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"Languaged" World, "Worlded" Language: On Margolis's Pragmatic Integration of Realism and Idealism

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Introduction

Joseph Margolis has argued for decades, against mainstream forms of realism and antirealism, that the world is "languaged" while our language is "worlded" (e.g., Margolis 1994b, 523; cf. also Margolis 1993b, 323). What this means, in a first approximation, is that reality and the language(s) we use to categorize it are inseparably entangled, and there is no epistemically accessible language- or categorization-independent way the world is, even though the world cannot simply be regarded as a human construction, either. Analogously, the epistemic and the ontological dimensions of the realism issue, as well as realism and idealism as general philosophical perspectives, are deeply integrated. We cannot reach *die Welt an sich*, but we should not maintain that *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*, either.

This paper will examine issues that are themselves entangled and cannot, I think, really be separately addressed. First, Margolis's synthesis of realism and idealism will be interpreted as a version of *pragmatic realism* (which is, given the entanglement of realism and idealism as articulated by Margolis, also a version of pragmatic idealism).¹ I will also briefly show how it differs from some other pragmatic realisms, here exempli-

¹ Note, however, that Margolis does not subscribe to "pragmatic idealism" in Nicholas Rescher's (1992–94) sense. Rescher's idealism is... well, more realistic. Another essay would be needed for a detailed study of the similarities and differences of these two pragmatic realism-cum-idealisms. For Margolis's take on Rescher, see Margolis (1994c).

fied by Philip Kitcher's views (2012). Secondly, it will be investigated whether, and in what sense, this pragmatic realism-cum-idealism can be regarded as an instance of *pragmatist metaphysics*, especially—given Margolis's emphasis on the embodied yet constructed and historical nature of cultural entities—of pragmatist metaphysics of culture. Margolis's notion of *emergence* will also be briefly revisited in this context. Thirdly, it will be suggested that the kind of pragmatic and (moderately) constructivist realism-cum-idealism that Margolis defends can be reinterpreted as a "naturalized" form of (quasi-)Kantian transcendental idealism, or better, *transcendental pragmatism*, and that Margolis's (broadly Hegelian) criticism of Kantian transcendental philosophy therefore remains problematic. In any event, the blurring of the boundary between the empirical and the transcendental will be crucial to the success of this overall project.²

Margolis as a pragmatic realist

One starting point for the present contribution is the recent exchange I had with Joseph Margolis in the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* (vol. 4, no. 2, 2012). This exchange occurred in the context of a book symposium on Margolis's *Pragmatism Ascendent* (Margolis 2012a; see also Margolis 2012c for a related essay). While I very sympathetically discussed Margolis's integration of realism and idealism (or "Idealism", as he prefers to write it) as a version of pragmatic realism, I also suggested that Margolis had failed to do full justice to Immanuel Kant's transcendental considerations.³ One reason for this is that, although I very

² Note that I will not discuss in any detail either the historical readings of other philosophers Margolis offers (and there are many of them, as his reflections canvass the entire history of Western philosophy) nor the developments and changes in his own positions (that would be a topic for a monograph rather than an essay). Indeed, I agree with Margolis (2005, 11) that realism is "the master theme of the whole of modern philosophy"; it would be impossible to capture it in a single paper.

³ In addition to my essay in the journal (Pihlström 2012), see my more recent paper on pragmatic realism (Pihlström 2014), which incorporates the same basic arguments. One might wonder why we should worry about getting Kant right in this context—that is, the context of developing pragmatism and pragmatic realism and naturalism further in contemporary philosophy. Well, perhaps it doesn't matter that much. However, Margolis himself says that the "Darwinian effect", that is, "the import of the bare evolutionary continuum of the animal and human", yields the "single most important philosophical challenge to Western philosophy since the appearance of Kant's first *Critique*" (Margolis Forthcoming, 5). Insofar as it is pragmatism, especially John Dewey's naturalistic pragmatism, that takes seriously Darwin's influence on philosophy, and insofar as pragmatism can thus be seen as a critical synthesis or fusion of Darwinism and Kantianism (cf. Pihlström 2003), it does seem

much appreciate Margolis's Hegelian and Peircean project of "pragmatizing" and historicizing Kant, I remained (and still remain) slightly suspicious of his criticism that Kant does not introduce "a working distinction between appearances and the objects they are appearances of" (Margolis 2012a, 19). A "one world" Kantian response to this charge is obviously that appearances are appearances *of* things in themselves; these are not two different classes of objects (as more traditional "two worlds" interpretations maintain) but, rather, the "same" objects considered from two different perspectives, or articulated through two different types of considerations.⁴

Moreover, I argued in the same essay that Margolis does not pay due attention to the distinction between the quite different *empirical* and *transcendental* ways in which, say, space and time can be said to be "in us". He partly relies on P. F. Strawson's (1966) relatively conventional interpretation which has been heavily criticized by "one world" Kantians. Margolis thus claims repeatedly that Kant's transcendental project is incoherent from the very start, but he never (as far as I can see) explains in any great detail, or in full communication with relevant scholarship, why this is so. This is a serious setback in his otherwise admirable treatment of the realism issue (and we will come back to this matter in due course). *Pace* Margolis, the story of the emergence of pragmatism could, it seems to me, be told by starting from Kant—and perhaps at least partly skipping Hegel—just as it can be told (and is generally compellingly told by Margolis) by beginning from Hegel's historicization of Kant. Such a story, even when it remains more Kantian than Hegelian, may also join Margolis's story in rejecting any "principled disjunction between the empirical and the transcendental".⁵ In brief, I still remain somewhat unconvinced

to matter to our story about how this happens, and how indeed it is possible, whether we get Kant right or not. I am certainly not making any interpretive claims about Kant (or other historical classics) here; what I want to insist on is a certain way of integrating Kantian transcendental idealism into the story about the importance and relevance of pragmatism to the contemporary debate on realism and idealism.

⁴ See, e.g., Allison (2004). I am not saying that Allison is right about Kant, but for a pragmatist Kantian, his reading is helpful and makes it easier to render transcendental idealism compatible with pragmatism. Whether this is in the end a pragmatic virtue of one's reading of Kant cannot be assessed here.

⁵ This is what I try to do in Pihlström (2003). Margolis briefly comments on my effort in his previous book, *Pragmatism's Advantage* (Margolis 2010), especially 110–111. Cf. also Margolis (2014b, 6): "[...] there is, then, no principled difference to be made out between 'transcendental' discovery and broadly 'empirical' conjecture". From this, however, I would not infer, as Margolis does, that transcendental "demands" would no longer play any "con-

by Margolis's idea that only Hegel, rather than Kant, offers a sustainable version of the inseparability of realism and Idealism. Kant rejects such an exclusive disjunction as firmly as Hegel.

I further argued, in the same paper, that when Margolis writes that Peircean "Idealism" is "construed 'epistemologically' (in the constructivist way) rather than 'metaphysically' (disjunctively)" and is thus restricted to "our constructed picture" of reality rather than the "actual 'constitution' of reality itself" (ibid., 91), one might ask whether he isn't himself resorting to new versions of dichotomies or disjunctions he wants to set aside. Instead of the realism vs. Idealism dichotomy (which, reasonably, he wants to move beyond), we now have (still) the one between metaphysics and epistemology, and also the corresponding one between our picture of reality and reality in itself. Note that these dichotomies—or, to be fair, more absolute versions of them—are standardly used in the kind of mainstream analytic philosophy that Margolis wisely wants to leave behind. In my view, all these dualisms should be critically examined in terms of the pragmatic method and thereby *aufgehoben* as different versions of the age-old subjective vs. objective disjunction. This disjunction needs to be given up (at least in its conventional forms) in any viable post-Kantian (and post-Hegelian) pragmatism.⁶

stitutive' role vis-à-vis the cognizable world" (ibid.) but only that they may continue to play that role in a naturalized and pragmatized form. Similarly, I would be happy to reinterpret Kant's "transcendental dualism regarding autonomy and causality" (ibid., 7) as a *compatibilist* entanglement: autonomy is part of human nature, seen through Kantian-Darwinian double spectacles. Note, furthermore, that even though I have frequently defended something I like to call "transcendental pragmatism", this approach significantly differs from the much better-known views of philosophers like Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, who, according to Margolis, are "the final regressive advocates of Kantian fixities among the Frankfurt school" (ibid., 22).

⁶ Yet, my proposed re-entanglement of the metaphysical and the epistemological at the transcendental level—the level at which constructivism provides a framework for any viable realism—must somehow also accommodate the (re-)entanglement of the transcendental and the empirical. Here I see the real challenge for the current pragmatist who wishes to develop further the insights of naturalized transcendental philosophy and apply them to the realism debate. However that challenge can be met, the pragmatist can certainly agree with Margolis's "précis": "[W]e must, as realists, replace representationalism with some form of constructivism; [...] we must, again as realists, avoid characterizing reality as itself constructed [...] and hold instead that what we construct are only conceptual 'pictures' of what we take the real world to be [...]; and [...] we must acknowledge that the realism thus achieved is itself cognitively dependent on, and embedded in, our constructivist interventions." (Margolis 2012a, 55.) This can, I think, be offered as a useful characterization of the program of pragmatic realism, insofar as we are able to give up Margolis's in my view too sharp distinction between (the construction of) reality itself and our pictures of it. When

In his "Replies", Margolis reacts to my requirement of a "fuller statement of [his] treatment of realism and idealism" (Margolis 2012b, 202) as follows:

He [Pihlström] clearly sees that I reject what Kant rejects, what Kant calls 'transcendental realism', as well as what Putnam calls 'metaphysical realism', all the while I favor a constructivist form of realism that "accepts the idea that there is... a reality independent of us," viewed solely from human perspectives. Pihlström is cautiously open to my preferring Hegel to Kant, though I believe he takes me to have misread Kant's resources in the first *Critique*: he signals (so it seems) that I might have secured my own claims within the bounds of Kant's vision. (On my view, Kant's transcendental idealism ultimately requires what he names transcendental realism.) [...]

I, however, am quite persuaded that Kant, committed to his 'transcendental idealism', found it impossible to pass from subjective (or mental) appearances to empirically real things without investing (factly, I would say) in some form of 'transcendental realism', which was surely a doctrine he strenuously opposed. Ibid.

He then goes on to explain, once more, why this is so. Kant is still committed, according to Margolis, to a dualism between the subjective and the objective and cannot overcome it remaining on "this side" of the divide (ibid.). He repeatedly argues that transcendental idealism presupposes metaphysical necessities and invariants in a manner unacceptable to pragmatists (cf., e.g., Margolis 2005, 14).

The same theme continues in some of Margolis's most recent essays.⁷ He maintains that "Kant's constructivism yields an intractable paradox regarding our cognitive access to the intelligible world, that is in principle completely relieved (if not entirely resolved) by restricting the constructivist aspects of human intervention to whatever falls out as a consequence of the artifactual emergence of the functional self itself" (Margolis 2015, 5–6). Now, a naturalized transcendental philosophy would be happy with this: it is indeed the emerging functionality of the human self, in its various linguistic and other symbolic and representational (and therefore inescapably normative) articulations, that "constructs" the cat-

developed in Margolis's way, pragmatic (constructivist) realism is reflexively conscious of its own status as a human pragmatic posit rather than an imagined God's-Eye View picture of how things absolutely are.

⁷ Margolis (2015) and (Forthcoming). He presented early versions of both papers at the conference, *Metaphysics of Culture*, which was organized in honor of his philosophy at the University of Helsinki in May, 2013.

egorizations of reality we are able to use for our purposes (themselves constructed through the same historical processes).⁸ Moreover, the phrase "intelligible world" is problematic here, because Kant himself denies that we have any cognitive access to the "intelligible world" (*mundus intelligibilis*), as our cognition is not purely intellectual (i.e., we human beings do not possess the capacity of intellectual intuition) but also sensible. Kant, as much as Darwin and the pragmatists, is concerned with what human beings, given the kind of beings they (we) are, are capable of; philosophical anthropology, hence, is at the heart of the realism issue itself—and this, moreover, is in my view a fundamental unifying feature between Kantian and pragmatist approaches to realism and idealism. The pragmatist, in any case, can fully endorse Margolis's view that an "artifactualist" picture of the self can overcome what he regards as "Kantian dualisms" (if there really are any such pernicious dualisms in Kant) and that a kind of artifactuality characterizes both normativity and the self (*ibid.*, 8–9).⁹

However, Margolis continues:

Kant seems, effectively, to have equated the intended realism of the noumenal world (a completely vacuous, even incoherent conjecture) with the realism of a "subject-ively" (but not solipsistically) "constructed" world that, according to Kant's own lights, is the "only world" we could possibly know (a completely self-defeating posit [...]). What Kant requires (I suggest) is the notion of an "independent world" (neither noumenal nor confined to "subject-ive" construction) that we may discern (though we deem it to be ontologically independent of human cognition). But, of course, to concede this would already obviate the entire labor of Kant's "transcendental idealism."

Ibid., 6.

I will later turn to Margolis's own previous writings in order to suggest that there are, *within* his philosophy, resources to develop a (quasi-)Kantian softly transcendental approach to realism as well as other "second-order"

⁸ I will briefly return to the notion of emergence below. Moreover, note that my disagreement with Margolis is obviously dramatically softened, as he points out that he has no interest in either attacking or defending "'transcendental' variants that abandon apriorism—or effectively concede (say, along C. I. Lewis's lines) that the *a priori* may simply be an *a posteriori* posit" (Margolis 2015); this, clearly, is exactly what my version of naturalized transcendental philosophy seeks to do (though perhaps dropping the word "simply").

⁹ This is compatible with admitting that there may be vestiges in Kant of what Margolis (2002, 38) regards as Kant's "Cartesian" representationalism. For a different critical discussion of Margolis's own vestiges of Kantianism, focusing on Husserlian transcendental phenomenology rather than Kantianism *per se*, see Hartimo (2015).

legitimation questions of philosophy. This leads to *a* version of transcendental idealism, but without pernicious dualisms, unpragmatic apriorisms, or illegitimate commitments to the transcendent or the noumenal.

Note also that it is a bit hard to understand why, and how, Kant's transcendental idealism should, or even could, be based on transcendental realism, as Margolis maintains. Aren't these two mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive alternatives, as Allison (2004), among others, has argued? This leads to the traditional opposition between Strawson's (1966) and Allison's interpretations of transcendental idealism all over again: while the former found the "metaphysics of transcendental idealism" problematic or incoherent—and is joined by Margolis who maintains that transcendental idealism presupposes transcendental realism—the latter regards transcendental idealism as "merely methodological", albeit (*contra*, say, Strawson) necessary for the Kantian system as a whole. For the pragmatist Kantian, as I have argued on a number of occasions, the truth lies in the middle (whether or not this accurately captures Kant's own position): the epistemological or methodological, on the one side, and the metaphysical or ontological, on the other side, are themselves deeply entangled here.

This inseparability of the epistemological and the ontological in the formulation of pragmatism and transcendental idealism is in fact something that Margolis is explicitly opposed to in my previous attempts to articulate a pragmatist version of transcendental idealism (see Margolis 2010, 110–111). He says I am going too far here. I am not sure whether a fundamental disagreement like this can be argumentatively settled. It is in the end related to the stronger point I would like to make (but cannot argue here) about not only the epistemological but also the *ethical* grounds of ontological inquiry—in pragmatism and more generally (cf. Pihlström 2009). It also seems to me that this mild dispute may be related to Margolis's and my own different preferences regarding the old pragmatists: while Peirce and Dewey are clearly the two key pragmatist classics for Margolis—the former because of his uniquely insightful (re-)entangling of realism and Idealism, the latter because of his Darwinization of Hegel—for me James is, clearly, number one.¹⁰ However, I will not dwell on these differences but will try to move forward in our dialogue.

¹⁰ For the record, it might be added that for the same reason, it seems to me that Margolis does not pay sufficient attention to the central role philosophy of religion plays in classical pragmatism. It is, of course, most prominent in James. I discuss pragmatist philosophy of religion in some more detail, also in relation to the realism vs. idealism issue, in Pihlström (2013).

Conflicting versions of pragmatic realism

Let me therefore continue the exchange and critically reintroduce Margolis's specific contribution to the debates over realism, idealism, and pragmatism by contrasting his pragmatic realism and idealism with a position recently defended by another major contemporary pragmatist and realist, namely, Philip Kitcher. I will do this by briefly addressing Kitcher's argument in his recent book, *Preludes to Pragmatism* (2012).

Kitcher's defense of realism begins from what he (with reference to Arthur Fine's notorious "Natural Ontological Attitude") calls the "Natural Epistemological Attitude" (NEA): we form action-guiding representations of the world around us; that is, the world "puts human beings into states that bear content" (ibid., 72), and while we often represent things accurately, we also occasionally misrepresent them. By "double extrapolation", what Kitcher labels "real realism" follows from this commonsensical point of departure as soon as we acknowledge that we can accurately represent things far removed from everyday observation and that we can thus meaningfully also speak of "a world of objects independent of all subjects" (ibid., 74). It is from these relatively simple beginnings that Kitcher launches a detailed argumentation countering the semantic and epistemological worries of both empiricist and constructivist antirealists. He argues that the accuracy of our representations is an objective matter in the sense that an external observer could in principle observe that a subject's representational relations to an object either obtain or fail to obtain independently of that subject, and this can be generalized—or extrapolated—to situations in which there is no observer present.

Kitcher's "Galilean" extrapolation argument says, in brief, that "our purchase of the idea that some objects are independent of some of us (although observed by others) suffices to make intelligible the thought that some objects are independent of all of us, that they would have existed even if there had been no humans (or other sapient creatures), even though, had that been so, there would have been no observation of them or thought about them" (ibid., 97).¹¹ Kitcher's pragmatism, however,

¹¹ At this point Kitcher's critic (such as, possibly, Margolis?) might argue that while this may suffice to make "intelligible" the realistic thought about the independence of some objects from all of us, it is another matter whether this thought is rendered more plausible than its denial by this argument—or whether the intended contrast between realism and antirealism really makes sense. A critic of (strong) realism like Hilary Putnam would not oppose the idea that in any relevant sense of "independence", some objects (e.g., stars) are independent of us all and would have existed even if there had never been humans; see, e.g.,

crucially supplements his realism as he accepts the constructivist's view that relations of reference obtain "in virtue of what speakers (writers, cartographers, thinkers [i.e., anyone using representations]) do" (ibid., 98). This, however, need not be construed antirealistically. The realist may insist, against straightforward constructivism, that patterns of causal relations among objects, representations, and human behavior constitute sign—object connections. Accordingly, the relations of reference are independent of observers.

This, however, reinvokes the debate between, for example, Putnam and his metaphysically-realistic critics. Putnam argued in the 1980s against philosophers like David Lewis and Michael Devitt that the causal structure of the world (as postulated by the "metaphysical realist") cannot by itself single out any referential or representational relations; to believe it does would be to subscribe to something like "medieval essentialism" (cf. Putnam 1990). Kitcher here takes the side of Putnam's realistic critics but wants to do this in a pragmatic and metaphysically minimalistic manner. Margolis, in contrast, seeks to transcend the entire controversy, but is actually closer to Putnam—and, hence, idealism (perhaps against his own will, it seems).

While being sympathetic to causal accounts of reference, Kitcher admits (with Putnam) that a certain kind of *interest-relativity* is at work in the notion of causation itself. In our causal talk, "we do make an interest-relative selection from the total succession of states that make up complete causal chains" (Kitcher 2012, 101). Here, however, the Galilean strategy, showing "how real realism begins at home, and how it never ventures into the metaphysical never-never-lands to which antirealists are so keen to banish their opponents" (ibid., 105), can again be employed:

Even though our notion of reference gains its initial application in circumstances in which an observer is explaining the behavior of a subject, we should not conclude that the notion applies only to situations when there is an observer present. For, given the observer's interests, there is a particular set of relationships that constitute reference and there is no reason for thinking that the obtaining of those relationships depends on the presence of the observer. Ibid., 101.

Putnam's exchange with Michael Devitt in Baghramian (2013). Moreover, this independence is something that *we* can intelligibly commit ourselves to only given that we are indeed here to make such a commitment; Kitcher's critic could maintain that in a world without humans it would make no sense to say that the world is independent of subjects. The pragmatic realist with a constructivist (Kantian) orientation could, hence, still argue that the realist's "independence" is itself humanly constructed.

The basic claim seems to be that the constructivist cannot block the realist's appeal to the independence of causal relations constitutive of reference by invoking the idea of the interest-dependence of causation. It is right here that pragmatic realism accommodates both independence and interest-relativity. While the constructivist may try to accuse the realist of assuming a heavy metaphysics of essences or "mysterious noumena" (which comes close to Margolis's occasional criticisms of various versions of metaphysical fixities), the "real realist's" pragmatic response is that what we represent are no such metaphysical entities but "the things with which we interact all the time" (*ibid.*, 103). For the realist, there is "no causally relevant difference" between situations in which properties of things can be observed and situations in which they cannot.

Just as I would like to defend Kant against Margolis, I am not entirely convinced that Kitcher succeeds in refuting Kantian-inspired *transcendental* arguments against (metaphysical, transcendental) realism and in favor of a certain kind of (transcendental) idealism—that is, arguments that we may attribute, possibly, to Kant himself and to some post-Kantian philosophers, including arguably Wittgenstein and even the pragmatists (e.g., Putnam).¹² When Kitcher argues (like Margolis?) that there is no helpful distinction to be made between objects as experienced and objects in themselves (e.g., *ibid.*, 102), he employs the Kantian-sounding distinction between appearances and things in themselves in a non-transcendental manner. A transcendental employment of this distinction would already involve transcendental idealism.¹³ When Kitcher maintains, along his Galilean line of thought, that there is no *causally* relevant difference between situations in which observers are present and those in which there are no observers, from the Kantian point of view he illegitimately helps himself to the category of causality as if it were available independently of the human cognitive capacity and applicable to the world in itself. The Kantian *Dinge an sich selbst* are individuated neither as objects nor as causal relations; the notions of objectivity and causality only apply to appearances.¹⁴ Similar problems in my view trouble Margolis's project, albeit from an opposite direction, so to speak. Kitcher overemphasizes metaphysical independence at the cost of the historicized constructive ac-

¹² Only Kantians would be happy to call this argumentation "transcendental", though.

¹³ See again Allison (2004), especially chapters 1–2.

¹⁴ It is misleading to speak about the things in themselves (*Dinge an sich selbst*) in the plural—or in the singular—because any such way of speaking already seems to presuppose individuating them as object(s). This should here be understood as a way of speaking merely.

tivity of subjectivity, while Margolis overemphasizes the latter at the cost of transcendentalism.

In any event, Kitcher is correct to distinguish his view from Putnam's internal and metaphysical realisms. His real realism, again like Margolis's version of pragmatic realism, is something different. It agrees with pragmatic pluralism and what Putnam calls conceptual relativity in maintaining that the divisions we make in nature reflect our purposes—and here there is certainly a Kantian ring to it. However, again, this does not sacrifice realism: "Once we adopt a language, then some of the sentences in that language will be true in virtue of the referential relations between constituent terms and entities that are independent of us. The adoption itself, however, is guided not only by nature but by what is convenient and useful for us in describing nature." (Ibid., 108–109.)

Margolis would presumably endorse this combination of realism and linguistic or conceptual relativity, championing a sophisticated version of relativism (see especially Margolis 1991). Furthermore, Kitcher also offers us a plausible rearticulation of James's pragmatist arguments in the context of contemporary debates, integrating pluralism and constructivism (as well as the view that truth "happens" to an idea) with scientific realism. The realism again comes into the picture when we admit that, although the world that is independent of us is not "pre-divided into privileged objects and kinds of objects" (ibid., 136) and the divisions depend on our interests, nevertheless "given particular capacities and particular interests, some ways of dividing up independent reality work better than others" (ibid., 137).

But why? What is—and this is, obviously, a question that Margolis could also ask—"independent reality", after all? Does it, prior to any human categorization, possess *some* structure, and if so, is that fundamental ontological structure pre-organized independently of our interests? Putnam, for example, might find Kitcher's argument a version of the "Cookie Cutter Metaphor" he criticized in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see, again, Putnam 1990). The world is compared to "dough" from which we cut "cookies" by using different conceptual "cutters". But then the dough itself must already have some structure. Margolis avoids this problem by rejecting any humanly accessible yet ahistorical and construction-independent structure. But then he needs something like the constitutive activity of the transcendental subject upon which any historical process of structuration depends.

Kitcher perceptively notes that pragmatists need to take for granted a language identifying capacities and interests when stating their thesis about the interest-relativity of the languages used for identifying objects relevant to us. *That* language will then "invite a reiteration of pragmatist pluralism" (Kitcher 2012, 138). There is an infinitely deep reflexivity in pragmatism: "Pragmatic pluralism invites us to take a stand by committing ourselves to a particular way of speaking, while recognizing that the uses of that language to recognize and appraise other linguistic choices could legitimately give rise to a parallel scrutiny and appraisal of the commitments that have been presupposed" (ibid., 138). This, however, also applies to our talk about "independence". It is a human way of speaking, presupposing a language used to categorize the world as categorization-independent. We may view Margolis's arguments as an extended attempt to lead us to appreciate this point. There is no language-neutral way to *any* insights about reality, including the reality of human language(s) and their uses in our attempts to speak about language-independence.

It is right here that we should re-emphasize Margolis's sophisticated view of *realism itself as a human posit*. Far from being a metaphysical feature of mind- and discourse-independent reality *an sich*, realism is itself (along with language, discursivity, normativity, rationality, agency, and cognition, among other things) one of the "artifactualities" Margolis posits (Margolis 2015, 29). This is one of Margolis's crucial advantages in comparison to many contemporary realists, who somehow still seem to hold on to a metaphysical conviction about realism itself being somehow the world's "own" account of itself.

So how does Margolis deal with the realistic "independent world" that he still in some (redefined) sense needs? He says, among other things, that the independent world is "neither Kant's noumenal world nor any constructed (would-be realist) world: it answers to what we conjecture, constructively, is our best 'picture' of the world. Its realist standing depends on our epistemology [...]." (Ibid., 6.) It is to this entanglement of epistemology and ontology at the core of the constructivist reconceptualization of realism that we now need to (re)turn, also drawing help from some of Margolis's earlier pronouncements.

Constructivism: transcendental idealism by other means

Margolis has argued for decades that ontological and epistemological questions are inseparable in the pragmatist vindication of (historicized,

constructivist) realism. He repeatedly characterizes realism as the view that there is a cognitively accessible yet mind- and inquiry-independent world (Margolis 1986, 111, 215–216), arguing that realism and “robust relativism” are reconcilable (Margolis 1986, 1991). The general idea is that we must view reality through our historically and culturally conditioned, hence practice-laden, epistemic perspectives; there is no God’s Eye View available, no epistemic neutrality to be achieved in metaphysics. The world is not transparent, or describable in abstraction from our constantly developing local perspectives. Given this entanglement of reality and language, Margolis’s ideas seem to lead, *pace* his own self-understanding, to a fruitful combination of pragmatism and transcendental philosophy. For him, the world is always already humanly “constructed” and our understanding of it is “historied”; what we are dealing with (and living in) is a Kantian-like “symbiotized” world in which the subject and object are mutually dependent on each other, never to be fully separated.

In this context, Margolis has also interestingly discussed—arguably somewhat more carefully than other neopragmatists, including Putnam and Kitcher—a more specific case, Peirce’s *scholastic realism*. He has tried to show that Peirce’s insistence on realism of generality can be appreciated from a considerably less realistic (or at least less metaphysically-realistic) and more historicist point of view than Peirce’s own. He suggests that a realism that preserves the Peircean (triadic) “resemblance” between human thought and the structure of the “intelligible reality”¹⁵ is possible only on a constructivist and historicist basis, connected with a Kantian-inspired symbiosis of “subject” and “object”:

The world is intelligible because its structure is constituted [...] through the very process of our experiencing the world. Things share real generals in the symbiotized world; but there *are* no antecedent generals formed in the world, separated from human experience, *that* experienced things are discovered to share. Margolis 1993b, 323.

The ancient quarrel about universals is a great confusion; we need no more than “real generals” to secure objectivity. But then, “real generals” have no criterial function either; they are no more than a (nominalized) shadow thrown by objective discourse. That is, *if* we admit objective truth-claims, then predication must have a realist function. In *that* sense (alone), there are “real generals.” But there are none that can be antecedently discerned, *in virtue of which* objectivity maybe con-

¹⁵ See, however, the critical remarks on this concept above.

ferred. [Real generals] are implicated in the *lebensformlich* viability of natural-language discourse. Margolis 1995, 128.

Realism of generality can, and should, then, be regarded as inseparable from, or inherent in, our thinking, language-use, and forms of life (Margolis 1993b, 325–326).¹⁶ In short, any realism that is not subordinated to historicist constructivism is, according to Margolis, hopeless, if one does not believe in the possibility of a Platonic or Aristotelian "first philosophy". Our social, open-ended, thoroughly historicized practice of language-use—i.e., our practice of applying general predicates in describing our world—must be the (non-foundational) ground of our realism of generality. Realism can only be grounded in such predicative practices, which are inevitably in flux, historically changing.¹⁷

More generally, Margolis, as a pragmatist, seeks to avoid the strong ("robust", "metaphysical") realism favored by many contemporary realists and "naturalizers" of philosophy. Throughout his writings, he sets against each other two quite different forms of realism: the first assumes a "freestanding priority" of the changeless over the changing or historical, whereas the second, Margolis's own pragmatic, constructive, and historicist option, finds any such prior, first-philosophical claim about what reality *is* apart from what we take ourselves to know or to believe to be true as arbitrary, thereby questioning the alleged necessity of maintaining that reality must be changeless and that change itself is intelligible only in terms of the changeless. Naturally, the defense of the second kind of realism is closely related to Margolis's numerous explorations of the historicity of thought and of what he calls the doctrine of the "flux" (cf. Margolis 1993a, 1995, 2000b, 2003b).

Although Margolis does not subscribe to any Kantian transcendentalism (as has become clear above), it is again worth noting that he should be classified as one of the key contemporary naturalizers and historicizers of Kantianism. Like Kant, he certainly turns toward the *conditions* for the possibility of our being able to cognize the world, albeit historically developing ones. This is so even though he does not want to explicitly speak about transcendental conditions or arguments. Moreover, he teaches us

¹⁶ See also Margolis (2000c), focusing on Husserlian phenomenology rather than Peircean realism.

¹⁷ It is, again, beyond the scope of this presentation to examine any specific problems in Margolis's historicist and relativist views. Margolis's constructivist modification of Peirce's realism has raised some controversy (which I discuss, referring to Carl Hausman and Douglas Anderson, among others, in Pihlström 2009, chapter 6; cf. Anderson and Hausman 2012).

an important lesson about the unavoidability of normative, second order questions of legitimation regarding realism and the way in which pragmatism, too, is intimately connected with the Kantian aspiration of avoiding both robust realism (or what he calls objectivism) and skepticism (see also Margolis 1999).¹⁸

Margolis has also emphasized the difference between the rather trivial denial of "a fixed, necessary and sufficient, transparent, certain, or presentational access that human cognizers have to the world, reality, Being, or the like" and the almost equally trivial, albeit actively forward-looking, recognition of there being "a reasonable, reliable, functioning, operative sense in which human cognizers find their way around the world" (Margolis 1994a). It is this distinction that according to Margolis gives us a clue to appreciating some major differences between Jacques Derrida and the later Ludwig Wittgenstein. In postulating an "'originary' origin" and rightly denying that we could ever discover it, Derrida (possibly deliberately) confuses "the false realism of a completely transparent metaphysics with the mundane realism of actually functioning societies which it would be merely mad to deny" (ibid., 176). Both Derrida and Wittgenstein reject "transparent realism", but the latter maintains a "pragmatized realism" (ibid., 178).

¹⁸ Let me, however, note here that even though I sympathize with most of the things Margolis says about pragmatic realism, historicity, etc., I have some doubts about his at least occasional ontological intolerance toward entities such as universals, propositions, facts, meanings, and thoughts. He seems to regard them as fictions, claiming that these things do not exist. An alternative pragmatic strategy would be to dispense with the univocity of "exist(ence)" and admit that many different kinds of things exist, or are real, in quite different ways, depending on the pragmatic, constructed, historically evolving frameworks within which we regard them as existent. This, indeed, is what Margolis's reconstruction of Peirce's realism should, in my view, amount to. It should be noted, furthermore, that Margolis is not alone in his historicist, constructivist doctrine of generality. Tom Rockmore distinguishes, in a related manner, between ahistorical (Platonic) essences or universals and general ideas or "generals", by which he means "ideas, or concepts, which are not beyond time and place but that derive their cognitive utility from their temporary acceptance at a given time and place" and that are, hence, "mutable, impermanent, malleable, alterable", "come into being and pass away". Such historicized generals "emerge from, and remain relative to, the sociohistorical context". (Rockmore 2000, 54–55, 57–59.) I want to leave to dedicated Peirce scholars the quarrels regarding how close Peirce's actual position (at different phases of his philosophical development) may have been to the view Margolis proposes. In any event, as Margolis's reference to the "Kantian-like" symbiosis of subject and object suggests, the critique of metaphysical realism has been an important theme in the Kantian tradition of transcendental philosophy; indeed, the rejection of such realism is *the* key Kantian theme at the background of the pragmatist tradition.

As has become clear, Margolis has throughout his career sought to articulate a form of realism taking seriously not only pragmatism and idealism but also constructivism. This theme figures strongly in, e.g., a series of books he published about a decade ago (cf. Margolis 2002, 2003a). I will now argue that it is only by integrating Margolis's constructivism into a (pragmatically naturalized) transcendental idealism that we have a real alternative to a more mainstream pragmatic realism such as Kitcher's.

While maintaining that realism must "take a constructivist form", Margolis criticizes some other pragmatists and constructivists for maintaining that we must still distinguish between the epistemic and the ontic: "the inseparability of the subjective and the objective applies to the epistemic and not to the ontic aspects of realism" (Margolis 2002, 15).¹⁹ For the (pragmatic) transcendental realist, the ontological (rather than the merely "ontic") will be inevitably epistemic precisely because ontology itself is a transcendental matter. However, we should not, *pace* Margolis's repeated insistence on our not constructing the actual world, understand the pragmatist metaphor of the mind or language (or, more generally, human practices) as "organizing" the world in a "constituting ('idealist') way" (*ibid.*, 17) as (merely) ontic but as (genuinely) ontological. That is, I fear that Margolis himself ultimately applies to a non-constructivist dichotomy between the epistemological and the ontological. Constructivism, according to Margolis, is not idealism (see also, e.g., *ibid.*, 39; Margolis 2003a, 55); however,

Constructivism means at the very least that questions of knowledge, objectivity, truth, confirmation, and legitimation are constructed in accordance with our interpretive conceptual schemes—the interpretive qualification of the indissoluble relationship between cognizer and cognized; and that, though we do not construct the actual world, what we posit (constructively) *as* the independent world *is* epistemically dependent on our mediating conceptual schemes. *Ibid.*, 22.²⁰

¹⁹ The specific target of Margolis's (2002) criticism in this context is Putnam's internal realism. See also, e.g., Margolis (1986), (1991), and (1993a) for his earlier criticisms focusing on Putnam's notion of truth as an epistemic *Grenzbegriff*. (See also Margolis 2002, 143.)

²⁰ See also Margolis (2002), 43, and (2005), 89. In a somewhat more detailed way, Margolis (*ibid.*, 41) concludes: "(1) every viable realism must be a constructivism (or a constructive realism), in the sense that there can be no principled disjunction between epistemological and metaphysical questions, no neutral analysis of the disjunctive contributions to our science drawn from cognizing subjects and cognized objects; (2) the admission of (1) precludes all necessities *de re* and *de cogitatione*; (3) the admission of (1) and (2) disallows any principled disjunction between realism and idealism, as these are defined in the Cartesian tradition [...]. I wonder why the epistemology—metaphysics entanglement is acceptable while the world's "ontic" construction by us is still denied. In short, I am not convinced we need

This constructivism, I take it, is, according to the pragmatist Kantian, just transcendental idealism by other means, or perhaps only in other words. The transcendental idealist in this sense is happy to join Margolis in maintaining that “the objectivity of our beliefs and claims about the world *is itself a constructive posit* that we impose holistically and without privilege of any kind” (ibid., 44). The “independent-world-as-it-is-known-(and-knowable)-to-us” is again something we construct (ibid., 45).²¹ In his *The Unraveling of Scientism*, Margolis makes the relevant notion of construction somewhat clearer: what he now says (again in the context of redefining constructivism, coming close to the 2002 pronouncements) is that whatever is constructed as *ontically* independent of human inquiries is *epistemically* dependent (Margolis 2003a, 51). But I fail to see why this is not equivalent to the Kantian synthesis of empirical (factual) independence and transcendental (epistemologico-ontological) dependence. I see no reason why the *transcendental idealist* (unlike some other type of idealist) would have to maintain that the world is “ontically dependent” on us (*pace* ibid., 54). I would, rather, drop the category of the “ontic” altogether as a mere placeholder for something that is always already constructed in a historical and practice-embedded way—albeit often constructed as independent.

Margolis’s (ibid., 13–14) claim that transcendental idealism “confuses matters by conjoining constructivism and idealism” and cannot be reconstructed in naturalistic terms is, in my view, refutable by his own words. It is precisely by following Margolis up to the point of regarding realism itself as a human posit that we may naturalize transcendental idealism into a constructivist pragmatic realism. I agree that we need not maintain that “reality is constructed by the human mind” by maintaining that we construct “what we *take* to be independently real” (ibid., 100)—to do so would precisely be to conflate empirical with transcendental constitution—but we can still say that the independent world in the realist’s sense is itself, like realism as our interpretation of it, a human epistemic-ontological transcendental construct.

the category of the (merely) “ontic” at all, if we endorse Margolis’s position. Furthermore, see Margolis’s critique of Putnam’s pragmatic pluralism as insufficiently epistemic (ibid., 105–106; Margolis 2005, 46–48).

²¹ In a slightly different (Deweyan) context, Margolis (2002, 128) speaks about the constitution and reconstitution of objects and situations. I would again reinterpret this as a process of transcendental constitution in which the practices of resolving (Deweyan) problematic situations play a transcendental role.

Emergence

As the frequent references to historicity and temporality suggest, the notions of *evolution* and *emergence* are central to Margolis's pragmatism, constructivism, and pragmatic realism. It should be obvious that his version of realism-cum-idealism (or pragmatism) cannot in the end be separated from his realistic account of emergence and cultural entities. There is a complexly arranged picture of the emergence and embodiment of cultural entities (such as artworks, but also persons and, presumably, values) in Margolis's earlier (Margolis 1978, 1980, 1984) as well as more recent work (Margolis 1995, 2002, 2003a). According to Margolis, cultural entities are embodied yet autonomous "tokens-of-types". They need a material basis, but they cannot be adequately accounted for in any naturalized theory restricted to that basis. "Naturalizing" strategies, according to Margolis, desperately fail as theories of culture—and as theories of the mind.²² We should be able to ascribe to cultural entities a causally relevant (and thus also explanatorily relevant) role—in this sense, they must be seen as autonomous, without sacrificing the materialist demand for a material basis of embodiment (see Margolis 1984, 14). Furthermore, we should view the human self itself—the subject of world-structuring—as an historically emerging perspective of constructive world-engagement.

Indeed, I already pointed out above that philosophical anthropology is crucial for the realism issue. Characterizing human persons and other cultural formations, such as works of art, as emergent, embodied tokens-of-types, neither identical to nor reducible to their material composition, Margolis argues that our ontology of cultural entities ought to recognize these entities as *real*, while being compatible with materialism and allowing cultural entities to enter into causal relations and to support causal explanations (ibid.). He thus favors a form of "downward causation" as a key element of his pragmatic emergentism. Instead of reviewing his discussions of the concept in detail, I just quote from one of his numerous publications:

By an **emergent** order of reality [...] I mean any array of empirical phenomena that (i) cannot be described or explained in terms of the descriptive and explanatory concepts deemed adequate for whatever more **basic level** or order of nature or reality the order or level in question is said to have emerged from, and (ii) is causally implicated

²² See especially Margolis (2003a) for a devastating critique of scientific assumptions in twentieth century American philosophy.

and cognitively accessible in the same "world" in which the putatively more basic order or level is identified

Margolis 1995, 257; original emphases.²³

In this sense, human cultural constructions, such as normativity and values, can be said to constitute, or belong to, an "emergent order of reality" insofar as they cannot be fully accounted for in terms of merely factual concepts at a "more basic" level, even though they are fully natural—entangled with natural facts—in the sense of belonging to the "same world" with the latter.²⁴ Margolis emphasizes the link between realism and the emergence of the self in a particularly helpful manner in relation to Robert Brandom's and Richard Rorty's in his view highly problematic versions of neopragmatism that are both indebted to Wilfrid Sellars's ideas:

The fatal weakness in Sellars's argument—very possibly in Rorty's (and, it may be added, in Robert Brandom's "Rortyan" treatment of Sellars)—lies with the metaphysical standing of language itself: it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to treat selves eliminatively (as Sellars does) *and* yet allow the continued objective standing of truth (and language) in the scientific realist's sense. You cannot find in Rorty or Sellars [or, we may add, Brandom] any explanation of how to admit language without admitting the realist standing of mind.

Margolis 2002, 61.

While his criticism of Brandom here remains implicit, hidden under the more explicit criticism of Rorty and Sellars (see also, e.g., Margolis 2000a), Margolis makes a very important point: the pragmatist ought to be a (pragmatic) *realist* about the various normative structures, including language and the mind (or the self), which s/he anti-reductionistically acknowledges. In Margolis's preferred terms, the emergence of cultural entities (including language), and hence the emergence of human world-*construction*, should be genuinely acknowledged—and human selves should also be seen as cultural products in this ontological sense, yet fully real, *contra* the kind of eliminativism we find in the work of Brandom's and Rorty's

²³ See also, e.g., Margolis (1995), 219.

²⁴ Margolis's position, while giving us an idea of what a pragmatically understood concept of emergence may look like, is by no means the first pragmatist elaboration on the idea of emergence; on the other hand, emergence theories have never been part of the mainstream orientations of pragmatism, nor vice versa (see, e.g., El-Hani and Pihlström 2002). I have argued elsewhere at some length that the concept of emergence ought to be employed within pragmatism, too (and partly explicated through pragmatism).

quasi-pragmatist hero, Sellars.²⁵ This adds a further reason for seeking (for instance) a pragmatist account of emergence, or alternatively, an emergentist reconceptualization of pragmatism (more specifically, of pragmatic realism about irreducible cultural entities we need to commit ourselves to ontologically). Moreover—and here I depart from Margolis—the transcendentalism of the historically emerging self must itself be seen as an emergent feature of the evolving of human *Lebensformen*. Margolis returns to emergence in some of his most recent writings. He now maintains that there are "two entirely different forms of emergence, both within nature". One is the "Intentional transformation of natural-kind kinds, collecting the irreducible emergent of the specifically human world", while the other is restricted to the (merely) "natural emergent" of the physical world. (Margolis 2015, 11.) However, is this dualism between two types of emergence just a replacement of more traditional substance or attribute dualism? How well does it go together with Margolis's desire to avoid *any* dualisms (including the Kantian ones discussed in the beginning of this essay)?

When Margolis (Forthcoming, 11–12) comments on Sellars's influential views on the manifest and the scientific image (as articulated in Sellars's "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man", in particular; see Sellars 1963, chapter 1), he perceptively draws attention to the notion of "placing" in Sellars's project of placing the human being in the scientific image. Here a natural follow-up question is *who places?* To place something or someone into a certain kind of image is already to move within the space of reasons (to continue a Sellarsian way of speaking). A transcendental argument opens up here: you must have that space, and a transcendental self that engages in the project of "placing", already in place in order to be able to treat anything as a person. An argument within the ontology of persons and cultural entities thus seems to presuppose a transcendental, and arguably transcendentially idealistic, account of subjectivity. A realism of emerging world-constructing selfhood is a transcendental presupposition of pragmatic (constructivist) realism.

²⁵ Margolis frequently claims (and I am tempted to agree with him) that Rorty's and Brandom's attempts to put Sellars's work to do a pragmatist job fails. Sellars, he says, "cannot be made into a pragmatist of any sort (as Rorty and Brandom pretend to do) except by deliberate deformation—which I'm bound to say both are willing to embrace" (Margolis 2003a, 5; see also 107, 142–143). The reason for this, from Margolis's perspective, is Sellars's stubborn scientism, according to which "manifest image" entities such as tables and chairs and human persons do not exist in the ontologically privileged "scientific image".

Conclusion

We hence return to the transcendental—Kantian—picture of realism and idealism that we started out from when beginning to examine Margolis’s peculiar version of pragmatic realism. The issues concerning the artifactuality of the self and of normativity, and the related pragmatic metaphysics of culture, are all in the end indistinguishable from the basic issue of realism vs. idealism, as examined in relation to the entanglement of the “language world” and “worlded language”. Let me quote Margolis once more:

Realism [...] is a late artefact of our reflections, *not* a first principle of any kind; hence, never more than provisional, perspective, “interested,” “instrumental” [...], fluxive, constructed, lacking any invariance or necessity or essential *telos* or privilege or unique validity.

Margolis 2002, 117.

Accordingly, realism itself is emergent. Furthermore, the metaphysics of emergence, as well as of emergent normativity and mentality, itself emerges historically through our practices of categorizing reality, as does ultimately our realism itself, both our general pragmatic realism about reality and our more specific pragmatic realism about processes of emergence (understood as human “posits”, i.e., as our ways of making sense of the “independence” of the world we live in). It is with this pragmatically holistic and reflexive as well as, I hope, genuinely Margolisian thought that I wish to conclude.²⁶

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²⁶ I should like to thank the participants of the conference in honor of Joseph Margolis. I was pleased to be involved in organizing at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, University of Helsinki (May, 2013)—especially Professor Margolis himself—for valuable discussions of several ideas addressed in this paper, as well as Dirk-Martin Grube and Robert Sinclair for the opportunity to submit the essay to the conference volume. Thanks are also due to Aili Breshanan for the kind invitation to deliver a related paper in the conference in honor of Professor Margolis’s 90th birthday at Temple University, Philadelphia, PA in May, 2014.

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