VERSITA

HUMAN AFFAIRS *21*, 437–453, 2011
DOI: 10.2478/s13374-011-0042-4

THE PRAGMATIST CONCEPTION OF ALTRUISM AND RECIPROCITY

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Abstract: The paper provides an account of the pragmatist philosophical conception of reciprocity and altruism based on the ontology of "panrelationalism". The Deweyan concepts of transaction and cooperation are also outlined in some detail as well as the pragmatist (Rortyan) idea of justice. The author attempts to show that altruism is not necessarily just reciprocal but demands as its supplement (at least) altruism without reciprocation.

Keywords: pragmatism; panrelationalism; transaction; cooperation; justice; altruism; reciprocity

Introduction

Reciprocity and altruism are important concepts which are mainly discussed in evolutionary theory (Trivers 1971; Kitcher 1993; Sober 1998) and in game theory (Maynard-Smith 1988; Bruni 2008), particularly in elucidating social relations and the phenomenon of cooperation (Axelrod 1984; 1997); they also have a place in social anthropology (Mauss 1924/199), in economics (Kolm 2008) and in law (Posner 1999).[1] As for philosophy, reciprocity is analyzed in the theory of contractarianism—its modern theoretical foundations were laid by T. Hobbes, then in the theory of justice (Rawls 1999) as well as in the theory of emotionality, where it is regarded as one of the crucial moments of love (Nozick 1989; Nussbaum 1990).

The question is whether there are any foundations and prerequisites for reciprocal altruism outside ethics as well or is it a purely moral phenomenon? Ethics is a sphere of conscious human decision-making and action; that is why conscious, intentional altruism can only be one thing, whereas the nature of reality is another thing. A unique philosophical work by L. C. Becker (1990, 3) justifies reciprocity exclusively in ethical terms:

> Reciprocity is a moral virtue. We ought to be disposed, as a matter of moral obligation, to return good in proportion to the good we receive, and to make reparation for the harm we have done.

[1] For a more complex overview of the issue, see Monroe (1996); Gerard-Varet et al. (2000); Post et al. (2002); Seglow (2004); Scott and Seglow (2007).

Reciprocity is studied as a moral, deontic obligation. T. Nagel (1970) gives ethical reasons for the possibility of altruism as action motivated by the fact that somebody else will benefit from it or will avoid harm, although his arguments seek to go deeper into the psychological theory of motivation and rationality; according to him, we have direct and "objective" rational reasons to do good for others.

To understand and chiefly to justify the phenomena of altruism and reciprocity (and their joint connections) requires a look through the lenses of other concepts. The philosophy of pragmatism offers some of these. Of primary concern is the ontology of panrelationalism, i.e. the philosophical conception of the world, according to which relationships (relations and correlations) between entities are determining for the way they are. The concept of relation as a starting point for understanding society and human action is later explicated in the concepts of social interaction, transaction, interdependence, and cooperation. At the ethical level, the philosophy of pragmatism overcomes the dualism of egoism vs. altruism and develops the principle of reciprocity in the context of concepts such as loyalty and culture[2]. This study is devoted to the analysis of these concepts.

Metaphysics of panrelationalism

Pragmatism construes being as dynamic (processual) and at the same time as relational—all entities only exist in mutual relations with other entities, none of them exists in isolation. Relations are so important for the existence of entities that they determine their character. The intention to determine the character of an entity in abstraction from others is, according to pragmatism, an old essentialist and substantialist interpretation which postulates its own "internal" value of the matter; what it is "by itself", regardless of the context and network of relations in which it exists. According to pragmatism, however, this value depends on the relations, in which it is present.

Classical pragmatism describes *metaphysics* as the study of "the most general features of reality and real objects" (Peirce 1998, 2, 375). This is Peirce's concept of metaphysics. According to this concept every man "has a metaphysics, and has to have one; and it will influence his life greatly" (Peirce 1931-1958, 1, 129). It was Peirce's project to found metaphysics on science and make it scientific. In metaphysics we deal with the same reality which we also have to deal with empirically and which we observe in phenomenological and normative sciences. The objects of metaphysics are not only the most common but also the least observable, abstract, unobservable, and transcend current experience. They are real in spite of this. We reach these objects through judging using logic.

Part of Peirce's metaphysics is *cosmology* dealing with the most general characteristics of the world as a whole. It is evolutionary cosmology inspired mostly by Darwin, but, at the same time, it is entirely different from Darwinism. The universe evolves in a particular direction, from chaos to order, from pure coincidence and irregularity to regularity; from pure possibility, spontaneity and potentiality to certainty, following the rules and self-control.

[2] The concepts of loyalty and cultural reciprocity were developed by the pragmatists J. Royce (1908/1995) and A. Locke (1942/1989). In spite of their significance for our theme, we cannot deal with them in detail in this study.

All entities in nature develop from a disordered to an ordered state through habits, which represent certain essential structures. The universe has a tendency to observe the rules and laws, but it is not an absolute tendency in any case. Peirce described this tendency through *synechism*, a continuity doctrine, in which matters come under the same law. However, natural laws are not absolute, invariant, they are derived and approximate. They continually create space for coincidence and spontaneity (tychism). Tychism accentuates spontaneity, whereas synechism emphasizes orderliness. There is tension between the two fundamental sides of the world which is balanced through agapism—the doctrine of evolutionary and creative love. Agape (love) is a unique causal force, the positive power of sympathy, a creative law of association and not something that is temporary or mechanistic.

Peirce's metaphysics is not only a purely theoretical conception—it is allied with his religious, even ethical and social views. Its ethical meaning consists in a well thought out cultivation of self-control as the supreme stage of evolution. According to Peirce's metaphysics interdependence in the universe grows together with evolution from spontaneity to law. It is, however, never an absolute necessity; there is always a space for spontaneity and love, in particular, is the force which levels everything off to *harmony.* Through such metaphysics, Peirce accentuated altruism in opposition to social Darwinism (Hausman 1999, 203).

Classical pragmatism defends consistent *pluralism* including *metaphysical pluralism* as a radical-empiricist conception of reality which holds that we live in a "pluralistic universe". The *locus classicus* of this conception is a theory by W. James. For instance, in his chapter on *Pragmatism* (1907) titled "One and Many" James opposes traditional philosophical monism, determinism, and absolutism and explains that according to pragmatism "one and many" are "co-ordinates", that is that the world is one and many at the same time since

> everything that exists is influenced in SOME way by something else, if you can only pick the way out rightly Loosely speaking, and in general, it may be said that all things cohere and adhere to each other SOMEHOW, and that the universe exists practically in reticulated or concatenated forms which make of it a continuous or 'integrated' affair (James, 2003, 60).

This is a concept of universal interdependence or a network, which may remind us of Hegel's dialectics. James's emphasis is on the practical, i.e. the empirical side, which includes relations as well as objects. In his ontology and epistemology there is no division into things that are "objective" and "subjective" but only "disjunctive" and "conjunctive" relations. Experience and world are "one" (unified) but pluralistic (varied, multiplied) at the same time, which means they are composed of a variety of mutually interconnected parts, one part of that being us, humans. In our stream of lived experiences we are intimately embedded in reality (unified with it) and only on the basis of reflection do we distinguish these parts and their mutual relations. Our reflections of our experience teach us that the world not only demands us to act but that it is also open to many of our projects. James's ontology as a theoretical conception is intertwined with his religious, ethical, and social views.

James's pluralism should not be mixed up with subjectivism and/or relativism of the type "anything goes". A pluralistic universe of a number of interdependences is not a "solid block", rather it is an open, incomplete and imperfect universe, which is at the same time risky, dangerous, vague, "tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed" (James 2003, 9). On the other hand, it is "flexible" enough to enable people to intervene and assert their

intentions. This, however, is no arbitrary matter. One of the features to which James was very sensitive was having an understanding and respect for others. It is evident that there is a plurality of various life styles and opinions and therefore we should all overcome what he called "a certain blindness in human beings" with respect to the lives of others. In spite of all the differences in the universe, James's philosophy does not collapse into an atomistic conception. For instance, he appeals to the concept of sociality based on the old understanding of the word "socius" as an ally, partner, or family member. In *A Pluralistic Universe*, James wrote that "the common *socius* of us all is the great universe whose children we are" (James 1971, 137). He believed that numerous varieties require reciprocal relations and cooperation rather than hindrances, regardless of how difficult all this may be. James was very perceptive to our changing the world into a harmonious home for humankind. Although he knew that there would be no guarantee of our success, our "will to believe" and "strenuous mood" would provide insurmountable support for his meliorism.

Contemporary neopragmatism in contrast to all versions of classical pragmatism defends the *antimetaphysical approach*, which holds that "there is a way things really are" and that "the appearance—reality distinction" should be replaced with those "between descriptions of the world and of ourselves which are less useful and those which are more useful" (Rorty 1999, 27). In this context Richard Rorty developed a wide and fundamental vision of reality, which he called "panrelationalism" (*ibid*., 52). He explained that "there is nothing to be known about anything save what is stated in sentences describing it" and "there is nothing to be known about anything save its relations to other things" (*ibid.,* 54). With regard to each real thing, this approach maintains that it has no "intrinsic essence" or "objective substance" separate from our descriptions or interpretations from the point of view of relations. Rorty understood everything to be a "nexus of relations" (Rorty in Balslev 1999, 39).

Rorty's pragmatism is "visionary", "romantic", "utopian" even. His global utopia, in which he underscores the concept of cooperative community as an expression of interconnection of humankind (Rorty 1999, 235), he describes thus:

> In a just global society, not only would all children have roughly equal chances, but the girls would have the same sort of chances as the boys. In that society, nobody would care about which sex you fall in love with, any more than about the lightness or darkness of your skin. In that society, people who wanted to think of themselves as Basque first, or black first, or women first, and citizens of their countries or of a global cooperative commonwealth second, would have little trouble doing so. For the institutions of that commonwealth would be regulated by John Stuart Mill's dictum that everybody gets to do what they like as long as it doesn't interfere with other people's doing the same.

According to Rorty it would not be correct to talk about absolute interdependence; humankind depends on its own social practices and mutual internal and external relations and not on something "superhuman". With reference to Dewey, he stated that the only type of dependence people need is their self-image, as part of a wider context. In spite of his skepticism, Rorty believed in "the power of human beings to change the conditions of human life"; in "humanity's ability to take charge of its own affairs" (Rorty 1999, 264).

A specific expression in Rorty's panrelationalism is not only the concept of solidarity but also the concept of "relational morality" in general and in opposition to essentialism. His essay "Ethics without Principles" is based on this relational "principle" (Rorty 2006, 73):

> Pragmatists have doubts about the suggestion that anything is unconditional, because they doubt that anything is, or could be, nonrelational. So they need to reinterpret the distinctions between morality and prudence, morality and expediency, and morality and self-interest, in ways which dispense with the notion of unconditionality.

Given that, our moral behaviour and decision-making always take place within the context of relationships with other people (but also with other entities and beings in the world), in which they are "horizontally anchored". These relations require and contain what is called "moral obligation", which cannot be ignored. Moral obligations with respect to others, that is real demand for reciprocity, do not depend either on any moral imperatives from above (they are not vertically anchored), or on universal and abstract commands of reason (as in Kant) but rather are a manifestation of our sensibility (perceptiveness) with respect to the particular members of our community, family, neighbours, etc.

What then does this pragmatist metaphysics of panrelationalism mean for ethics, particularly the concepts of altruism and reciprocity? If we live in a world of manifold mutual relations many of which are relationships of interdependence and not in a world of isolated entities separated one from the other, an ethics that should be (and could be) a useful tool for surviving in this world, ought to contain "mutualism" as the conviction that nobody in this world could survive alone and against others or to the detriment of them; rather the reverse: only together with them and in mutual cooperation. J. Dewey (LW 13, 303) wrote:

> Through mutual respect, mutual toleration, give and take, the pooling of experiences, it is ultimately the only method by which human beings can succeed in carrying on this experiment in which we are all engaged, whether we want to be or not, the greatest experiment of humanity—that of living together in ways in which the life of each of us is at once profitable in the deepest sense of the word, profitable to himself and helpful in the building up of the individuality of others.

Dewey's concept of transaction and cooperation

Classical pragmatism defends metaphysical *interactionism* as a theory of a conception of the world where all entities interact directly and mutually or indirectly through other entities and relations. In social philosophy and in the ethics of pragmatism this conception was developed by George Herbert Mead (1934) although Jane Addams had written earlier (1902) in this vein and had even spoken explicitly about the "principle of reciprocity" as a substantial part of morality and social relations altogether. According to her, none of them is possible without reciprocity; that is, neither ethics nor social life. This principle is currently being developed by other philosophers who regard it as common to both pragmatism and feminism and/or pragmatist-feminist ethics (Seigfried 1993).[3]

[3] J. Addams (1860-1935) was a social reformer and activist (she founded and led a social movement of the poor and immigrants, Hull House in Chicago); she was also Dewey's co-worker and the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1931). Her approach to the "principle of reciprocity" was close to that of the founder of social liberalism L.T. Hobhouse (1868-1929).

Dewey's conception of transactionism is an extension and concretization of the pragmatist physics of panrelationalism and interactionism. Dewey used the term "transaction" instead of "interaction" because he regarded it as more appropriate. Transactions are dynamic relations and multi-relations that occur between entities, organisms, and subjects. Transactions are so diverse and rich that reciprocity can only be one part of them, not a universal characteristic. Transactions occurring among people as social agents are thus reciprocal as well as nonreciprocal and, within the reciprocal ones, they are equivalent and non-equivalent.

Dewey spoke about transactions in various contexts from bio-psychological to sociological and educational. A transaction is generally a complex of inter-active experiential exchanges, which occur between the organism and its environment, between the mind and the world, between the individual and society. Each action is a transaction. In *Experience and Education* (1938) Dewey defined a transaction as follows: "An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment…" (Dewey LW 13, 25). In *Knowing and the Known* (1949) he wrote about a transaction as being fundamental interdependence (Dewey LW, 16). A transaction is a two-way process which always includes a mechanism of correlation and coordination.

Dewey explicitly used the term "interdependence", which he regarded as a substantial part of the modern vision of the world as a correlative and coordinated order. For instance, in his early work about Leibnitz, he noted that "the law of the universe is interdependence" (Dewey EW 1, 282). Later he wrote that "the ideas of the complete interdependence of all things according to universal and necessary law" is an "idea which he found to be the basis of natural science" (Dewey LW 4, 45). Dewey saw that in all places where there is diversity, there is also interdependence as a "substantial fact", so that organic unity and integrity can be preserved whether it is nature or culture, mental or social life (in *The School and Society* he used the term "organic interdependence"). Interdependence consists in causal and functional mutual relationships; it is dynamic and processual, not static and rigid. It functions not only in the interest of preserving things and their status but it is also indispensable for change: "There is, then, a genuine sense in which the evolution of life, the increase in diversity and interdependence of life functions, means an evolution of new environments just as truly as of new organs" (Dewey MW 6, 438).

In Dewey's social theory the interdependence between an individual and society is both a fact and a value; it includes "a reciprocal influence of each on the other" as against "those who would assert individuals independent of society or society independent of psychical individuals" (Dewey EW 5, 388-389). Social inclusion, solidarity and public participation are a manifestation of conscious interdependence. The "ever-increasing interdependence of peoples in every phase of modern life", Dewey wrote in *Ethics* (1908), are necessities and signs of the growth of western civilization. Social welfare is not possible without the "interdependence of interests" (Dewey MW 8, 353).

Nothing in the world and in society is purely exclusive, isolated or separated. According to Dewey (MW 5, 439), all types of

> relations of man to man, political, friendly, kindred, are developed forms of the interdependence implicit in the early group life. A group of units, each independent of the others, would represent mass only, but such a group as is made up of men, women, and children, sustaining all the relations found in present human life, represents something vastly more than a mass

> of individuals. Every life draws from the rest. Man without friendship, love, pity, sympathy, communication, cooperation, justice, rights, or duties, would be deprived of nearly all that gives life its value.

From the ethical perspective, the shaping of a close and bilateral interdependence is one of the age-old social mechanisms in becoming accustomed to human communities. On the other hand, together with the development of modern individualism and tolerance, the process of breaking free from the interdependence within family, economic and political ties, has in religion the opportunity to become more personal and more universal.

Dewey was aware of the two sides of the coin: interdependence is not necessarily positive but rather a complex fact:

> It is a commonplace that steam and electricity have made the nations of the world increasingly interdependent. They have drawn the peoples of the earth, for weal and for woe, closely together. Interdependence is a condition of many things better than those which mankind has achieved in the past. But interdependence in and of itself is not necessarily a good (Dewey LW 3, 348).

In *Ethics* he wrote:

> The increased interdependence of men, through travel and transportation, collective methods of production, and crowding of population in cities, has widened the area of the harm likely to result from inconsiderate action, and has strengthened the belief that adequate thoughtfulness is possible only where there is sympathetic interest in others (Dewey MW 5, 416).

Dewey also expressed the idea of reciprocity indirectly through relationships and acts of "give-and-take": "Give and take is the law of nature and of life" (Dewey EW 3, 199). This "dialectics" of reciprocity as "give-and-take" is of special importance, i.e. as exchange in the broadest sense of the term for social life and human relations, education and ethics since it "must be borne in mind that ultimately social efficiency means neither more nor less than capacity to share in a give and take of experience" (Dewey MW 9, 127). Common experience is a "social medium" through which and within which bilateral (and multilateral) "give-and-take" acts occur, enriching human lives and fostering individual development. What "one is as a person is what one is as associated with others, in a free give and take of intercourse" (Dewey MW 9, 129). Dewey's concept of "give-and-take" is thus not reduced to an economic act of the exchange of goods and material possessions, or to an act of communication; this exchange is a precondition for and a result of cultural diversity in the broadest sense of the term (Dewey MW 10, 288). It is about free exchange—reciprocal give-and-take—of cultural values as a sign of open democratic society. To learn

> to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community; one who understands and appreciates its beliefs, desires and methods, and who contributes to a further conversion of organic powers into human resources and values. But this translation is never finished (Dewey LW 2, 332).

Every obstacle placed in the way and each breakdown in the free exchange of contact, activities, values, etc., means undermining the foundations of social life because:

> Society is of course but the relations of individuals to one another in this form and that. And all relations are interactions, not fixed moulds. The particular interactions that compose a human society include the give and take of participation, of a sharing that increases, that expands and deepens the capacity and significance of the interacting factors (Dewey LW 5, 82).

Society is an organization which, "as in any living organism, is the cooperative consensus of multitudes of cells, each living in exchange with others" (*ibid.,* 83).

Dewey does not develop the notions of reciprocity, interdependence and reciprocal exchange, give-and-take within the context of power and relationships of superiority/inferiority. By contrast, his ideals are the relations of equality, love and friendship; however, these do not necessarily mean equivalence in give-and-take. Such an equivalence cannot, for instance, exist in intergenerational relationships (between parents and children, teachers and pupils), where the amount of giving on one side (parents, teachers) can only with difficulty be equalled from the other (children, pupils). From this Dewey does not necessarily deduce any relationship of the dependence of the latter on the former. Those who give claim dependence on those to whom they give and on those who take from them; this is true only within the context of power but not in the context of love and friendship. Quite the reverse,

> the best thing we can do for another is to assist him to stand on his own feet so that he can get along without our assistance. We forget that the companionship, the give and take, of equals is immensely more rewarding than that of inferiors (Dewey LW 5, 136).

On the other hand, it does not mean that those who take—to whatever extent and especially to the extent where it can only be equalled with extreme difficulty—do not have (and/or should not have) any obligations to give back (reciprocate) to those who give. Dewey shows that human society has long since been functioning on such a principle of reciprocity. Such reciprocal relations and acts are part of the habits that are crucial to Dewey's social theory:

> The basis of customs is to be sought in several concurrent factors. In the first place every member of a group stands in certain relations of give and take to other members of the group, and usually to the group as a whole… When one man makes a gift to another he expects some gift in return. All such relationships tend to become regular and standardized. They are the machinery of society. Customs are the natural workings of this machinery. Even in modern society the law considers that certain obligations and rights follow from the status of the persons concerned, such as parent and child, husband and wife, landlord and tenant (Dewey LW 7, 50).

Cooperation is a typically reciprocal activity since it is not possible without reciprocal investment on both (or more) sides, the amount invested by these sides need not always be equivalent (proportional). People in fact cooperate making "profits" or "losses" which are difficult to measure and quantify. In Dewey's social philosophy the concept of cooperation[4] logically also occupies a key position but not so much from the point of view of the results (profits and losses) but from the perspective of meaning and value:

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[4] In his theory of cooperation Dewey collaborated with James H. Tufts (1862-1942), his colleague at the University of Chicago with whom he wrote *Ethics* (1908, 2nd ed. 1932). Tufts extended his own ideas on cooperation as well (1918).

> Man without friendship, love, pity, sympathy, communication, cooperation, justice, rights, or duties, would be deprived of nearly all that gives life its value (Dewey MW 5, 439).

Cooperation is according to Dewey a social process without which people would not achieve certain results and which is the core of social life and has value as a process as such. In this process people act as valuable social beings contributing to the reciprocal enrichment of their lives. According to Dewey, cooperation is far from simply having economic value but also has psychological, social and cultural value. Cooperation is a "socializing as well as rationalizing" agency (Dewey MW 5, 16). Cooperation

> implies a common end. It means that each is interested in the success of all. This common end forms then a controlling rule of action, and the mutual interest means sympathy. Cooperation is therefore one of nature's most effective agencies for a social standard and a social feeling (Dewey MW 5, 46).

Dewey analyzes cooperation in various spheres of social life (industry, the army, the arts) and points first of all to its socio-ontological anchoring as a strength and factor and only then to its ethical meaning. Cooperation is a primary social activity and morality simply carries on its work (Dewey MW 5, 52). From the ethical point of view cooperation will have to become "the root principle of the morals of democracy" (Dewey MW 5, 276). Democracy "demands cooperation in place of coercion, voluntary sharing in a process of mutual give and take, instead of authority imposed from above" (Dewey LW 7, 349); and democracy is

> a way of living together in which mutual and free consultation rule instead of force, and in which cooperation instead of brutal competition is the law of life; a social order in which all the forces that make for friendship, beauty, and knowledge are cherished in order that each individual may become what he, and he alone, is capable of becoming (Dewey LW 11, 417).

The culture of democracy is not a culture of classical individualism to the detriment of the sense of common interests, aims and good; without the latter, there would be a decline in freedom and equality, in the democratic ideal itself, of which cooperation as well as personal initiative is part. To place cooperativeness in opposition to freedom and equality is so absurd as to assume that the only mutual relations among people are those into which they enter only for private profit. According to Dewey then, individual freedom, like the "freedom of cooperative individualities is then a problem to be viewed in the context of culture (Dewey LW 13, 79). Within the context of human nature "rational egoism" cannot be presented as natural together with private interest and individualism, nor can "irrational altruism" be presented as unnatural alongside sympathy and cooperativeness, because

> neither competition nor cooperation can be judged as traits of human nature. They are names for certain relations among the actions of individuals as the relations actually obtain in a community (Dewey LW 13, 142).

Democracy as Dewey understands it is a social order which neither prefers nor serves individualistic interests to the detriment of the whole; On the contrary, democracy without cooperation and a cooperative culture, without "habits of friendly cooperation" within which rivalry and competitiveness are not subordinate components, is not possible. On the contrary, democracy includes the tendency to change "every conflict which arises… into

that of discussion and of intelligence (Dewey LW 14, 228) and "the will to transform passive toleration into active cooperation" (Dewey LW 14, 277):

> A genuinely democratic faith in peace is faith in the possibility of conducting disputes, controversies and conflicts as cooperative undertakings in which both parties learn by giving the other a chance to express itself, instead of having one party conquer by forceful suppression of the other… To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life (Dewey LW 14, 228).

> The essence of cooperation is the will to cooperate–fraternity (Dewey LW 14, 277).

Overcoming the dualism between altruism and egoism

Since it was first introduced by A. Comte (1857/2009) the concept of altruism has remained problematic despite a number of current analyses. The crucial question concerns the interconnection between altruism and reciprocity, i.e. the question of "reciprocal altruism". If the thesis that altruism has to do with the good for others (Nagel 1970) is generally accepted, then there is still the question as to what the relationship is between the good for others and good for myself as the classic question of the relationship between altruism and egoism. Moreover, it is not clear whether altruism is only a one-way act of giving from the side of one actor associated with a one-way act of taking from the side of another actor, and whether this is the end of the act, or, if it is a reciprocal process of exchange that also contains "reciprocation", i.e. the act of giving (paying back, returning, etc.) also from the part of the second subject. According to some authors (Monroe 1996) true altruism is "radical" and unconditional, that is nonreciprocal and in contradiction to altruism along the lines of "an eye for an eye", because it does not calculate the payback on one's investment in advance and does not reckon with reciprocity. If the reaction to altruism from the other side is the same altruism, it may be either a coincidence or a situation that is not the norm. Reciprocal altruism as an ethical norm may be problematic: if it is doing good for others based on one's inner motivation and unconditionally, who would act altruistically by themselves if it was conditioned by expecting reciprocal good from the other side and without being sure that it would be returned? And finally, although this returnability might have been reciprocity, it need not necessarily be equivalent and as a reaction it would only be paying back something that had happened of its own accord. A truly altruistic act appears to be an act which does not expect reciprocity.

Pragmatism is the philosophy of antidualism, which does not place reciprocity in opposition to non-reciprocity as being mutually exclusive but rather as being complementary and the same is true of altruism and egoism. Doing good for oneself (traditionally called egoism) and doing good for other people (traditionally called altruism) are always interlinked according to the actual situation and therefore we cannot unambiguously place one before the other. According to pragmatism, this would mean alternative approaches eliminating themselves and be proof of dogmatism and not of a creative approach in ethics.

In his ethics, Dewey (EW 3; MW 5; LW 7) cast doubts on the traditional opposition of egoism and altruism, which holds that egoism is unequivocally morally bad and that altruism

is unambiguously morally good. Dewey says that it is a very simplified image of morality e.g. because there are cases of immoral altruism, such as manipulation,

> a desire to do for others which, at bottom, is simply an attempt to regulate their conduct. Much of altruism is an egoism of a larger radius, and its tendency is to "manufacture a gigantic self," as in the case where a father sacrifices everything for his children or a wife for her husband (Dewey EW 3, 308).

Dewey does not deny the morality of doing good for others but "it is much better to do this by securing for them the freedom which makes it possible for them to get along in the future without such 'altruism' from others" (*ibid.*). For him the best way of helping others is an "indirect" approach consisting "in such modifications of the conditions of life, of the general level of subsistence, as enables them independently to help themselves (Dewey MW 5, 350).

Dewey also points out that altruism is "external" and egoism "internal" in the mind and in the actions of the actor. Also as far as altruism is concerned our

> native instincts or certain acquired habits demand relief of others as part of themselves. The well-being of the other is an interest of the self: is a part of the self. This is precisely what is meant ordinarily by unselfishness: not lack or absence of a self, but such a self as identifies itself in action with others' interests and hence is satisfied only when they are satisfied (Dewey MW 5, 340).

These are internal personal motives which belong to the subject and which contain within them concern for the other person. And in this there can be no difference between these and internal personal motives of concern for the self cannot differ from the former. Altruists do not differ from egoists in that the altruist's own interests are "closer" to them than the interests of others because both are part of the subject's psychological equipment and motivation. In Dewey discussions about altruism vs. egoism thus become an analysis of the concept of the subject, the self, which can be "broader" if its relationships with others (and the environment as a whole) and their realization include needs and aims besides their own; or "narrower" if they are reduced to this (Pappas 2008, 214-216). Egoists find ignorance or concentrating on one's own interests disturbing in that that they would also allow in others' interests and the relations between them. Dewey believes that from the emotional point of view, it is sympathy that is the key to interest in others (Dewey EW 2, 282).[5]

Dewey doubts that both are equally legitimate: "that just as conscious regard for self is not necessarily bad or "selfish," so conscious regard for others is not necessarily good: the criterion is the whole situation in which the desire takes effect" (Dewey MW 5, 346). This is why the distinction between the altruistic and egoistic is not absolutely valid; the proportions are different in different people and it depends on the situation in question (Dewey MW 5, 347). Moreover, it is not only motives but also the results and consequences that decide about the character of an action; a person can act on the basis of altruistic motives but the resulting act need not always be qualified as altruistic and *vice versa*. Dewey submits the

[5] The concept of sympathy occupies a crucial position in Dewey's ethical conception, we cannot, however analyze it in detail here. For details see Fesmire (2003); Pappas (2008).

following deformations of altruism: i) it has a tendency to make others dependent, which contradicts the aim of helping them; ii) the promotion of an altruistic motive as a virtue engenders egoism in others; iii) focusing excessively on altruism as a motive creates egoism in individuals who emphasize it (*ibid.*). For Dewey, the most distinctive example of these deformations is philanthropy masquerading as a facade behind which lies the egoism of the rich and operating as a kind of false compensation for brutal exploitation (Dewey MW 5, 349). Dewey's words are clear:

> It is a mistake to distinguish interest in self as egoistic and interest in others as altruistic. Genuine interests, whatever their object, are both egoistic and altruistic. They are egoistic simply because they are interests--imply satisfaction in a realized end. If man is truly a social being, constituted by his relationships to others, then social action must inevitably realize himself, and be, in that sense, egoistic. And on the other hand, if the individual's interest in himself is in himself as a member of society, then such interest is thoroughly altruistic (Dewey EW 3, 307-308).

The traditional opposition between altruism and egoism dates back to the old individualistic perception of man and society in classical liberalism, which became embedded as a dichotomy between economic interests (justified as an expression of "rational egoism") and moral virtues (justified as an expression of "altruistic emotions"). The key to their solution is a new approach to the individual and society, the self and others, and their mutual relations. Then we realize

> the fact that regard for self and regard for others are both of them secondary phases of a more normal and complete interest: regard for the welfare and integrity of the social groups of which we form a part (Dewey LW 7, 299).

The solution, therefore, is a just social order in which people would act in order to make a profit for themselves and for others at the same time.

> Services, in other words, would be reciprocal and cooperative in their effect… Interest in the social whole of which one is a member necessarily carries with it an interest in one's own self… Since each one of us is a member of social groups and since the latter have no existence apart from the selves who compose them, there can be no effective social interest unless there is at the same time an intelligent regard for our own well-being and development… When selfhood is taken for what it is, something existing in relationships to others and not in unreal isolation, independence of judgment, personal insight, integrity and initiative, become indispensable excellencies from the social point of view (Dewey LW 7, 300).

The act is immoral not because it is focused on caring for oneself (traditionally egoistically) but because it is "unfair, inconsiderate, in respect to the rights, just claims, of others" (Dewey LW 7, 294). Ontologically the self simply does not exist in advance and without others (alter ego); therefore neither can the egoistic motives of the subject centred on the self have priority over altruistic motives focused on others:

> The self has no meaning except as contrasted with other persons. Egoistic feelings are impossible except through a connection with altruistic feelings. "Mine" requires a contrasted "thine" (Dewey EW 2, 282).

According to Dewey's pragmatist conception altruism and egoism overlap each other and cannot be separated. They can, but need not, incorporate both reciprocity and non-reciprocity. Their moral value is decided by their consequences, produced in particular situations and judged from the perspective of the good of the individual as well as from the good of the social whole.

Pragmatist concept of justice (outline)

J. Rawls defined the relationship between reciprocity and justice[6] as follows:

> Justice and fairness are, indeed, different concepts, but they share a fundamental element in common, which I shall call the concept of reciprocity. They represent this concept as applied to two distinct cases: very roughly, justice to a practice in which there is no option whether to engage in it or not, and one must play; fairness to a practice in which there is such an option, and one may decline the invitation. In this paper I shall present an analytic construction of the concept of justice from this point of view, and I shall refer to this analysis as the analysis of justice as reciprocity (Rawls 1999, 190).

Rawls (1995) cannot imagine justice without the principle of reciprocity and says that it is an indispensable part of a well-ordered society. This principle is even more evident in his conception of justice as fairness:

> As understood in justice as fairness, reciprocity is a relation between citizens expressed by principles of justice that regulate a social world in which all who are engaged in cooperation and do their part as the rules and procedures require are to benefit in an appropriate way as assessed by a suitable benchmark of comparison (Rawls 2001, 49).

Obviously, this concept of justice includes the principle of reciprocity as the principle of the equivalence of the exchange between give and take. Although R. Rorty attempted to re-interpret Rawls, who was close to the philosophy of pragmatism, the pragmatist concept of justice is not founded primarily on equivalence although reciprocity is not entirely avoided.

Dewey did not see the concept of justice as an abstract and unchangeable Platonic ideal to be struggled for but as the product of our human experience, practice and history; at the same time, he saw it as an instrument for evaluating the state and level of the development of society.

> But in fact, we institute standards of justice, truth, esthetic quality, etc., in order that different objects and events may be so intelligently compared with one another as to give direction to activities dealing with concrete objects and affairs (Dewey LW 12, 216-217).

Dewey argued against the organic Platonic conception of justice and the contractualistic Hobbes version:

> Justice, then, is the name for the deed in its entirety; it names as a whole what we name in aspects when we use the other virtues. It is not another virtue; it is the system of virtue, the

[6] The relationship between altruism and justice is less clear and more complicated since we can only speak of it meaningfully where "reciprocal altruism" is concerned.

> organized doing: whose organic members are wisdom, the will to know; courage, the impulse to reach, control, the acquired power to do (Dewey EW 4, 363, 357).

For Dewey, justice as "obedience to the law" or "just award" are very static and very narrowed down concepts. What is much worse, according to him, is the "market concept of justice" which reduces it to a thing analogous to goods and exchangeable for the equivalents commodity just like anything else (Manicas 2008, 240). Dewey writes:

> If justice be conceived as mere return to an individual of the equivalent of what he has done; if his deeds, in other words, be separated from his vital, developing self, and, if therefore, the "equivalent return" ignore the profound and persistent presence of self-hood in the deed, then it is true that justice is narrow in its sphere, harsh in form, requiring to be supplemented by another virtue of larger outlook and freer play—Grace (Dewey EW 4, 361).

The crucial point in this conception is that justice is not a "thing" but a living relationship, an act even and the value of it and the people themselves are its measure. Dewey continues:

> But if justice be the returning to a man of the equivalent of his deed, and if, in truth, the sole thing which equates the deed is self, then quite otherwise. Love is justice brought to self-consciousness; justice with a full, instead of partial, standard of value; justice with a dynamic, instead of static, scale of equivalency (*ibid.*).

Later he writes in a similar vein: transformation of the concept of justice requires joining "hands with love and sympathy" (Dewey MW 5, 374). This romantic-Hegelian conception goes hand in hand with his critique of legal formalism, which works with "some fixed and abstract law… as if man was made for law, not law for man" (*ibid*., 373).

Dewey did not, however, confine himself only to this concept. He carried his critical reconstruction through in relation to classical liberal theory, where it had to face more serious questions not only of a legal but also of an economic and political character. The primary problem was that of distributive justice, however, Dewey did not judge it simply from the perspective of material production but in a much more complex way. He did not abandon the principle he formulated as early as in his first draft of ethics in 1891: "What is due the self is that it be treated as self" (Dewey EW 4, 359). It is nothing other than the "principle of dignity", which is formulated as a normative demand for the principle of justice. On the basis of this, Dewey analyzes justice in capitalist society in the broad terms of "contributing" to its wealth and not only in the economic sphere, and gaining a share in return for the contribution a person makes. He comes to the conclusion that we cannot speak of any equivalence or equality. Although Dewey does not make a detailed analysis of these relations, it is clear to him that each person's contribution and their "reward" for it are conditioned by the following factors: biological heredity, social heredity (background) and by their own individual efforts. Evidently, in the case of the first two factors, society should reward individuals with as much equality as is possible and it is only where the third factor is concerned that just inequality is based on the individual contribution made by each person, although it is almost impossible to establish its measure exactly.

If Dewey's conception of justice was romantic and simply the roughest of sketches, Rorty's newer concept is similar in terms of his liberal utopia. It was not a central problem

for him either (as was the case with altruism and reciprocity) but we can see a wide humanistic approach in his only draft of "justice as larger loyalty (Rorty 2001). Without referring to J. Royce (1908/1995) he develops a concept of loyalty which he does not intend (as is traditionally done) to confront against the concept of justice nor to develop it within that context (and this is not always possible) but his intention is to replace the concept of justice with the concept of loyalty. He regards the concept of justice as being infused with the notion of "an eye for an eye", the notion of revenge; however, in the contemporary global situation of humankind, it is possible that the "idea of justice between species will suddenly become irrelevant, because things have gotten very tough indeed, and our loyalty to our own species must come first" (Rorty 2001, 224). Rorty poses a hypothetical question: "Would it be a good idea to treat "justice" as the name for loyalty to a certain very large group… Could we replace the notion of "justice" with that of loyalty to that group…?" (*ibid.,* 225).

Rorty's strategy (in contrast to that of M. Walzer for instance, who replaces the Kantian strategy with a neo-Humean one) is a redescription of our ethical vocabulary and that means a redescription of our human identity, of the question "who are we?" He proposes to anchor the concept of widespread loyalty among people in emotionality rather than in traditional rationality and replace the abstract and universal principles of moral obligations to humankind with more specific habits and practices of loyalty, which can be disseminated from the narrowest community to the largest possible. The original conflict between justice and loyalty will be transformed into a conflict between loyalties towards particular groups (*ibid*., 228). Rorty says that loyalty is not irrational either and the idea of justice and the idea of loyalty do not have different sources: the former has rationality and the latter emotionality (*ibid*., 232-233). This, however, requires that we "cease thinking of reason as a source of authority, and think of it simply as the process of reaching agreement by persuasion" and along with this consider "trust rather than obligation to be our fundamental moral concept" (*ibid*., 233).

The pragmatist concept of justice is closer to the concept of altruism without reciprocity than to reciprocity without altruism.

Conclusion

The philosophy of pragmatism reveals through its concepts of panrelationalism, interactionism, transactionism, give-and-take, cooperation, antidualism, justice as loyalty, that reciprocity and altruism are not only ethical categories: they also have deeper ontological anchorage in reality and/or in social reality. In this, philosophy anticipated contemporary scientific theories that corroborate the evolutionary laws of these phenomena (Gouldner 1960; Trivers 1971; Axelrod 1984). On the other hand, without an ethical dimension as a conscious power in human action understanding them in terms of philosophy would be neither complete nor adequate.

While altruism appears primarily to be a one-sided (and one-way) relationship between subjects without reciprocity within the framework of ethics, reciprocity is a broader concept (economic, political and legal), but reciprocity itself need not always be equivalent to a two-sided (and two-way) relationship. Altruism can thus exist without reciprocity and reciprocity can exist without altruism; apparently, "reciprocal altruism", i.e. the so-called mutual

relationship between the subjects in which they reciprocally give to the other that which belongs to him (i.e. "justly pay back" even in an equivalent measure) is an ideal case, which only occurs in exceptional relationships of love, friendship, solidarity, etc. In the human world, relationships tend to be nonreciprocal and tend towards the exploitation of one side by another: this is traditionally understood as the opposite of altruism, i.e. egoism; even in cases where there are bilateral contractual obligations, there is no absolute guarantee that they will be fulfilled. This is why altruism as a non-equivalent investment from one of the two sides appears to be a necessary balancing and complement as well as a manifestation of the fact that nothing is lost and undertaken pointlessly in the human world (not only the natural world), although we cannot speak of harmony and just the "payback" of each individual human act. The attempt to achieve a mathematically exact economic equivalence in all areas is not only a manifestation of illusion about the power of mathematics and the economy but also of a complete absence of concepts such as broadmindedness, magnanimity, trust, gratitude, solidarity, etc., which are altruistic in character.[7]

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[7] Acknowledgement:This paper was supported by a grant from VEGA No 1/0132/10.

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