CHAPTER 2

World-Views as Options—Humanistic and Non-humanistic

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Using the concept of "world-view" as a lens, this chapter examines the varying ways in which the distinction between humanistic and non-humanistic stances and attitudes are conceptualized with particular focus upon not only such conceptualizations, but also, their contextualization. Unfortunately, the broad term *humanism* is excessively vague and its meanings are manifold and often inconsistent. We can put aside highly idiosyncratic uses like the one in Martin Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism", where the term signifies a specific metaphysical attitude in which the meaning of 'Being' is left unconsidered.[1] More recently, computer scientist David Gelernter used the term (humanism) to distance himself from reductive functionalism, that is the scientific attitude of treating mind and self as mere algorithmic patterns, transforming sensual input into motor output and void of all deeper meaning. Contrary to this attitude, he declared that we need a new subjective humanism which does justice to the human desire for a meaningful world which includes beauty and morality.[2] For Gelernter, human beings thrive only in a meaningful universe and would wither

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away in a world of meaningless causal processes. Here, the term *humanism* denotes opposition to computer-models of the mind and to all attempts of replacing a strong notion of the human self with the subpersonal mechanisms of neural networks in the brain. In other contexts, however, taking a humanistic stance mainly implies opposition to supernatural worldviews. Thus, Gelernter's use of the term would easily allow for subsuming non-religious *and* religious attitudes alike under the common species of "humanism," insofar as both are opposed to scientistic, reductionist world-views, in which the validity of our personal experiences is denied and substituted by scientific knowledge. On the other hand, when the distinction between humanistic and non-humanistic is paralleled with the one between religious and secular, Gelernter's parlance is excluded.

This situation leaves us with uncomfortable options. How we frame our questions, which contrastive pairs we choose to shape the meaning of humanism, seems to depend basically on prior conceptual stipulations. This is hardly satisfying because it leaves the reasons for the diversity of uses unexplained. Thus I suggest a different, integrative way of treating the problem. Instead of defining humanisms in, more or less, arbitrary ways, we ought to focus our attention towards their common status as *world-views*. In this manner, attention is diverted from the differences and directed towards the overall features of world-views, which distinguish them from more specialized forms of relating to the world as is the case in science or art. If we draw our attention to these features, with respect to the difference between science and comprehensive experience, we can better realize that both the secular and Gelernter's use of the term *humanism* can be understood as expressions of world-views. As such, they have something *in common* which becomes invisible if we focus on their mutually exclusive use of humanism.

The structure I have in mind can be elucidated with the help of a simple piece of elementary logic, namely the Aristotelian distinction between genus and species where the importance lies in distinguishing between, and among, two kinds of differences: genus/species on the one hand (e.g., tree-oak), species/con-species (e.g., oak-spruce) on the other. The latter, so to speak animates a "horizontal" difference which has an exclusive character (an oak *is not* a spruce), whereas the former highlights a "vertical" one, by pointing to the common genus shared by more than one species, and may connect what from a horizontal perspective looks so different (oaks and spruces *are both* trees). Excluding the

other, species are distinguished from other species by specific differences to the genus. Therefore, on the level of species, humanism à la Gelernter and secular humanism are like oaks and spruces: mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, on the level of the common kind (*genus proximum*) "world-view" they share important features and can be regarded as different answers to the same problem of integrating the diverse forms of human experience into a holistic picture.

Introducing the conceptual level of world-views will prove indispensible to tackle the problem of humanism (now taken as a secular world-view by many accounts) vs. non-humanism. In what follows, I argue that in pluralistic societies, all comprehensive doctrines and world-views, religious *and* secular alike, should be viewed as *options*, framed by other options. Their strained or even antagonistic relation on the level of the species-species-distinction is mollified once we recognize their common ancestry in their common kind, namely the human demand for integrating the cognitive, emotional and volitional facets of being-in-the-world. Admittedly, this proposal places heavy demands on world-views insomuch as they are requested to develop a reflexive stance towards the contingencies of their own development, and to further realize the precarious and fallible status of world-view-like generalizations. Consider the self-identification of "Christian" as an example. Whereas in the Middle Ages being a Christian might have meant being part of an unquestionable, closed universe of religious meanings, whereas nowadays it might mean living in a world of countless *other* options which too, have to be considered and taken seriously. Such a task is not to be confused with getting rid of religious claims to truth or validity, since taking the reflexive stance may alter the manner of believing but not necessarily the beliefs themselves. Nevertheless, one might imagine that fundamentalist religiosity of any sort will have a hard time satisfying such demands, in a world where, for example, believing in the Bible as infallible and inerrant stands to face much scrutiny as *legitimate* option on the grounds of easy refutation vis-à-vis rational evidence. But scientism—the belief that science reveals all there is—can be as rigidly stubborn too, whereas the distinction between scientific knowledge and its enlargement to a world-view may be hard to swallow for those unwilling to accept that the act of totalizing always transcends experience.

In what follows, this basic insight will be elaborated by drawing on the resources of classic pragmatism, especially William James's and John Dewey's, two of its most prominent representatives. I make use of Dewey's non-reductive naturalism as a starting point in order

to show that meaning, in a sense often rejected by scientistic positions, is a perfectly normal and irreducible feature of human experience, which comprises volitional and affective as well as cognitive dimensions. Dewey's important achievement lies in reconciling scientific knowledge with humane values in a naturalistic framework. He is, however, quite insensitive to the optional character of this naturalism if taken as a comprehensive world-view. Drawing on insights by William James, among others, I then turn to focus both on the inevitability and fragile structure of world-views, and finally, conclude with a discussion of the humanistic/non-humanistic-distinction in the light of the previous line of argumentation.

Dewey's Humanism as a Non-reductive Naturalism

In order to tackle the question how humanists should relate to the non-humanist world, it is essential to pose the juxtaposition in the right manner. Many religious humanists—in the more comprehensive sense of the term Gelernter suggests—feel hostile to naturalist humanism because they see it as inseparably intertwined with a reductionist view of human nature and of values in general.[3] On the other hand, many secular humanists feel uncomfortable with religious positions because they regard them as inevitably connected with claims untenable in the light of what science tells us about the world. It is here where John Dewey enters the picture. Dewey developed a non-reductive naturalism which can serve as a common ground for both brands of humanists on which they may stage their disputes without overlooking what they actually share with each other.

Thus, it is essential for my argument here to distinguish between two kinds of naturalism and to relate both to the larger question of humanism. Both terms are synonymously complimentary as they are divergent and complex, and existing confusions therefore stem from lacking clarity in this regard. Beginning with naturalism, two distinctions are essential for empirical research and philosophical argumentation: one between its reductive and non-reductive variants, and the other which views naturalism on the level of world-views as well as the more limited form of a naturalistic methodology. More often than not, the latter distinction is blurred. To offer just one example among others: in Chap. 3 of his otherwise interesting and important book *Science in a Democratic Society*, Philip Kitcher develops "Ethics as a human project"

and declares his methodological commitment to avoid the invocation of "spooks",[4] by which he means all sorts of deities, nebulous entities, but also Kant's faculty of practical reason. Even if we leave aside the sloppy categorization of practical reason, this statement remains ambiguous. If taken in a strictly methodological sense, it only commits to an "innerworldly" explanation of moral resources and rejects invoking transcendent entities for filling explanational gaps. Thus, it leaves open the question whether the natural resources of morality, on the level of a generalized world-view, might or might not be seen as related to religious convictions about the ultimate source of these natural processes. Talking about spooks, on the other hand, seems to imply more than that, namely a negative ontological commitment pertaining to the 'objects' of religious convictions. By definition, spooks are ridiculous entities from the standpoint of reason and rationality. Now, many people feel so inclined to take the step from methodological naturalism *to* world-view naturalism which is certainly a legitimate option. But it should not, however, keep one from scrutinizing whether such a decisive step is *really* a plausible one *within* science or philosophy. Generalizing experience to ultimate convictions *about* the universe and our place in it seems to overstep the boundaries of both. Yet, as Kant has clearly demonstrated and outlined in his work, we cannot seemingly, however, fully prevent doing so as such seems justified and an unavoidable part of humans trying their hand in developing comprehensive world-views, as such. But is it not, we might ask, different in kind from methodological naturalism and realizing the significance for understanding the humanistic stance?

Kept clearly distinct (albeit not separated) from a generalized world-view, *methodological* naturalism is something all world-views and religions have to learn to accept and come to terms with. Put otherwise, it is more or less synonymous with the commitment to letting science take its course without invoking supernatural explanations for natural events. Religious convictions failing to satisfy this condition, like fundamentalist deniers of evolution, are so hard to deal with precisely because they deny this common ground of shared experience and reason. But accepting the demand of methodological naturalism would be easier for religions and world-views alike if its demands would clearly distinguish from scientistic attempts to reduce natural meanings to the realm of scientific explanations. It is here where Dewey's efforts at naturalism come into play.

Before that however, it is important to draw attention to the more general relations between naturalism and humanism. To begin, methodological naturalism poses little to no threat to humanism but rather constitutes part of its very idea. As Dewey habitually pointed out again and again, the task humanism calls us to is to secure human, universalistic values in a contingent frame of nature. To make such possible, we need the kind of knowledge only the methodological stance that naturalism enables: knowledge *about* causal relations between events in the world that further enable us to influence the course of nature according to human needs. Reductionist naturalism or scientism, on the other hand, indeed poses a threat to humanism. But why, we might ask, is it so dangerous? Perhaps, because it undermines our moral and aesthetic capacity by depicting them as a merely *epiphenomenal*: in following scientism, we may, for example, *feel* free and strive hard to make the morally right decision, when it is in fact the neural clockwork in our brain, rather than our own responsibility, that determines what we will do. And though it is true that science and humaneness, in the 'Age of Enlightenment' were often (not always!) seen as inseparable, there is no logical bond nor any unalterable historical connection between the further development of science and the progress of the humanistic agenda.

Given my use of the term "scientism" in a critical manner, a clarification might be appropriate. Steven Pinker has recently pointed out[5] that the term is often used as a kind of boo-word, a way to block scientific research into topics traditionally treated by the humanities. That is true and regrettable enough, but it should not keep us from using it in a better way, namely to criticize the reductionist attitude of identifying the cognitive meaning of human experience with that of scientific knowledge. For Dewey, this fallacy goes under the heading of "intellectualism," but we can easily identify it as the core of scientism too: "The isolation of traits characteristic for objects known, and then defined as the sole ultimate realities, accounts for the denial to nature of the characters which make things loveable and contemptible, beautiful and ugly, adorable and awful."[6] And if, as scientism implies, the values which guide us in ordinary experience are indeed nothing but "projections onto a morally barren world"[7] (according to Ronald Dworkin), then science, it seems, would cease to be an ally for moral aspirations. Assigning a merely epiphenomenal status to human values is hardly compatible with a humanistic attitude. In an age of countless attempts to "scientifically" debunk the vocabulary of our understanding of, and reliance on, "folk-psychology" and its attendant emphases on

self-understanding and freedom and responsibility,[8] it would be exceedingly naïve to see science *and* humanism as natural partners.

Thus, we must distinguish several sorts of relationships between naturalism and humanism. Methodological naturalism, if combined with a universalistic value-orientation, is conducive to humanism insofar as it enables us, via causal knowledge and technological skills, to effectively pursue our aims. In stripping the objects of knowledge from their embeddedness in the organism's interaction with its environment, and focusing on causal relations, it will necessarily be reductionist, albeit in a limited and harmless form. Reductionism as a danger to humanistic values enters the picture only at the very moment the scientific approach to nature is taken as comprehensive.

Against the backdrop of this reflection it is now possible to assess the impact of Dewey's non-reductive naturalism more precisely, which I approach as a philosophical attempt to develop a comprehensive metaphysics of experience within nature with the double aim of emphasizing the role both of science *and* of non-scientific, value-laden ordinary experience. This metaphysics aims at making the world of science safe for humanistic values, be they tied to a decidedly non-theistic or religious form of humanism. As such, it should be placed on an intermediary level of reflection and generalization, *above* concrete scientific and this-worldly experiences, but *below* the unifying attempts of world-views and religions. Dewey himself would probably not find such a sketch and description agreeable, a point to which I will later return. But first, let us consider a brief outline of the general form of his argument.

A helpful way of understanding Dewey's naturalistic metaphysics, exhibited most clearly in works like *Experience and Nature* or *The Quest for Certainty*, is indeed to see it as a way to conceive of the universe in ways that make it safe for human values. In like manner, Robert Westbrook reads the naturalistic reflections of these great books as efforts "to provide a philosophical anthropology for democracy."[9] I find such efforts so put rather far-fetched, given that one of Dewey's major aims was to avoid anthropocentric positions by placing human life in the entirety of life on the planet, and to further place life in the context of the cosmic order. But Westbrook is correct in that Dewey asks a vital question which is often overlooked by scientistic naturalists and religious fundamentalists alike: how are we to conceive of nature as to do better justice both to the qualitative (i.e., emotional experience of being human) as well as its scientifically explorable features? Without

a satisfying answer to such a question, methodological naturalism alone easily inclines towards a condescending and unappreciative attitude pertaining to the values which are important to our lives. On the other hand, without accepting the middle ground of a naturalistic metaphysics that includes human values, religious world-views are inclined to deny the autonomy of both science and morality and invoke divine commands and acts prematurely. It is easy to see that both attitudes pose challenging obstacles to the work of promoting of human values.

Dewey's metaphysics of unreduced, comprehensive human experience in nature helps us to avoid going astray here insomuch as it builds upon his distinction (not separation) of *knowledge* and *experience*. As all other organisms, human beings are essentially part of an environment in which they stand in, and find themselves among, constant relations of exchange. These repeated interactional feedback loops are the basis for both our sophisticated practices of scientific inquiry and for the process of valuation. Ordinary experience takes place *within* the action and comprises emotional, volitional and cognitive dimensions, usually without seperation. For example, when we see the sun rise in the morning, when we are immersed in our work or when we encounter another human being, we will be filled with a certain "unified comprehensive quality" (to borrow from Dewey) in which facts and values are, as Hilary Putnam says, entangled.[10] It is only when a 'hitch' occurs, when—to give two examples—the ground yields instead of supporting our steps or when others react in ways unanticipated by us that the necessity for articulating what we took for granted arises. The interactional feedback loop is then somehow obstructed. Hitches like these, though, will occur regularly, since we live in an environment with other actors and with physical features offering resistance. It is important to see that the articulations triggered by the encounter of resistances may develop in two opposite, but related directions: one cognitive and the other evaluative. Cognitive clarifications separate what is experienced from its embeddedness into interactions. They can be seen as the starting point for the human science-project. Evaluative clarifications appear when the reaction of others urge us to distinguish between our spontaneous impulses for action and that which would be good to do. Thus, they introduce the important distinction between the (factually) desired and the (normatively) desirable (to invoke Dewey's parlance). In this way, they trigger the ethical projects of humankind. Obviously, this picture is painted in very broad strokes,

but it should suffice to offer a general idea of what Dewey has in mind: it is the *des-integration* of the dynamic unity between organism and environment from which both the desire for causal knowledge and for shared human values spring.

By starting with ordinary experience as a holistic way of interactive relatedness, and by seeing science as an incomplete, albeit extremely important part of the whole specializing in epistemic knowledge, Dewey accomplishes a naturalistic re-integration of facts and values. The subject-matter of science is incomplete, but likewise *is* the subject-matter of ordinary experience, so long as it fails to integrate scientific knowledge. Such a task, however, is not as much a scientific one as it is humanistic. That is, it needs to be performed by the subjects of ordinary experience, led in this task by the articulation of values inaccessible to science, but elaborated and reflected upon in natural experiences. Dewey's non-reductive, naturalistic humanism encourages the subjects of these experiences (e.g., all of us) to realize that science has no prerogative for the disclosure of reality. On the contrary, science might be able to tell us that the sun does not revolve around the earth and yet it cannot tell us that a beautiful sunset is actually nothing more than atmospheric particles filtering out the red components of the light, or that human rights are nothing more than clever instruments of maximizing the survival of the species.

"If experience actually presents esthetic and moral traits," Dewey writes in *Experience and Nature*, "then these traits may also be supposed to reach down into nature, and to testify to something that belongs to nature as truly as does the mechanical structure attributed to it in physical science."[11] Since we are natural beings, and our interactions with our environment happen within nature, the experiential and evaluative features discovered in this process are as real as the laws of gravity or the genetic code. Taking the stance of classical, Deweyan pragmatism thus paves the ground for a naturalistic humanism. It allows us to cherish science *and* humanistic values, since both are grown on the same natural ground of our embeddedness in nature as interacting and articulating organisms. If we dispense with the ironic and somewhat condescending overtones of Kitcher's phrase, we can confidently say: no spooks so far. This is an important result since it demonstrates the manner in which humanism, in the basic sense of a natural evaluative attitude towards the achievement of universalistic values, is anthropologically situated, so to speak, in the middle region of our life: *above* the level of scientific

knowledge, since it relies on the comprehensive subject-matter of experience, not on the incomplete subject-matter of science alone, but *below* the level of comprehensive world-views which imply more than that basic sense of humanism, namely generalizations pertaining to the overall meaning and structure of existence, be they theistic, agnostic or atheistic in kind.

To sum up the first part, I'd like to highlight that Dewey's non-reductive naturalism incorporates methodological naturalism and thus, gives it the humanistic twist it often lacks when taken in isolation. By regarding our natural attitudes towards the social and physical world surrounding us as nature's self-revelation in the realm of values and by seeing them as capable of reflective refinement, Dewey breaks the spell of the barren-universe-attitude of scientism. For him, values are neither invented, as John Mackie would have it,[12] nor do they come down on us ready-made from some moral Mount Sinai, as the divine-command-theory claims. Rather, values are real features of the human world, which is a world of potentially reflective interaction between the organism and its environment. This 'common' or 'middle'-ground humanism is so important due to *its world-view independence*. Having escaped from the clutches of both scientism and fundamentalism, world-views and religions of all kinds should be able to subscribe to the promotion of human values in the basic sense of conditions for human flourishing. The astonishing rise of the talk of human rights, and human-dignity, in the last decades testifies to the possibility of such commonalities *below* the level of world-views. No supernatural strings must be pulled in order to establish human rights. To be sure, for religious believers these common human values will not be enough. As Charles Taylor has repeated again and again, secular humanism is hardly satisfying for people aspiring to a more transcendent vision of the ultimate reality.[13] But these values nevertheless indicate the common ground achievable for believers and non-believers on the basis of non-reductive naturalism.

The obvious objection to this is that naturalism is a no-go for religious believers. But if you think about it, this is true, strictly spoken, only of world-view naturalism. Dewey allows one to see that methodological naturalism, if combined with the broader naturalism of ordinary experience, constitutes no threat for comprehensive world-views. And, that the cultural life form of human beings has evolved naturally is a hard fact to deny. The threat for believers may well reoccur on the level of world-views, but believers and non-believers alike should in principle

be able to see universal human values as shared *necessary* conditions of human flourishing, despite the fact that believers will not regard these conditions as *sufficient*.[14]

Unfortunately, Dewey himself does not distinguish clearly between middle-ground naturalistic humanism and humanistic world-views. In his small book *A Common Faith*,[15] he develops the outline of an all-encompassing humanistic faith intended to replace all positive religions. And he depicts this faith as the natural and only possible outcome of his naturalistic concept of experience. This attempt, as respectable as it is, is yet flawed in several ways and inappropriate, I argue, for modeling the relation between the humanistic and the non-humanistic world. In order to demonstrate this, I will first elaborate the concept of world-views a bit more.

Religions and Other World-Views

Human beings are indeed part of the natural world and their mind is firmly embedded and embodied into its physical and social structures. But embodiment should not be confused with identity. Complementary to embodiment is our ability to transcend local environments and to relate ourselves to ultimate reality—whatever that is taken to mean among the great diversity of religions and world-views. This ability is brought about by our use of symbolic language, which enables us to think and talk about everything, independent from direct interaction with it, but likewise permeates our whole being in its emotional, volitional and cognitive dimensions. Existential feelings, as Matthew Ratcliffe[16] has shown, relate us to our way of being-in-the-world in more general terms. Thus, moral principles transcend the here and now of every given situation and cognitive convictions about the ultimate reality overstep the boundaries of what we can know in any scientific and even in any empirical sense at all. It is an inevitable part of our human condition that we lead our lives in the light of generalized emotional, volitional and cognitive attitudes which transcend the given or the empirically verifiable in principle. Obviously, huge differences occur in this regard. Some people seem to get along without recourse to any even remotely articulated coherent world-view, others stick to a verbal reading of some holy text as the guideline of their lives. But, these differences not withstanding, general attitudes with cognitive implications are anthropologic universals. And these attitudes, though

of course connected with experience, necessarily transcend and extrapolate each possible experience.

In this respect, William James had a clearer vision than Dewey. He opened his lectures on Pragmatism by pointing out that the most important thing to know about a person is her "philosophy," her overall world-view in a non-technical sense. By that he means "our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos."[17] And despite the fact that James somewhat neglects the sociological and psychological truism that this "individual way" is always already shaped by the surrounding culture, he is perfectly right in underlining that such a general attitude is as inevitable as important und may exist independently from any further articulation. Another important insight of James consists in the paramount importance of emotional attitudes, which he brings under the heading of tender vs. tough-minded minds. The contemporary discussions about existential feelings confirm this point.[18] And already at the turn of the twentieth century, the German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey attempted to reconstruct ideal types of world-views depending on generalized emotional attitudes.[19] But world-views develop from the articulation of holistic, non-methodological experience which they relate to the ultimate reality. Emotional attitudes will accordingly often be starting points, but during the process of articulation they will continuously be fused with general orientations of the will (values and norms) and with cognitive world-pictures.

I do not follow James in his claim that cognitive world-pictures are *only* functions of emotional attitudes. They exhibit a, so to speak, relative autonomy and cannot be reduced to subjective expressions. But the important point is, that in all three aspects, human experience is as well relied on and transcended—emotionally, practically and cognitively. An isolated cognitive picture of the world will therefore not suffice as a comprehensive world-view: generalizing our experiential relation to the world necessarily oversteps the boundaries of scientific, methodological knowledge. In performing this transcending movement, the generalization will necessarily be guided by emotional and volitional desires and attitudes and consequently loose the epistemic prestige of science. There is no such thing as a scientific world-view in the all-encompassing sense, only the—perfectly legitimate—non-scientific extrapolation of science to a world-view called scientism.

Accordingly, we find ourselves with a multitude of world-views and religions. Some are easily compatible with the cognitive claims of science, like scientism, some not at all, like Christian, Islamic or Jewish fundamentalism, and others may find themselves trying to reconcile a scientific world-picture with religious validity claims, like most liberal forms of the world-religions. Correspondingly, some existing world-views are compatible with what I have called middle-range humanism, like the more tolerant varieties of the world religions and non-reductive naturalisms, some are not, like scientism. As one can easily see, the borders between humanistic and non-humanistic world-views (in the middle-range sense) are different from those between humanism and religion.

To sum up once again: comprehensive world-views or religions are part and parcel of the human condition. Their human abode (to paraphrase Dewey who talks about the "human abode of the religious function" [20]) is the desire for integrating emotional, volitional and cognitive attitudes towards being-in-the-world as such. Every world-view or religion transcends the realm of knowledge. Admittedly, this transcending movement may or may not be compatible with what we know about the world, which creates a gradient of rationality between several world-views. But even the most rational world-views transcend knowledge and interpret reality in the light of more than principles of rationality. Next, we will consider Dewey's *A Common Faith* in the light of these general observations about the nature of world-views above.

In a way, Dewey's task in this little book is the same as that of the volume to which this chapter contributes: How should humanism relate to the non-humanist world? In a very condensed form, Dewey's answer would be: by getting rid of religion and saving the religious. Dewey's hope was that it might be possible to redirect the religious attitude onto its alleged real object, namely humanity. In sharp contrast to the new atheists of today, he realized clearly that human experience includes an irreducible religious dimension, a demand, as he called it, for "a thoroughgoing and deepseated harmonizing of the self with the Universe (as a name for the totality of conditions with which the self is connected)."[21] Quite recently, Thomas Nagel has made much the same point, albeit in a more soberly manner.[22] Dewey's attempt of severing the religious in the adverbial sense from the supernatural believes of the positive religions rejects both "aggressive atheism" and "traditional supernaturalism" and even goes so far as to contemplate, despite his clear negation

of any religious believe in the traditional sense, saving the God-talk for his secular humanism. "Use of the words 'God' or 'divine,'" he writes, "to convey … the union of actual with ideal may protect man from a sense of isolation and from consequent despair or defiance."[23] But, understandably, this attempt satisfied neither the more openly atheistic of his followers nor the religious believers. Dewey seems to be insensitive to the fact that the functional advantages of God-talk are dependent upon the belief that there actually *is* a God. Furthermore, as I see it, he is mistaken in another important regard in that he overlooks the difference between his own quasi-religious world-view of naturalism-cum-humanism offered in *A Common Faith* and his non-reductive account of human experience in nature.

Precision, I suggest, is necessary here: obviously, both aspects of Dewey's thought are closely connected, and for Dewey himself his theory of action and experience expanded to a world-view quite naturally. Nevertheless, the move from an account of experience which shows us that values are no lesser part of nature than atoms and their interactions to a comprehensive world-view involves the transcending of all experience towards a vision of the ultimate reality. Such move is entirely, no doubt, legitimate but *not*, however, an unavoidable consequence of the non-reductive theory of experience. As I have already attempted to demonstrate, it is indeed possible to share the concept without necessarily sharing the world-view. And this possibility creates common ground for shared human values and -rights which are independent from religious or anti-religious convictions. Independent but not wholly unrelated: quite naturally, religious believers will see human dignity as rooted in God's creation. Such surplus does not, I believe, affect the main thrust of my point here: many different and mutually exclusive world-views or religions can share the minimal humanism of allegiance to, if I may use Philippa Foot's expression, *natural goodness*.[24] In order to reach this common ground, they have to accept that fertile sources of values and norms can be found in ordinary human experience, conceived of in a non-reductive naturalistic, but world-view neutral manner.

This is as far as we get so long as we put aside the human desire for a unified world-view which integrates and inspires the search for the securing of human values in a contingent world. Dewey wrote *A Common Faith* because he realized the strength and importance of this desire, but his solution is nonetheless faulted because—to put it quite bluntly—he tried to have it both ways. As I see it, theistic world-views

own their inspiring power at least partly to their use of concepts like *saving grace* or *redemption* which can never be reconstructed in naturalistic terms, since they presuppose some active instance beyond nature. Dewey succeeded in enlarging naturalism over the limits of methodology and thereby paved the ground for middle-range humanism across the differences between the world-views and religions. But his attempt to appropriate the powers of God-talk for world-view naturalism remains a non-starter. If secular humanism needs transcendent consolations, theistic vocabulary and grammar is certainly not where it is to be found.

Thus far, I have attempted to sketch the possibility and limits of middle-range humanism through a critical assessment of Dewey's attempt to glide smoothly from a naturalistic theory of experience to a secularist world-view. In what follows, I focus on the status of and mutual relations among full-fledged world-views.

World-Views as Options

The Inevitability of Generalizations

Above, I suggested that world-views and religions necessarily generalize and synthesize experience beyond the limits of both methodological *and* ordinary naturalism. Methodological naturalism, after all, is what makes science possible. It is compatible with, but must be distinguished carefully from ordinary naturalism, which takes values and meanings as they come in our natural experiences. Religions and other comprehensive ways of life do not stop here. The range of world-view independent universal values lies below their level of generalization, and this is an insight hard to overestimate, because it provides common ground for several branches of humanism. Nevertheless, due to our anthropological proclivity for articulating our relation to the ultimate reality, humankind will probably never be able to stop there and refrain from such totalizations. In other words, we do *not* need them to secure the validity of universalistic norms and values and thus of a 'weak,' middle-range humanism, but we likewise cannot seem to do without them in view of our search for meaning. Meaning, in this sense, comprises emotional, volitional and cognitive aspects in intricate reciprocal relationships. Accordingly, isolating the cognitive aspect as exemplified in the example of the so called proofs for God's existence, in the end, will have very limited

powers of persuasion. It is precisely this entanglement of emotion, will and cognition that shapes the form of communication about values and religions and distinguishes it from scientific argumentation, at least in its idealized form. And it is essential to realize that we cannot import the standards of science into the realm of world-views, since that would inevitably amount to changing the subject. Hence, world-views and religions deal with the totality of man's being-in-the-world, not only with the scientifically accessible aspects of it.

These considerations determine my reflections on the relation between full-fledged secular humanism and other comprehensive world-views. First, it is important to acknowledge the insecurity *and* fallibility of *all* world-views. As Ronald Dworkin has so convincingly emphasized in his work, "absolute confidence or clarity is the privilege of fools and fanatics."[25] Now, what about the difference in rationality? Obviously it is highly counterintuitive to put fanatical religious or secular suppositions on a par with sophisticated world-views offering subtle conceptions of the relation between scientific knowledge and this-worldly meaning. The rationality of a world-view or religion can be measured partly by the seriousness of their attempts to incorporate scientific knowledge. But, it would nevertheless be misleading to assign a higher degree of rationality to scientism, which is by definition, compatible to the findings of science, than to other world-views and religions. On one hand, scientism falls short of the practical rationality of our ordinary evaluations and denies them the cognitive status of revealing properties of nature. Yet, on the other, it is prone to underestimating the precarious and fallible character of its own world-views, since it is blind to the non-scientific character of the relevant generalizations. Religious fundamentalists, on the opposite side of the range, suffer from the complimentary blindness of being unable to integrate science and to admit the fallible and interpretative element of all religions and world-views.

The Inevitability of Pluralism

These considerations are enforced by the fact that world-view pluralism has arrived at the core of all western, democratic societies—albeit in astonishingly different degrees. On the factual level, we find a wild diversity of standpoints concerning conceptions of the ultimate reality, and political philosophies since the time of John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*[26] are highly sensitive to this fact. Looking for overlapping consensus among the comprehensive world-views like Rawls or for discursive

consent like Habermas,[27] they try to travel, metaphorically speaking, with as few luggage as possible. Nevertheless, as sociologist Hans Joas aptly shows,[28] such a pluralistic setting and context ought not prevent us from looking for the possibilities of value-generalizations. Competing religions and secular world-views, under the pressure of an honest encounter with alternative visions, may *rearticulate* their own values in a manner that allows for a more comprehensive view and for shared values across religions. This process, I suggest, is what allows for, and enables the success of talk of human rights, at all.

The conceptual status of world-views and religions, in the light of the considerations above, is that of options framed by other options which provide alternatives. There is, in the end, no such thing as a *single* option. In the meaning William James gave to that term, an option is anything which, "appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed".[29] Christianity, in the Middle Ages, was *not* an option for most Europeans, because it wasn't framed by viable alternatives. In any one region of the world today the local creed might still be obligatorily, if no other *options* exist. For such places, clarifying the relation between the humanist and the non-humanist world essentially boil down to questions of power and dominance. But, the hallmark of democracies is the value placed on pluralism, and in this setting, world-views and religion inevitably encounter each other as *living* options framed by others. This situation becomes even more complicated with the process of religious individualization in mind insomuch as it unduly dissolves the traditional unity and closedness of world-views themselves. Individuals can, for example, easily be inclined to secular humanism, concurrently attend to Christian religious services, and still feel drawn to shamanic spirituality *and* be the biggest fan of the Dalai Lama at the same time. On the other hand, individualization is limited by the fact that world-views are more or less always parts of lived communities, draw upon the resources of the more traditional religions and furthermore, if rationally articulated, still meet some minimal standards of coherence and consistency.

The Odds and Limits of Dialogue

Taken together, we can say that—provided the existence of science and democracy—all world-views and religions bear an optional character but, unfortunately, only the enlightened ones have integrated this fact reflectively into their self-interpretation. It follows from my

argumentation that scientism is perfectly legitimate if it is seen as the risky and fallible extrapolation of science from the standpoint of ordinary experience, one that can likewise degenerate into an unenlightened dogmatic travesty if it fails to do so. Still worse is religious fundamentalism with its refusal to acknowledge the autonomy of 'natural'—in the elucidated sense—morality (thus making impossible middle-range humanism) *and* the truth of science. But in between we find a wide range of world-views and religions which compete with each other (on the level of the species-species-distinction), but at the same time, can be seen as different extrapolations of the same generic humanism of shared universal values, ranking foremost among them those of human rights and dignity.

If the encounter takes place in a pluralistic and democratic setting, the relations of humanism to the non-humanist world are thus, I suggest, threefold: (1) *Against* reductionist attitudes like scientism and religious fundamentalism it emphasizes the importance of ordinary experience and the universal, world-view independent values of human flourishing. Since human culture develops within nature, this includes the possibility of extending the realm of protective rights to other animals and even to inorganic nature. (2) *Together* with reflective representatives of non-humanistic world-views, humanists can and should work for what I have called middle-range, world-view independent humanism. This work includes the search for value-generalizations, which enlarge the set of values and convictions shared diagonally across very different world-views. (3) Finally, on the level of competing full-fledged world-views, secular humanism should debate *together* with, for example, theistic religions and at the same time *against* their validity claims. Over and against the other, we ought to remain consciously aware that fallible generalizing inferences to the best explanations are at stake, *not* embodiments of some absolute truth, be it scientific or divinely revealed. Hence, we must accept that an element of antagonism will constitutively remain. After all, to be convinced of a certain world-view or religion means to see it as the best possible general interpretation of experience *for everyone*, not just for me and my local tribe. One cannot consistently subscribe to a comprehensive vision of ultimate reality and at the same time limit its scope to oneself only.

The demanding task at hand lies in efforts to combine confidence *in* the validity of one's own world-view *with* openness and fallibility-consciousness.

Such a task is at least facilitated by two important insights: (1) World-view independent middle-range humanism offers common ground for all minimally self-reflective world-views, and (2) On the other hand, even those values which are tied up to full-fledged religions or world-views are in principle open to the process of value-generalization. On the level of cognitive convictions about the character of ultimate reality, differences are cast in a more exclusive manner and looking for a synthesis of theistic and non-theistic world-views would prove futile. Still, if humanists and non-humanists alike would realize both the inevitable *and* contingent nature of their ultimate beliefs, such differences would not vanish but after all loose their implacable character. Seeing other non-fundamentalist world-views as living options, not primarily as manifestations of error and obduracy, and grasping the possibility of middle-range humanism would at least be a huge step in the right direction.

Notes

1. I refer to Heidegger's famous "Brief über den Humanismus" (Letter on Humanism) from 1946/1947.
2. David Gelernter, "The Closing of the Scientific Mind", *Commentary*, March 2014, accessed March 31, 2014. http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-closing-of-the-scientific-mind/.
3. For a poignant critique of naturalistic reductionism from a non-theistic standpoint see Raymond Tallis, *Aping Mankind. Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Durham UK: Acumen, 2012).
4. Philip Kitcher, *Science in a Democratic Society* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2011), 41.
5. Steven Pinker, "Science Is Not Your Enemy. An impassioned plea to neglected novelists, embattled professors, and tenure-less historians", *New Republic* August 6, 2013, accessed March 31, 2014. http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114127/science-not-enemy-humanities.
6. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, The Later Works, 1925–1953, vol. 1, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 28.
7. Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 36.
8. To give just one example from popular neuroscience: David Eagelman, *Incognito. The Secret Lives of the Brain* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2011), chap. 6.

9. Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 320.
10. See Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value-Dichotomy and other Essays* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 202.
11. Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, 13.
12. See John Mackie, *Ethics. Inventing Wright and Wrong* (New York: Viking Press, 1977).
13. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2007).
14. Even from an agnostic or atheistic perspective, human values alone might no be enough. The desire for somehow relating the contingencies of our life-stories into a greater picture of the universe is presumably more or less an anthropologic universal.
15. John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1934).
16. Matthew Ratcliffe, "The Feeling of Being", *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12/8–10 (2005): 43–60.
17. William James, *Pragmatism*, ed. by B. Kuklick (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1981), 7.
18. See Joerg Fingerhut and Sabine Marienberg, eds., *Feelings of Being Alive* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012).
19. See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Weltanschauungslehre. Philosophie der Philosophie*, Gesammelte Schriften Bd. VIII (Stuttgart/Göttingen: Teubner/Vandenhoeck, 1960).
20. Dewey, *Common Faith*, 59.
21. Ibid., 19.
22. See Thomas Nagel, *Mind & Cosmos. Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20: "The implausibility of the reductive program that is needed to defend the completeness of this kind of [scientistic, M.J.] naturalism provides a reason to think of alternatives—alternatives that make mind, meaning, and value as fundamental as matter and space-time in an account of what there is."
23. Dewey, *Common Faith*, 53.
24. See Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
25. Dworkin, *Justice*, 95.
26. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1971); the question of world-view pluralism is especially tackled in Rawls's "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical", *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 3 (1985): 223–251.

27. See Jürgen Habermas, *Inclusion of the Other. Studies in Political Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
28. See Hans Joas, *The Sacredness of the Person. A New Genealogy of Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2013), chap. 6.
29. William James, "The Will to Believe", in *The Will To Believe and other essays in popular philosophy/Human Immortality* (both books bound into one; New York: Dover, 1956), 2.



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