# JF21 – NC – Pragmatism (1:40)

#### Normative epistemology comes first – we must first understand how to gain and act upon knowledge before deriving moral obligations.

#### [1] Justification – Every theory requires an understanding of how we acquire the knowledge that leads us to believe that theory is true. All justifications for arguments appeal to epistemological principles to which we refer in order to proclaim that statement is true.

#### [2] Motivation – Our beliefs in statements are determined by the strength in our epistemic reasons to believe it, since the epistemic soundness of arguments determines truth value. Thus, only statements for which we have a strong epistemic basis can cause us to follow through on them.

#### Experience is the foundation of knowledge, which means we must experience an object to be aware of its goodness. West 89

[Cornel West, The American Evasion of Philosophy A Genealogy of Pragmatism, Cornel West, The University of Wisconsin Press, Cornel West is a prominent and provocative democratic intellectual. He is Professor of the Practice of Public Philosophy at Harvard University and holds the title of Professor Emeritus at Princeton University] CL & SHS ZS

For Dewey, modern **philosophy has** five paradigmatic **notions of experience**: first, as **a knowledge affair**; second, as a psychical thing shot through with "**subjectivity**"; third, as **registering what has taken place**, with **a**n exclusive **focus on the past**; fourth, as **an aggregation of simple particulars**; and last, as antithetical to thought. For Dewey, these five governing conceptions of **experience constitute the pillars** **upon which rests the subject**-object epistemological problematic of modern philosophy. His own transactional conception of experience, buttressed by Darwinian biology and historical consciousness as well as rooted in Emersonian sensibilities, rejects each of these paltry ideas of experience. His three definitions of experience in the essay lay bare his rejection and threefold debt. **Experience is** primarily **a process of undergoing**: a process of standing something; of **suffering and passion**, of **affection**, in the literal sense of these words. **The organism has to endure**, to undergo, **the consequence of its own actions**. **Experience**, in other words, **is a matter of** simultaneous **doings** and sufferings. Our **undergoings are experiments** in varying the course of events; our active **tryings are trials** and tests of ourselves ... **Nothing can eliminate** all risk, all **adventure**. The **obstacles** which confront us **are stimuli to variation**, to novel response, **and** hence are **occasions for progress**. If biological development be accepted, **the** **subject of experience is** at least an animal, continuous with other organic forms in **a process of more complex organization**. An animal in turn is at least continuous with chemico-physical processes which, in living things, are so organized as really to constitute the activities of life with all their defining traits. And experience is not identical with brain action; it is the entire organic John Dewey agent-patient in all its interaction with the environment, natural and social. **The brain is** primarily **an organ of** a certain kind of behavior, **not** of **knowing the world**. And to repeat what has already been said, **experiencing is** just certain **modes of interaction**, of correlation, of natural objects among which the organism happens, so to say, to be one. It follows with equal force that **experience means primarily not knowledge**, **but** **ways of doing** and suffering. **Knowing must be described by discovering what particular mode-qualitatively unique-of doing** and suffering it is.46 89 Dewey's **metaphilosophy** **is** essentially **an act of** **intellectual regicide**; **he wants to** behead modern philosophy by **dethroning epistemology**. **For too long**, modern **philosophy has deferred to** the authority of "**knowledge**" in the name of science, **without questioning this authority and demystifying science**, i.e., bringing it down to earth, as it were. Therefore, the diversity, complexity, and **plurality of experience have been "assimilated to a nonempirical concept of knowledge.** "47 This impoverished empiricism "has said Lord, Lord, Experience, Experience, but in practice it has served ideas forced into experience, not gathered from it."48

#### That requires a procedure of testing by which we constantly examine objects’ effectiveness to make ethical judgements. Arras 02,

[PRAGMATISM IN BIOETHICS: BEEN THERE, DONE THAT, John D. Arras, © 2002 Journal of Social Philosophy & Policy Foundation, Porterfield Professor of Bioethics & Professor of Philosophy University of Virginia] CL & SHS ZS

Anyone in bioethics searching for methodological resources in pragmatism might naturally look to Dewey’s theory of experimental inquiry. While his books on ethics and politics discuss the substantive values that should inform our social thought, Dewey’s so-called “logical” works sketch a general, all-purpose approach to problem-solving that might prove useful 29 Nancy Dubler and Leonard Marcus, Mediating Bioethical Disputes (New York: United Hospital Fund of New York, 1994); Moreno, Deciding Together. 30 This collaborative and democratic model of contemporary bioethical practice contrasts sharply with H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.’s characterization of bioethicists as moral experts and secular priests. See, in this volume, H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., “The Ordination of Bioethicists as Secular Moral Experts.” Although Engelhardt tells a plausible story here about the rise of contemporary bioethics to public prominence against the backdrop of our society’s loss of faith in technocratic expertise and the public pronouncements of church leaders, his account of the social function of bioethicists is based upon highly selective evidence and, thus, bears little resemblance to the everyday reality of most bioethicists. PRAGMATISM IN BIOETHICS 41 to bioethicists seeking to refine their methods.31 Although most philosophers understand “logic” to be a study of the purely formal relationships between concepts, **Dewey** **conceived of** his **logic** **as [is] a general approach for finding** fruitful **solutions to** any kind of scientific or social **problem**. Dewey regarded the “scientific method” as a great human achievement that makes it possible for our species to rise above reflex and habit and to therefore control nature and predict the future. Although other pragmatists, such as Peirce, restricted the range of application of this method to the natural sciences, Dewey sought to extend it to moral and social thought as well. **Instead of resting the study of morals on** mere **intuition**, **Dewey sought to transform it into** a field of **scientific investigation**, a kind of “**materials science**” **of** the **moral life**.32 Thus, instead of accepting a dichotomy between science and social thought, **Dewey proposed** that **we view natural and social phenomena as** **two domains approachable through the same intellectual methods**. The key similarity uniting the natural and social sciences with moral thought would be **a common emphasis on experimentalism**. As Dewey sketched it in his book How We Think, **this** common **pragmatic approach** to problems **involves the following logical steps**: “(i) **a felt difficulty**; (ii) its **location and definition**; (iii) **suggestion of** possible **solution**; (iv) **development by reasoning** of the bearings of the suggestion; [and] (v) **further observation and experiment** leading to its acceptance or rejection.” 33 I suppose that interesting things might be said about steps (i)–(iv) that would help advance the discussion of methodology in bioethics, but I do not know what they are. **The necessity of identifying a serious (i.e., “felt”) problem**, defining **and locating it within a framework encompassing similar problems**, rehearsing possible solutions, and trying to figure out in advance the likely implications of each suggested solution **seems** to me, as it probably did to Dewey, to be nothing more than dressed up **common sense**. The fifth step, however, is more promising. Perhaps **the most crucial way in which moral thought needs to become** more **scientific**, according to Dewey, **resides in** the **ongoing experimental testing** of its results. **It is not enough to have** elevated feelings, confident **intuitions**, well-developed arguments, and even what we today would call reflective equilibrium among our intuitions, principles, and theories. The achievement of **the best possible moral results requires**, in addition, a continuous process of **confirming**, discrediting, **and** **refining our hypotheses** about what should be done or how society should be organized. Taking great pains to fasten onto a proposed means for solving a problem 31 See Glenn McGee, “Pragmatic Method and Bioethics,” in McGee, ed., Pragmatic Bioethics, 19: “John Dewey produced perhaps the clearest account of how pragmatism can revolutionize bioethics in his book about method, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry.” 32 Welchman, Dewey’s Ethical Thought, 68. 33 John Dewey, How We Think (Boston: Heath, 1910), 72, quoted in Miller et al., “Clinical Pragmatism,” 33. 42 JOHN D. ARRAS **without bothering to** **examine how this solution actually works** out **in the real world is**, for Dewey, a classic example of **unintelligent** thought and action. Yet one could argue that this is often standard operating procedure in bioethics. Take, for example, the problem of safeguarding the welfare and rights of patients and healthy volunteers enrolled in clinical trials and other varieties of human experimentation. For decades, bioethicists have been at the forefront of efforts to craft rules and regulations governing the conduct of research on human subjects. Particularly noteworthy are the federal regulations that articulated the relevant ethical principles and rules of conduct and established a vast system of institutional review boards (IRBs) charged with the important task of reviewing the ethical suitability of protocols on the local level. Although this system is currently undergoing increased scrutiny, many years have passed in which it was simply assumed that the system was working as it was designed to do. On the level of local IRBs, committees would dutifully scrutinize the risk/benefit ratios and consent forms of hundreds of protocols each year without ever investigating whether genuine informed consent was actually obtained in the clinic. Another classic example of this disconnection between theoretical elegance and concrete results is provided by the history of the living will in the United States. A great deal of ink has been spilled by bioethicists on the justifications of using living wills, on their supposed advantages and disadvantages, and on ways to expand their use by means of national and state legislation. But until fairly recently, no one thought it desirable or necessary actually to study the ways in which living wills affected (or, more to the point, failed to affect) clinical practice.34 As Dewey would have been the first to point out, though, living wills are most likely only one possible way of fostering the effective use of patients’ autonomy and helping them to secure a good (or at least decent) death. If studies show that living wills do not really alter physicians’ well-worn paths of clinical decision-making, then the bioethical community of inquiry needs to rethink its commitment to them. Perhaps some other, more systemic approach—that is, one relying less on the initiative of individual physicians—should be attempted and its comparative efficacy evaluated. At this point, a resourceful principlist might counter that a concern for the practical consequences of our elegantly articulated and theoretically justified practices could easily be accommodated within the existing methodological paradigm. She might argue, for example, that the principle of beneficence could be used to justify the sort of ongoing experimentalism called for by pragmatically oriented bioethicists. Since that principle encompasses a broad utilitarian concern for securing good consequences, 34 See, e.g., Alfred F. Connors et al., “A Controlled Trial to Improve Care for Seriously Ill Hospitalized Patients: The Study to Understand Prognoses and Preferences for Outcomes and Risks of Treatments (SUPPORT),” Journal of the American Medical Association 274, no. 20 (1995): 1591ff. PRAGMATISM IN BIOETHICS 43 the satisfaction of desires, and human happiness, then surely, it could be argued, it could justify ongoing scrutiny of the IRB system and the role of living wills in the care of actual, terminally ill patients. Indeed, if research subjects and dying patients would be better off in a society that did, in fact, routinely assess and refine its practices in these areas, then the principle of beneficence would require this sort of experimentalism—assuming, of course, that the costs of doing so were not excessively high

#### I contend that the AC is not consistent with the methodological restraints of social inquiry.

#### That negates –

#### 1. Fully developed LAWs have not been developed yet a pre-emptive ban prevents acquisition of truth. Kessel 19,

[Kessel, Jonah. “Killer Robots Aren’t Regulated. Yet.” The New York Times. Published 13 December 2019] SHS ZS.

Do I need to worry about a Terminator knocking on my door? Most experts say you can rest easy, for now. **Weapons that** can **operate like human soldiers are not** something they see **in our immediate future**. Although there are varying opinions, most agree **we are far from achieving artificial general intelligence**, or A.G.I., **that would allow for** Terminators with the kind of **flexibility necessary** to be effective **on today’s** complex **battlefield**. However, [Stuart J. Russell](https://www2.eecs.berkeley.edu/Faculty/Homepages/russell.html), a professor of computer science at the University of California, Berkeley, who wrote an influential textbook on artificial intelligence, says **achieving A.G.I. that is as smart as humans is inevitable**. So where are we now? There are many weapons systems that use artificial intelligence. But instead of thinking about Terminators, it might be better to think about software transforming the tech we already have. There are weapons that use artificial intelligence in active use today, including some that can search, select and engage targets on their own, attributes often associated with defining what constitutes a lethal autonomous weapon system (a.k.a. a killer robot). In his book “[Army of None](https://www.amazon.com/Army-None-Autonomous-Weapons-Future/dp/0393608980): Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War,” the Army Ranger turned policy analyst [Paul Scharre](https://www.paulscharre.com/) explained, “More than 30 nations already have defensive supervised autonomous weapons for situations in which the speed of engagement is too fast for humans to respond.” Perhaps the best known of these weapons is the [Israel Aerospace Industries Harpy](https://www.iai.co.il/p/harpy), an armed drone that can hang out high in the skies surveying large areas of land until it detects an enemy radar signal, at which point it crashes into the source of the radar, destroying both itself and the target. The weapon needs no specific target to be launched, and a human is not necessary to its lethal decision making. It has been sold to Chile, China, India, South Korea and Turkey, Mr. Scharre said, and the Chinese are reported to have reverse-engineered their own variant. “**We call them** [are] **precursors**,” [Mary Wareham](https://www.hrw.org/about/people/mary-wareham), advocacy director of the arms division at [Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/), said in an interview between meetings at the United Nations in Geneva. “**We’re not quite there yet, but we are coming ever closer**.” So when will more **advanced lethal autonomous weapons systems [will] be upon us**? “I think we’re talking more about **[in] years not decades**,” she said. But for the moment, **most weapons that use A.I. have a** **narrow field of use and aren’t flexible**. **They can’t adapt** to different situations. “One of the things that’s hard to understand unless you’ve been there is just the messiness and confusion of modern warfare,” Mr. Scharre said in an interview. “In all of those firefights,” he explained, “there was never a point where I could very clearly say that it was 100 percent that the person I was looking at down the scope of my rifle was definitely a combatant. “Soldiers are constantly trying to gauge — is this person a threat? How close can they get to me? If I tell them to stop, does that mean that they didn’t hear me or they didn’t understand? Maybe they’re too frightened to react? Maybe they’re not thinking? Or maybe they’re a suicide bomber and they’re trying to kill me and my teammates.” Mr. Scharre added, “Those can be very challenging environments for robots that have algorithms they have to follow to be able to make clear and correct decisions.” Although **current A.I. is relatively brittle**, that isn’t stopping militaries from incorporating it into their robots. In his book, which was published in 2018, Mr. Scharre wrote that at least 16 countries had armed drones, adding that more than a dozen others were working on them. What’s Driving the Boom? You, kind of. Companies are often looking to sell us stuff that we didn’t know we needed. And now, some of that same technology is making its way into our weapons. “A.I. technology is not being driven by militaries, it’s being driven by major tech companies out of the commercial sector,” Mr. Scharre said. “The same technology that will save civilian lives on the roads and make self-driving cars safer could also save civilian lives in combat and make war more precise and more humane.” The dual-use nature of technology is at the heart of the boom. “It’s a global A.I. revolution; it’s one that’s very diffuse,” he said. “And while there’s only a couple of companies that are actually leading the charge here, **once the technology is built, it’s** really **easy for it to proliferate** pretty widely and be used by others.”

#### 2. Absolute prohibitions are always a bad procedure since they foreclose all future possibilities. Mukerji 14,

[Mukerji and Nida-Rümelin (Nikil Mukerji and Julian Nida-Rümelin, both at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 5-2014, “Towards a Moderate Stance on Human Enhancement”, Reframing the Debate on Human Enhancement, <http://www.humanamente.eu/PDF/Complete_Issue%2026.pdf>) AG] SHS ZS

Having introduced the two views of the edifice of moral theory, we may ask which is more appropriate. Given the scope of this essay it is, of course, impossible to give a comprehensive answer to that question.8 For this reason, we shall confine ourselves to one brief remark, viz. that **the rationalist view** combines two rather incredible assertions. On the one hand, it **holds** that at least **one view is absolutely** **certain**, viz. the first principle that the whole of moral theory is built upon. **On the other hand**, there is radical doubt. **Any moral judgement that collides with the first principle has to be given up**. These two ideas seem maddeningly absurd. **The notion that** certain **ideas cannot be given up under any circumstances appears to be** plainly **unreasonable**. In fact this has long been recognized in the philosophy of science (see Nida-Rümelin 2009). **It seems equally preposterous to suggest** that **we should be radically doubtful about all** the **moral beliefs** that we currently entertain. The second view acknowledges both of these points. It [**pragmatism**] is fallibilist insofar as it **recognizes** that **any moral judgement may**, in principle, **be doubted**. **But it dispenses with radical doubt**. For **it acknowledges**, as Wittgenstein has noted, **that doubt can never be radical**, **but is intelligible only against the background of beliefs** that are not doubted (Wittgenstein 1969). To that extent, then, our approach may be called “pragmatist”.9 This said, let us point out that **our** broadly **pragmatist view** contains an endorsement of what Allen Buchanan calls the “Balancing Approach”. This approach **suggests** that **the right way to** go about **discuss**ing issues of human enhancement (as well as any other **issues**) **is to** “**look both at the considerations in favor** of enhancement **and those against** **and to strive for the judgment that reflects** a **proper appreciation of both**.” (Buchanan 2011, 59) In other words, it suggests that **any radical stance** either for or against enhancement **should be rejected** and that the question about the permissibility of human enhancement **and** its ethical limits is an open question that **can be answered only if all the reasons** – pro and con – **are** duly considered and **appropriately weighed on a case-by-case basis**.10 3. Human Enhancement – Pro and Con Up until now, we have given two reasons why sweeping generalizations about human enhancement seem dubious. Firstly, it is hard to see how such a view might be supported argumentatively, given that a clear definition of enhancement is not available. Secondly, **the pragmatist conception of moral justification** that we favour supports the Balancing Approach, which **suggests that we should be wary of sweeping generalizations** about human enhancement. But suppose, for argument’s sake, that it was possible to come up with a clear and intuitively satisfactory definition. In that case, the Balancing Approach might support a general conclusion in favour of or against human enhancement. For it may turn out that all arguments line up on one side of the debate. In this section, we go through a number of normative considerations that are relevant in the context of enhancement, thereby making clear that that idea is rather doubtful.

#### [3] Banning LAWs prevents truth acquisition – humans learn and develop knowledge from the experience of being surrounded by these autonomous agents. By reflecting upon the nature of AI and their judgement, LAWs directly contribute to truth acquisition and moral understanding through choice.

# Extensions

## Overview (0:40)

#### Ethical knowledge and truth are derived from the experiences we subject ourselves to. This means we can never be certain about ethical principles and values because they always change depending on the relevant experiences, we are subjected too. Afropess, for example, was derived as a response to the horrors of the middle passage, and Kantianism was developed in response to the Enlightenment movement – both philosophies are the product of their times in places. Pragmatism is a theory of epistemology, or knowledge, which means it comes before the aff because we question how ethics are developed to begin with. That justifies the standard consistency with the methodological constraints of social inquiry – in other words, not foreclosing ourselves to the possibility of new experience for ideas that are unknown and untested.

#### Extend the offense – Since LAWs are not fully developed since AI technology is still very underdeveloped, we do not know the relevant moral implications of their existence. A ban would be premature before understanding their moral consequences. Additionally, LAWs themselves add to the acquisition of truth because by the nature of being autonomous agents they make decisions that we as humans can reflect upon and learn from.

## Frontlines

### AT Brightline

#### On your brightline arguments –

#### [1] The NC provides a clear brightline for motivating action: we shouldn’t take actions that interfere with the process of inquiry and discovery. A ban LAWs violate this because they are still undergoing the process of research and discovery – our evidence contextualizes how we have not yet achieved AGI.

#### [2] Extend the Mukerji evidence – which says that universal bans of technology are bad and we have to weigh ethics on a case-by-case basis. Even if they win that there isn’t a brightline for determining how far along LAWs are developed this still negates because it proves that universal bans of concepts like technologies are an intrinsic wrong. It doesn’t justify atrocities – take killing people – it’s incoherent to prescribe the universal obligation not to kill somebody because people have to act in self-defense, or even under a util framework you would be justified in murdering one to save too people. That means looking at actions like a case-by-case basis works, and is better for resolving abhorrent situations.

### AT Extinction First

#### [1] Extend that extinction first is impact justified – it presupposes that there is relevance to coming up with the correct ethical theory. Pragmatism takes this out in two ways:

#### [A] Our NC proves THERE IS NO CORRECT AND STATIC ETHICAL THEORY AND NEVER WILL BE so the pursuit to forever engaging in ethics is completely worthless. Our values will always change over time and we will never be fully “right,” so the notion that preventing extinction will give us the time to determine the correct ethic is absurd. Even if we went extinct tomorrow, we would be no worse off than living for another 100 years since our ethical values will change throughout that time period – that precisely proves why their extinction first standard its impact justified.

#### [B] Our NC doesn’t justify value in finding the correct moral truth. Rather, it is a side-constraint on the acquisition of knowledge. It says that if we want to find moral truth, we must open ourselves to relevant experiences, but doesn’t presuppose value in finding moral value itself. That means both frameworks don’t have a warrant why determining the correct ethical theory is best, so it’s still impact justified.