on for a full-time position at Rider College; and I did not see eye-to-eye with the Dean of Liberal Arts, Dominic Iorio, though Dean Iorio, a graduate of Fordham University, had originally been hired by Stroh as a member of the philosophy department. Iorio seemed to fit Guy's conception of needed American conservatism. He remained Dean until his retirement in 1997. I recall that Iorio, who had published on Nicolas Malebranche and had done research at the Vatican library in Rome,[4] did not take to the emphasis on Franz Brentano (1838-1917), in contrast to the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, in my approach to the topic of *intentionality* (roughly, "about-ness;" What does it mean that a mental state or process, a thought, say, be *about* something?) in my Ph.D. dissertation. My interest in Brentano on intentionality was due to his Aristotelian affinity and the work of the influential Brown University philosopher, Roderick Chisholm (1916-1999).[5] Chisholm was an important advocate in the revival of attention to Brentano and his writings. The contrast of Brentano vs. Husserl on intentionality seemed to be the decisive point in my job interview with Iorio on campus. (It was not that he ever read my dissertation.)

The faculty position went to a young woman of Philadelphia Quaker background who had taken her Ph.D. at Bryn Mawr College writing on R.G. Collingwood.[6] My subsequent impression was that the administration at Rider College was more interested in establishing a connection to Bryn Mawr College than in various philosophical issues, though it would *not* have helped with Dean Iorio that my dissertation also took up W.V. Quine (1908-2000) and his behavioristic criticisms of Brentano's thesis of intentionality. My question in the dissertation (supervised by Monroe Beardsley, 1915-1985) was whether and how

4. See e.g., Dominick Iorio 1980, *Nicolas Malebranche, A Dialogue between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence of God*.
5. See e.g., Roderick Chisholm and Wilfred Sellers 1958, "Intentionality and the Mental." Chisholm also wrote extensively on Brentano.
6. See Carol Jean Wallace Nicholson, 1977, *Metaphor and Anthropomorphism in Collingwood's Theory of Absolute Presuppositions*. Bryn Mawr College dissertation. Cf. Bryn Mawr philosopher Michael Krausz ed. 1972, *Critical Essays on the Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood*; Krausz 1982, *Relativism, Cognitive and Moral*.

the notion of intentionality could be modernized, in view of Quine's philosophy of science. My theme eventually developed in the direction of a critique of Quine's behaviorism in semantics.

Next came a visiting position at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, as Assistant Professor for a year (1980-1981). This allowed me to teach (along with a great deal of symbolic logic) a course on the philosophy of mind. Some of this focused on Noam Chomsky's hypothesis of an innate language acquisition mechanism. I also led an interdisciplinary faculty discussion group that year devoted to Jerry Fodor's book, *The Language of Thought* (1975). From the perspective of my dissertation, work on the philosophy of language was in the interest of the philosophy of mind. From the perspective of ordinary language and common sense, this is a Wittgensteinian connection—the rejection of private language. In the Summer of 1981, I attended the Summer Institute on Psychology and the Philosophy of Mind, at the University of Washington in Seattle. Shortly thereafter, I went to Africa to teach as a Senior Lecturer at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria (1981-1983). When I had first return from Ohio to the East coast in 1981, I found that my regular part-time teaching opportunities had evaporated entirely. (My standing position at Drexel University had been occupied by a graduate student of one of Beardsley's competitors in the Temple department.) Partly in consequence of that development, when I decided to resign my appointment at Ibadan in December of 1983 (just before the military coupe that overthrew the civilian President Shehu Shagari), I went to work in Europe.

I published a first book in 1993, an historical and critical account of twentieth-century analytical philosophy of language focused on language and meaning. This work is closely related to themes in analytic philosophy from by dissertation.[7] Subsequently, the long and varied discussions and teaching at Rider College developed in the direction of a joint project. I taught again at Rider as a Visiting Professor of Philosophy 1987-1988, before returning to Europe as a Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the University of Erlangen 1988-1989.

7. See H.G. Callaway 1993, *Context for Meaning and Analysis*, *A Critical Study in the Philosophy of Language*.

After several years of work in the late 1990s, partly via trans-Atlantic correspondence, Guy Stroh and I published a book of historical readings titled, *American Ethics*: *A Source Book from Edwards to Dewey* (2000). At the time, I was very much interested in Deweyan themes in contrast to Stroh's focus on Santayana and his more contemplative attitude. Working on our book of readings was a good opportunity to survey the history of American ethical and political thought.

Our book, *American Ethics*, divides into six historical periods, starting from the colonial, religious background and culminating with Dewey and the mid-twentieth century. I successfully insisted on various additions to Guy's early plan for the book. For example, we brought in John Witherspoon "Christian Magnanimity;" as a transition to the Enlightenment figures at the end of th first chapter, William Ellery Channing, "The Moral Argument Against Calvinism," as a transition to the American Romantics at the end of the second chapter, added emphasis on Emerson, in the third chapter, plus Frederick Douglass and Walt Whitman. In Chapter Four, I insisted on a selection from William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, and brought in selections from Alain Locke and Felix Adler in Chapter Five. I would say, in retrospect that Stroh was interested not only in bringing Santayana into contact with Dewey, but also in an *approchement* between American thought and rule utilitarianism; I was more interested in historical continuities and discontinuities in the history of American thought.

At about that time, I also became involved with various scholars of American philosophy, chiefly via internet discussion of Dewey, Peirce and William James. Many of the papers below in this volume were published at that time. The related work also brought me to eventually publish scholarly editions of philosophical texts of some of the chief figures of the various historical periods of our reader, including R.W. Emerson (1803-1882) and William James (1842-1910).[8] Since I was

8. See my critical, study editions of Emerson and James: Callaway 2006, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, The Conduct of Life*, *A Philosophical Reading*; Callaway 2008, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Society and Solitude*; and Callaway 2008, *William James, A Pluralistic Universe, A New Philosophical Reading*. In a similar way, Callaway 2011, *A.J. Dallas, An Exposition of the Causes and Character of the War*, addresses the political philosophy and foreign relations of the early republic.

intensely involved in the theory of meaning and interpretation, I came to think of my work in the history of American thought as practical and quasi-experimental applications of the theory of interpretation. I could see how the various historical figures, over hundreds of years, were reacting to each other, disputing and complementing ideas and themes in common. Since I was often in Europe, I also came to see frequent misunderstandings and even hostility to traditional American thought. At a fundamental level, I would say, there is some European hostility to the general contours of American civilization, anchored in Europe's ethnic nationalisms, though there is also grudging admiration for the American facility in the integration of immigrants. I do not see that these two strands of European thought often confront each other.

I became more deeply aware of the usefulness of counter-posing Dewey and Santayana. My paper, "Liberalism and the Moral significance of Individualism"[9] dates from this period of intensive study and discussions of Dewey. As it turned out, I was considerably more sympathetic to liberal individualism than was Dewey.[10] In a period of the growing influence of political correctness, this single theme was perhaps sufficient to inhibit the development of lasting professional relationships to many scholars of pragmatism and American philosophy around the country. In spite of that, I did make several lecture tours around American and European universities, often traveling to the U.S. from Europe.

In abstract terms, Dewey is well known to be sympathetic to democratic socialism. But he never settled on institutional forms for his ideal of the "*planning* society." He did hold that development of individuality is consistent with, indeed required by, his political ideals. He favored decentralization of authority, democracy in the workplace, equality in the distribution of wealth, strong civil liberties and representative institutions,[11] and he was always skeptical of state socialism.

9. See below, pp. 185ff.
10. Cf. Matthew Festenstein 2014, "Dewey's Political Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: "…the Idealist and New Liberal assault on individualism is one important element in the intellectual background of Dewey's political philosophy … ."
11. Cf. Robert B. Westbrook 1991, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, p. 457.

Lacking concrete institutional plans for his "new individualism," one would expect greater tolerance for alternatives—a tolerance I found prevalently wanting among academic scholars of American pragmatism.

On the other hand, as I think becomes obvious below, I was skeptical of the prevalent role played by deference to academic, institutional insiders among contemporary scholars of the history of the pragmatist tradition. I was also adverse to their "transactional" style of professional interaction—much akin to trading of favors among insiders. The point reflects back on my subsequent experience of the politics of the Philadelphia area which I now understand as very largely a matter of the domination of political and institutional insiders over career opportunities. This definitely tends toward authoritarian structures from which position, the insiders can *almost* do no wrong. Whatever my success abroad or around the country, it amounted to nothing back home. Insiders are persuaded only by their insider peers. Easy-going tolerance of relativism, I discovered, has long been massively prevalent among institutional gate-keepers.

2. The one and the many

Social-cultural pluralism and liberal individuality are closely related social phenomena—particularly so in American society. The recent, more politically inspired movement of multiculturalism[12] illustrates the point by contrast. Multiculturalism is basically an anti-liberal doctrine which suppresses individuality in the direction of identity politics; and this suppression of individuality amounts to a very significant move away from the liberal, more personal or one-on-one, *integrative* tradition of American society. What is fundamental in the contrast is the ethnic, racial and religious pluralism of American society—and of any society so largely formed by immigration and integration. What forms of unity we may have must be fashioned out of the pre-existing pluralism. We as a nation, have properly resisted *forced* segregation and placed policy premiums on the side of social integration.

12. See "Pragmatic Pluralism and American Democracy," pp. 47-74, below.

If American ethnic and racial diversity is to be integrated socially (and I use the term "diversity" in an all-*inclusive* sense, to include the entire population and all subgroups), then whatever the background or original affiliation of anyone, they must learn to reach across the boundaries of their own background and upbringing and attain to an understanding and appreciation of people with other backgrounds. At the least, there must be a growth of appreciation of the needed (and comparatively thin) commonalities of American life and society. Multiculturalism and identity politics resist this process—tending strongly to reconfigure ethnicities into interest groups practicing varieties of exclusionary identity politics. What is frequently sought is *political coalitions* of otherwise inward-oriented identity groups.

A point that needs to be emphasized, concerning the social process of integration, is that people are changed in the process; they are not only integrated into the larger society, they are also, at the same time, differentiated from their own background reference groups. The process of social integration in a multi-ethnic society is also a process of individuation. In consequence, to reject the typically high levels of individuality in American society is to force people back into the reference groups of origin (or perhaps into a new alternative identity group). Rejecting high levels of individuality is divisive or *dis*-integrative.

It is fundamental in understanding the role of the typically high levels of individuality in the U.S. (and in tendency in any pluralistic society) to emphasize and observe the distinction between pluralism and multiculturalism. Social and cultural pluralism (which contrast with the "interest-group pluralism" of the political scientists) is an indigenous American concept, including a long twentieth-century development.[13] It is better suited to historical American developments and general conditions of American society, while multiculturalism is chiefly a European (and often neo-liberal) import.[14] In spite of that, the

13. See my Introduction, "The Meaning of Pluralism," in Callaway 2008, *William James*, *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp. xi-l.

14. The original European, multiculturalist, political paradigm is plausibly a leftward oriented U.K. with its four, ethnically defined sub-polities: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Assimilating or passing over American

two terms are often conflated. Conflating multiculturalism with factual diversity or with the philosophical tradition of cultural pluralism—which originated in a critique of the demand for one-sided assimilation—threatens moral re-colonization of American society with European-style ethnic nationalism.[15] We can fairly reject demands for over-all uniformity and one-sided assimilation without falling into the opposite error of general, ethnic-racial balkanization.[16] The comparative rigidities of identity politics set self-interest against traditional integrative practices, weakens the middle-class basis of moderate liberal politics and tends to block the formation of new groups, (crossing traditional boundaries) as needed for reform and the solution of newly recognized problems—such as our growing inequalities over several decades.

3. Pragmatism and Putnam's open question

In a 1995 book, Harvard University philosopher Hilary Putnam (1926-2016) posed a question concerning pragmatism and the revival of the pragmatic tradition in philosophy: "whether an enlightened society can avoid a corrosive moral skepticism without tumbling back into moral authoritarianism."[17] It is worthwhile to return to Putnam's question and consider what answers may be given at present, some 20 years later. The focus of Putnam's question is an evaluation of the pragmatic tradition in American thought; will the revival of the pragmatic tradition avoid contributing to the twin social pitfalls of "corrosive moral skepticism" and "moral authoritarianism"? The present collection of papers shows an interest and engagement with the pragmatic tradition —partly a matter of interpretation of the history of American thought; but the essays also involve critical perspective. The doubts might be

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discussions of cultural pluralism in favor of multiculturalism, the Oxford political scientist Alan Ryan did some disservice to the distinctiveness of American pluralism. See Ryan 1995, *John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism*, pp. 171-173; 193-194.

15. Cf. below, p. 128.
16. Cf. Arthur Schlesinger 1998, *The Disuniting of America*, *Reflections on a Multicultural Society*.
17. Hilary Putnam 1995, *Pragmatism, An Open Question*, p. 2.

justly expressed by the idea that the pragmatic tradition has, too often, fallen into what Susan Haack calls "vulgar pragmatism."[18] This phrase suggests want of principle, as is suggested by much of the ordinary usage of the word "pragmatism," and the connotations are sometimes harsher yet: suggesting a ruthless and Machiavellian search for mercenary, professional or narrow political advantage; the sort of phenomenon which is sometimes characterized as "instrumentalization" of moral engagement and philosophical discourse.

Under the influence of the revival or the prevalent acquiescence of the reviving pragmatic tradition (as partly detailed in this volume), epistemic and moral relativism have sometimes made common cause with moral authoritarianism.[19] There has been an intensive politicalization and polarization of the American academy and American society which threatens to outrun our available, ameliorative political competence. We have seen a growth of divisiveness and growing economic inequalities at home, linked with uncritical acceptance of globalization, multiculturalism and a prevalent rejection of historical American ideals. From the present perspective, ignorance and distortion of American ideals is central in contemporary American moral and political disorientation. A country shorn of the knowledge of its own history is like a person who has lost all memory and who can consequently muster no decided preferences or expectations about the future. The view below is that contemporary pragmatism has too often been shorn of its needed contextual relation to American history and values. Several of the papers in the present volume may recommend themselves to readers by addressing the related questions and problems.

4. The appeal of corporatism

The topic of corporatism is *not* a matter of business corporations alone, though attention to them is featured in some familiar versions and

18. See e.g. Susan Haack 1997, "Vulgar Rortyism," where she says that "Rortyism is vulgar pragmatism." Cf. my review of Haack 1998, "Old Pragmatists for New," reprinted in Callaway 2008, *Meaning without Analyticity*, pp. 193-201.
19. See my analysis and criticism of contemporary doctrinaire relativism, below, especially, pp. 66-69; 207-210; 233-251.

variations on the concept. Corporatism includes various systems of political ideas and ideals which originated in the late nineteenth century, such as English guild socialism and French syndicalism[20] and which have had a variety of twentieth-century expressions and developments. The concept is of some interest here partly because of the appeal it exercised during America's progressive era—a formative period of pragmatist and American progressive political thought.[21] The basic idea is "the control of a state or organization by large interest groups."[22] However, this simple definition requires some elaboration. In the first place, the usage of the term "corporatism" covers both (the often questionable and misguided) demand for an ideal organic form of polity *and* analytical-empirical description of the function of some contemporary interest-group democracies. Contemporary democracies are sometimes regarded as more corporatist or more pluralist, depending on their degree of consolidation. Higher levels of national or industry-wide consolidation and consensus politics often earn praise for corporatism or neo-corporatism. State corporatism (exemplified in the fascist state) is coercive and thoroughly top-down in character, while neo-corporatism is conceived to be more consensual and based on freely accepted agreements among representatives of government, labor and business. One may reasonably doubt, however, that the cooperative modes of neo-corporatism are viable in larger and more ethnically diverse countries.

Corporatism, though an approach to utopian political or constitutional design early on,[23] vaguely resembles what is called interest-group pluralism, neo-pluralism and elite theory, which are competing

20. See G.D.H. Cole 1922, "Guild Socialism," in *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1922): "Guild Socialists for the most part have in mind … the mediaeval principle of *industrial* self-government." Cf. John Dewey 1888, "The Ethics of Democracy," p. 246: "democracy is not in reality what it is in name until it is industrial, as well as civil and political."
21. See Maureen A. Flannagan 2007, *America Reformed, Progressives and Progressivism 1890s-1920s*, pp. 272-276 and her references.
22. *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* (2008).
23. Cf. Cécile Laborde 2000, *Pluralist Thought and the State in Britain and France, 1900-1925*; Laborde 1996, "Pluralism, Syndicalism and Corporatism: Leon Duguit and the Crisis of the State (1900-1925)."

empirical accounts of social and political *power* arising in contemporary political science.[24] Corporatism also has a significant affinity to modes of contemporary continental European political thought and practice.[25] Corporatism is "the organization of a society into industrial and professional corporations [sometimes "guilds"] serving as organs of political representation and exercising some control over persons and activities within their jurisdiction."[26] Interest group representation in centralized, or industry-wide collective bargaining among employers and organized labor is regarded as supplementing political representation by party government in contemporary European neo-corporatism.

Although a chief aim and ideal of varieties of corporatism has been to supply individuals with supportive, intermediate social and economic affiliations, seeking in this way to avoid atomization of individuals in the overly powerful, centralized state, the implications of conceiving corporative units as a matter of binding *jurisdictions*, is a crucial turn of thought. Larger-scale and systematic social-political organization focusing on particularities of common economic interests (or ethnicity for instance) tends toward excessive rigidity, approximating to the classical republican concept of destructive political factions, and may well *inhibit* needed flexibility of the electorate—including political reconstruction, reconfigurations and re-ordering of available social and political elements in support of reform.

Political scientist Philippe Schmitter famously proposed the following, still more elaborate and often quoted definition. Corporatism is, he wrote:

> … a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered, and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respec-

24. See e.g., Robert A. Dahl 1957, "The Concept of Power;" "A has power over B," says Dahl, "to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do;" see pp. 202-203.
25. The practice of regularly negotiating pacts or agreements between major social groups such as business and labor is sometimes called *neo-corporatism*. See, e.g., Gerhard Lehmbruch 1977, "Liberal Corporatism and Party Government."
26. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition.

> tive categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.[27]

The obvious contrast to such a function-based system of interest representation is the geographic districts and units of conventional representative democracies such as congressional districts or the state-wise representation in the U.S. Senate. One naturally asks about the comparative advantages of the proposed alternative; and the defenders' answer is that representation via functional groups allows for higher levels of coordination within the groups and the suppression or exclusion of their otherwise (internal) destructive forms of competition. What is not often emphasized, however, is that this may also imply suppression of *fruitful* completion among social, institutional and political configurations.

The corporatist intermediaries between individual and state, such as labor unions and professional organizations, are supposed to offer better support and greater opportunity to individuals than do the family, local communities, self-organizing small business, religious organizations, or other groups of civil society; but the corporatist ideal also competes with broadly held contemporary conceptions of the independence of civil society. For example, consider the phenomenon of revolving-door employment between governmental agencies of economic regulation and the very firms or organizations they are charged with regulating. The suspicion frequently arises that insider access and information travels all too easily back and forth so that a properly adversarial relation is lost. The public good of regulation may be compromised by direct interest-group representation in the agencies of regulation. Again, according to political scientist Francis Fukuyama, "public sector unions have themselves become part of an elite that uses the political system to protect its own self-interests;" and "they are an integral part of the contemporary Democratic party's political base, making most Democratic politicians loath to challenge them;" the result, as Fukuyama has it, is "a marked decline in the quality of American public administration," since the 1970's, that is, "political

27. Philippe Schmitter 1974, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" pp. 93-94.

decay."[28] At the same time, while insider representation of intensive special interests has grown, geographic representation is seriously compromised by the prevalent practice of gerrymandering to create single-party districts. This tends to suppress broader debate, mutual consultation and contests of interests and ideas within geographic communities and electoral districts. But something more basic than gerrymandering of congressional and legislative districts is clearly involved, since a similar division of "red states" and "blue states" has arisen, though no re-districting is involved. Reflection on this development points in the direction of the political mobilization and over-representation of intensive special interests in particular localities.

What we might focus on in Schmitter's definition, is the idea that, in contrast with the conception of independent civil society, the guild-like or corporatist units are "granted a representational monopoly within their respective categories." In accordance with this conception, for example, the American Bar Association, since provided with monopoly power to license or deny the practice of law to individuals, constitutes a state-sponsored corporatist institution. The same is true of labor unions in particular branches of industry, insofar as the workers in a given branch can be compelled to join closed (union) shops. We may ask, more generally, then, whether there is sufficient grounds for the idea that individuals and their interests will be *better* represented to the extent that the government delegates its powers of compulsion, generally, to similar organizations and thus becomes to that degree a corporatist state. Far beyond that idea lies the further prospect of eliminating or diminishing the power of customary districts and geographic units of representation.[29] Though doing away with competitive state and local elections has never had much appeal in American society, the growing influence of intensive special interests raises important questions about where policy decisions are actually being made and about undue influence of favored constituencies, institutions and moneyed interests. We have to ask how and why people tend to be

28. Francis Fukuyama 2014, *Political Order and Political Decay*, pp. 163-164. See also, the crucial political turn in Fukuyama 2006, *After the Neocons*.
29. Compare the analysis in James Q. Whitman 1991, "Of Corporatism, Fascism and the First New Deal," pp. 752-753.

sorting themselves out in accordance with political affiliations or interests.

Direct appeal to corporatist ideals is much diminished in contemporary western liberal-democracies, in comparison to its theoretical and practical appeal in the early twentieth century—in reaction against the excesses of the Gilded Age. The corporatist ideal, especially on larger scales, is open to deep, stinging criticism by reference to fundamental political rights including freedom of association and freedom of speech.[30] However, contemporary social and political problems, including the competitive pressures of globalization, and the prospect of a "race to the bottom" for wages and working conditions, are still capable of evoking the appeal of "organic" social unity and functional interdependence as an antidote.

John Dewey, in his early, idealist phase strongly advocated the organic conception of society: "men are not isolated non-social atoms," he wrote, "but are men only when in intrinsic relations to men."[31] We may seriously doubt, however, that the organic ideal is a positive development for the general run of liberal-democratic societies. As generally understood, it seems an expression of political ideals more plausible in smaller or more homogeneous societies. Consider, in contrast, the American founders, men such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and John Adams aiming for republican forms on a large scale.

30. Cf. Dewey 1888, p. 245: "The democratic ideal includes liberty, because democracy without initiation from within, without an ideal chosen from within and freely followed from within, is nothing."
31. Dewey 1888, p. 231; Cf. e.g., Richard Bernstein 2013, "Hegel and Pragmatism," p. 107, on the appeal of Hegel to pragmatists thinkers and Dewey in particular. "Dewey," say Bernstein, "naturalized Hegel." But this is perhaps a more radicalizing interpretation; Cf. Sidney Hook 1976, "Introduction" to Dewey, *Middle Works*, Vol. 2, pp. xix-xx: Dewey's "trenchant criticism of both capitalism and, later, socialism as operating systems was inspired by his conviction that they failed to provide sufficient opportunities for ordinary persons, … , to develop themselves. He had the same faith as the poet, Gray, that among the multitudes was many a "mute and inglorious Milton" whose inability to create and enjoy the works of the spirit was due more to lack of opportunity than to the absence of genetic potential. This Jeffersonian faith in experience and the common man pervades everything he wrote in educational and social philosophy."

At times they cooperated and at other times they were political adversaries. The founded, surely, a non-corporatist state. But there is no significant sense in which they were not "in intrinsic relation to men." The phrase seems to hide more than it reveals concerning the differing conceptions and various practices of human sociality.

Contemporary neo-corporatist practices of national or industry-wide extra-legislative interest *mediation* seem to work better in smaller and more homogeneous European countries, say,[32] than they do in (E.U.) Europe-as–a-whole or in larger or less homogenous countries. This point alone suggests that corporatist organization of interest groups lacking plausible means for the mediation of highly focused interests represents a formula for destructive factionalism. Organic conceptions of political society tend to be excessively rigid and less dynamic. They leave little room for the development of new groups with new, critical or emergent purposes. In consequence, the ostensively leftward-oriented ideal of organic social unity has, often enough, functioned to mask or encourage acquiescence in the plans and purposes of the factually more powerful existing institutions and group interests of contemporary societies. Transfer of consensus oriented politics, often involving habitual deference to greater power or authority, from smaller and more homogeneous societies to larger and less homogeneous societies, lacking similar high levels of trust and social-political means of mediation, may easily facilitate, not organic, social neo-corporatism but instead the power of established institutions and large-scale corporations—which will tend to displace intricate, often local and emergent patterns of competition and cooperation.

5. Interest-group pluralism

Interest-group pluralism or "polyarchy" is a vast topic in contemporary political science and political philosophy which exhibits some remark-

32. Typical "neo-corporatist" paradigms are countries such as Austria, Norway and Sweden; but even the larger European countries, and the English-speaking countries generally, tend to be more pluralist and adversarial in policy formulation—as contrasted with more neo-corporatist and strongly consensus oriented politics.

able tension between the empirical and normative features of our conception of democratic government. Theorists have aimed for an empirically adequate account of democratic politics well supported by evidence and empirical studies; and it is difficult to ignore the fact that the best supported accounts of the actual workings of various political systems fall short of the objectives set by our democratic ideals.[33]

Interest groups are a natural product of the actual interests and conflicts of interests which exist in any human society. The interests which unite a group may be narrow and specific, say, one group may aim to beautify and maintain a local public park, and another aims to promote a branch of manufacturing; interest groups are sometimes very large and broad-based, such as the AFL-CIO a federation of labor unions. They can be narrowly focused on advancing the interests of group members, or, on the other hand, they may be devoted to the common good, say, good government, public integrity and rooting out corruption. It is standard practice to distinguish interests groups from various *unorganized* interests which exist in a society.[34] Interest-group pluralism, then, is the theory and thesis that in liberal democracy, political power *is*, and normatively restated, it *ought to be* dispersed among a variety of economic and ideological interest groups and not held by a single elite or group of elites.[35] Robert Dahl's conception of "polyarchy" is not a matter of pure majority rule, nor rule by a standing minority (as in oligarchy), but instead an evolving, competitive and pluralistic system of changing "minorit*ies* rule."[36] A possible defect often suggested is that coalitions of interest-groups may amount to destructive factions trading favors. It is interesting in this connection

33. Cf. Robert A. Dahl 1984, "Polyarchy, Pluralism and Scale," p. 228. Dahl distinguishes democracy as an ideal, "an end perhaps never achieved," and "polyarchy," as a matter of "distinguishing features of the actual political systems commonly called 'democratic' or 'democracies' in the modern world."
34. "Interest group": A group or organization with particular aims and ideas that tries to influence the government" (*Cambridge Dictionary*).
35. Cf. "Pluralism" in *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (2002).
36. Robert A. Dahl 2006, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, p. 132.

that in a 2006 book, Dahl maintained a studied agnosticism concerning the growth of political inequalities in the U.S.[37]

The ideal of democratic legitimacy is reflected in the thesis e.g., that "the just powers of government" derive from "the consent of the governed," to use the Jeffersonian formula from the Declaration of Independence. Again, President Lincoln advocated "government of the people by the people and for the people." This is the democratic ideal, yet it is often less than clear that policy arising from interest-group pluralism, as empirically ascertained, actually reflects broad public consent or government *by* the people—as contrasted with an equilibrium of more sharply focused, well organized or well financed special or vested interests. We doubt on occasion that the major groups actively engaged in interest-group politics have any pronounced and developed concern for the common good; and the trading of favors among interest groups often seems to be a kind of well-oiled automaton, grinding out legislative and policy results with little relation to the views of the citizens or the public good. It belongs to Francis Fukuyama's conception of the *decay* of the American political system, e.g., that it "gives excessive representation to the views of interest groups and activist organizations that collectively do not add up to a sovereign American people."[38]

However harsh Fukuyama's judgment may appear, it is mild in comparison to that of some other contemporary political scientists. Princeton University's Sheldon S. Wolin, e.g., in his 2008 book, *Democracy Incorporated*, holds up the specter of "managed democracy" and "inverted totalitarianism." While classical totalitarian systems attempted mass mobilization of the people, Wolin's inverted totalitarianism depends on public passivity, indifference to politics and *private* media as the disseminator of propaganda.[39] (Often, the phrase "corporate media" is employed in similar contexts.) Though "inverted totalitarianism" insists on its democratic goals and credentials, its

37. Robert A. Dahl 2006, *On Political Equality*, p. 78: "Achieving truly well-grounded judgments about the future of political equality in the United States probably exceeds our capacities."
38. Fukuyama 2014, *Political Order and Political Decay*, p. 503.
39. Sheldon S. Wolin 2008, *Democracy Incorporated*, p. 44.