

INTRODUCTION:

PRAGMATISM AND FEMINISM

– A NATURAL ALLIANCE

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In general, feminism stands for nothing else than belief in the equality of women and men. Men who think that patriarchal social order is founded biologically and is a permanent creation fear feminism or are at least indignant at it. However, usually everything they know about feminism has come into their lives thirdhand. They mostly believe that feminism does essentially mean ugly women who hate men or want to become stronger, smarter or richer than men. Nevertheless you can be both humanist and feminist at the same time. What is more, you can be both pragmatist and feminist since both are humanistic and pragmatism shares at least three characteristics with feminism. Firstly, both pragmatists and feminists prefer social changes and strive to establish a more just society since they mostly do not believe in a metaphysical order of the world and society. Representatives of both „factions” are convinced that we can change oppressive social practices and structures, because these are historically and socially determined. Secondly, they both prefer experience since human life is first of all practice (according to pragmatists, even theories belong to practice in a broad sense), and decisive things happen, begin or are connected to our experiential life. Finally, meliorism as one of the main pragmatist principles means that we have to improve human life as much as possible both on the individual and on the social level and from this it follows (though not in a necessary way) that most pragmatists prefer democracy to conservative social structures. Meliorism of this kind shows similar features to, for instance, the ethics of care.

The present issue of *Pragmatism Today* shows only a small piece of a huge cake, and wants to urge more intensive research work regarding the relationship between feminism and pragmatism. Being so tightly

bound together, it is not difficult to find new areas of shared or close ideas. In his article, Maurice Hamington tries to show the connections between Royce’s ethical approach and the ethics of care which was originally conceived by feminism. He suggests that „Royce’s understanding of loyalty has much in common with a robust notion of care and that dialogue between the notions of care and loyalty has the potential to yield a more robust political theory of care”. However, prior to attempting a synthesis of loyalty and care he begins „by describing the trajectory of care being employed here, followed by an overview of Royce’s concept of ‘loyalty to loyalty’ with an eye towards its relational implications”. Hamington writes that some philosophers and ethicists view care ethics „as an alternative ethical theory, or a variance on virtue theory,” although he is persuaded that ethics of care means „a paradigm shift in moral thinking representing something different (or more) than a normative theory of moral adjudication,” and he believes that „a loyalty to care can be considered a metaethical position that links particularism to a liminal sense of normativity that can be the basis for a more robust understanding of political care. Loyalty to care suggests a commitment to a moral ideal of care even when I am confronted by unfamiliar others.”

Marta Vaamonde Gamo’s paper offers us a fantastic historical description about the strong relationship between Dewey’s pragmatism and the contemporary feminist efforts of the age, suffragism. Unfortunately, this connection had all but vanished after Dewey’s death, but due to the contributions of Charlene Haddock Seigfried and her fellow American scholars, Erin McKenna, Shannon Sullivan, Judith M. Green, Barbara Thayer-Bacon and others, the relationship between Deweyan pragmatism and feminism is recovering. A new form of pragmatist feminism has been in the making over the last two decades, especially in the USA, causing mutual enrichment. „Feminism completes pragmatic analysis with a gender perspective, while pragmatism offers feminism a working method which sheds light on and dissolves some of the dichotomies present in

contemporary feminist debate.” Within this historical framework Vaamonde Gamo creates a Deweyan interpretation of communication. She shows firstly, that „Dewey does not understand dialogue as the result of a relationship of individuals able to act autonomously, which was of what post-modern and communitarian currents accused the liberal and critical proposals. For Dewey, individuals develop this ability over the course of their communicative relationships.” Secondly, she justifies that „despite the importance Dewey places on language, he does not turn to textualism. The reference of language is experience.” At the end of her article Vaamonde Gamo draws the conclusion, saying that „according to Dewey, communication serves to give order to and transform relationships that are constituents of personalities and communities.” This kind of communication which „must cover, in Dewey's opinion, the full range of both public and private relationships,” thus becomes one of the important means of building a democracy.

Our third article, written by Markéta Dudová, investigates the philosophical meaning of „vomiting”. The starting point of her essay is the feminist Kristeva's „theory of abjection and her understanding of vomiting as a dark revolt „'of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate' from an outside or inside”. Dudová looks at some important philosophical figures from the point of view of vomiting, first interpreting Hegel's philosophy and then Romanticism from this aspect. Nevertheless, she offers the most thorough analysis of vomiting when she compares Nietzsche's and Kristeva's interpretations, claiming that for „both Kristeva and Nietzsche, vomiting is a discourse of both life and death,” and „the best word to describe their discourse is therefore fragility.” As Dudová says, „vomiting draws attention to the fragility of being and life,” and this is why it may be of importance as a philosophical precedent of Richard Shusterman's neopragmatist somaesthetics, as well.