

## THE PRAGMATIC-REGULATIVE CONCEPT OF CONVERGENCE AND (THE END OF) HISTORY

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**ABSTRACT:** This article develops a concept of convergence as a pragmatic-regulative orientation toward epistemic and normative improvement over time. Drawing on Peirce's long-run inquiry, Habermas's discursive idealizations, Kant's regulative ideas, and James's meliorism, it argues that these distinct frameworks share a structural motif: agents orient their practices toward greater coherence, adequacy, or mutual intelligibility under idealized conditions, without presupposing any metaphysical endpoint. Convergence is understood as future-directed, open-ended, and normatively oriented, linking epistemological, and normative dimensions. By situating this concept against contemporary debates on the "end of history," the article highlights how pragmatist and regulative insights provide sensitive framework for thinking about human agency, improvement, and the openness of historical development.

**Keywords:** Peirce, Habermas, convergence, the end of history, meliorism

### Introduction

Austrian historian Philip Ther, a specialist in the contemporary history of Middle European countries, writes in one of his latest books about "a different end of history" (Ther 2019). Naturally, it is an allusion to Francis Fukuyama's famous 1989 essay "The End of History." As is well known, in that essay the Japanese-American political scientist predicted the gradual, global victory of the Western form of liberal democracy, connected especially with the free market economy. Recently, Fukuyama's predictions, which are based on, among others, Kojève's influential interpretation of Hegel's teleology of history, has definitely lost its persuasiveness. A persuasiveness, at least according to some, it never actually had (cf. Derrida, 2006, pp. 16–17; 97–98; Žižek 2009).

Ther claims that the period of the end of history (for him, especially the "transformative" nineties) comes to an end around 2016. Since that time, the consequences of this "belief in the end of history" have become in-

creasingly apparent. Ther situates this "different end of history" in the turbulent rise of populism and authoritarianism, and he links it to certain neoliberal policies and to a broader crisis of liberal democracy—another indirect allusion to Fukuyama (cf. Ther 2019, pp. 13–15; on populism in this context, cf. Mudde 2021; Lanham and Fishman 2005).

These remarks do not serve as an introduction in order to argue for a general thesis about the (un)persuasiveness of the alleged "end of history," nor do I aim to systematically revise the broader debates surrounding it, of which Ther's work is one example. Rather, my goal is to situate the subsequent discussion within the context in which "end of history" discourses—largely critical or rejective—remain operative. This context reveals the need for conceptual tools that can address the questions implicitly raised by these debates.

In this sense, I develop the idea that pragmatic philosophy provides a framework for addressing questions of meaning and orientation in historical and political life. However, I do not aim to offer a systematic development of what might be called a pragmatic philosophy of history. Instead, starting from the alleged "end of history," I focus primarily on how orientation toward the future can be conceptually articulated. In this sense, the broad relation to history is not understood in terms of history as a set of events, its internal laws, or a potential final state, but rather in terms of potential of epistemic and normative improvement.

As a terminological starting point, I draw on Richard Rorty's term "end-of-history convergence." Rorty introduced this expression to describe the Peirce-Kantian orientation of Jürgen Habermas's political philosophy to characterize a specific form of quasi-metaphysical liberalism (cf. Rorty 2009, p. 68). I instead attempt to redefine and rearticulate the term convergence, arguing that the convergence structure can be reconstructed across Peirce's account of long-run inquiry, Habermas's discursive idealizations, Kant's regulative ideas of reason, and

James's melioristic conception of truth. Since these concepts are most often treated in isolation, my goal is to argue that they can be understood as part of structurally similar motive.

Accordingly, in the first section I analyse Peirce's procedural theory of inquiry as an epistemological structure of convergence. In the second section, Habermas's model of deliberative democracy is presented as a political analogue of convergence, rooted in procedural idealizations. In the third section, the term convergence is further elaborated and related to Kant's regulative conception of ideas. In the final section, I introduce Jamesian meliorism as an existential-affective dimension grounding convergence within an essentially open conception of agency. I then conclude with a brief effort to explicate the internal connection that consist in an understanding of agents and their practices as tending toward greater coherence, adequacy, or mutual intelligibility without presupposing any metaphysical endpoint.

### 1. Epistemological Term of Convergence

What I will call the epistemological term of convergence or of converging<sup>1</sup>, can be reconstructed against the background of Peirce's reflections on the nature of scientific inquiry from the 1870s and 1880s. The idea of convergence is closely connected to Peirce's conception of reality and of definite knowledge and belongs to a broader nineteenth-century tendency toward methodological and scientific optimism.

Thus, the idea of convergence occurs most clearly in the starting point of Peirce's epistemology: in his general description of the method of scientific inquiry. The convergence functions here as the end of the process

of scientific inquiry, which is thought of as temporal. At the same time, in the spirit of methodological optimism, Peirce emphasizes the method of this sort of inquiry. Therefore, science can approach its goal – despite occasional stumbles – through the right procedure.

Now, I consider three primary formulations coming directly from Peirce to define the epistemological concept of convergence. These include the concept of convergence itself, along with the contextual conditions and underlying assumptions that make it intelligible. Firstly, Peirce's famous claim about the relationship between inquiry, reality and truth:

The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality. (Peirce 1992, p. 139)

Or, very similarly to the explicit accent on the temporal dimension of the definitive knowledge of reality:

The real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. (Peirce 1992, p. 52)

These formulations can now be evaluated in terms of convergence, understood as a state of agreement or congruence. Such agreement presupposes a certain endpoint or outcome. From the claims presented, two underlying assumptions can be identified that make this convergence possible.

The first can be named the transcendent assumption (1). This also has been identified as the realist premise (cf. Röd and Basile 2014, p. 103). According to Peirce, scientific investigation advances towards the end. It moves ever closer to an adequate knowledge of the external world. This is at the same time the condition for the gradual converging of non-definitive and partial findings. Thus, converging is only possible when the process of investigation is transcended by something that guarantees the convergence as such.

At the most general level, the second assumption could be identified with the inter-subjectivity of knowing,

<sup>1</sup> This distinction has a meaning as follows: when I use the term "converging", I want to stress a processuality. So basically, I conceive it as a process. When I use the term "convergence", I mean it as an end of some process. That is also the reason why, below, I occasionally switch between "end" and "convergence".

which in science is represented by scientists. For the quotation that was cited above continued and emphasised the fundamentally inter-subjective character of science.

The second part of the claim sounds like this:

Thus, the very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an indefinite increase of knowledge. (Peirce, p. 52)

This second assumption makes some useful corrections of the first assumption, because it supplies it with an element that excludes the standpoint of naïve subjectivist-adequational realism. It thus brings Peirce closer to a kind of regulative realism, which prospectively admits knowledge of the real, but only on condition of denying any form of subjectivism.

If I have accordingly called the first assumption transcendent, it is clear now that the possibility of achieving the goal depends at the same time on something that is immanent to the whole process and defines it, so to speak, from inside. The second assumption can be called immanent (2).

This means however that, according to Peirce, the convergence presupposes some conditions, under which scientific practice should take place. Thus, I count as a part of the immanent assumption some form of cooperativity between scientists in the sense of a constant exposing of one's own point of view to others on the one hand, and inferential linking of what are always only partial claims and conclusions transcending generations of scientists on the other (cf. Peirce 1992, pp. 126–127, 138). It is interesting that Peirce admits that inferential methods could be used very differently and are even different in very fundamental aspects. Convergence is guaranteed precisely because methods are complementary but are also in tension and conflict with each other.

To put it more concretely, the immanent assumption means a summary of semantical, inferential and even ethical rules, under which the practice of inquiring should ideally proceed. It is these rules that ensure that the dif-

ferent perspectives converge in content over time. In this sense, Peirce also defines convergence procedurally.

But Peirce never thematized the methodology of science in a way that would explicitly connect it with the idea of convergence. For him, this assumption is largely self-evident. For example, the way Peirce portrays different forms of fixing beliefs implicitly entails this motive (cf. Peirce 1992, pp. 116–123). In fact, Peirce generally conceives fixation as both an individual and historical process directed toward ever clearer beliefs, which simultaneously approximate full knowledge of reality. This ultimate and comprehensive goal, however, applies only to the scientific method, by its very nature. Here again, the intersubjective foundation is stated as a basic starting point, since all other methods of fixation, except the scientific, deny the social impulse; if they do not, they tend to transform into a more reliable method. This is particularly true of the method of authority (cf. Peirce 1992, p. 116).

To summarize briefly: the idea of convergence expresses Peirce's basic understanding of scientific conduct as directed toward the "final opinion." Approximating reality involves moving from particular and obscure claims toward shared and intelligible ones. Convergence is thus a fundamental aspect of the process by which knowledge ideally develops, both as an outcome and as a goal, reflecting how distinct conceptions of truth and reality gradually align through methodologically correct inquiry. Consequently, scientific conduct is ideally guided by this orientation toward greater epistemic adequacy, which in turn fosters its ongoing development.

## 2. Political Term of Convergence

During the last few decades, an interesting development has taken place in contemporary German philosophy. Against the background of Apel's introduction of Peirce into the German-speaking philosophical context, authors of the second and third generations of critical theory have engaged increasingly and more systematically with

ideas from both classical and contemporary pragmatism. The original misunderstandings, or even rejection and aversion, common to the first generation (cf. esp. Horkheimer 2004, pp. 29–37) slowly disappear and are simultaneously substituted by efforts to find a common ground (cf. Frega 2015, pp. 63–96). This mainly concerns the three main authors of classical pragmatism, Peirce, Mead and Dewey, and the four contemporary authors of critical theory, Habermas, Joas, Jaeggi and Honneth (cf. Särkelä 2021, p. 145–156).

The connection between Peirce and critical theory may appear unintelligible at first glance, not only because the foundations of critical theory are rooted in Hegelian-Marxian thought rather than in Kantian philosophy, but also because Peirce's basic opinions and habits were supposedly conservative (cf. Atkins 2016, p. 34; Westbrook 2005, pp. 142–149). However, Peirce's general influence on Habermas has recently become well recognized (cf. Misak 1994; O'Mahony 2023; et al.), even though Habermas and the core of his philosophy are generally treated within pragmatism as Kantian-critical rather than pragmatic (cf. Misak 1994; Bernstein 2010; Rorty 2021). Here, I follow this Peircean influence on Habermas by referring to his discursive idealizations connected with the communicative notion of power and his conception of deliberative democracy.

Of course, Peirce's role for Habermas cannot be reduced to this idea alone. Habermas regards Peirce as one of the most significant thinkers in modern philosophy, primarily because of Peirce's paradigmatic shift from a subjectivist to a communicative conception of rationality. Accordingly, I take as my starting point the claim that Habermas formulates key conclusions of his universal pragmatics, as well as his later elaboration of the theory of deliberative democracy, as part of this Peircean "communicative turn" (cf. Habermas 2019, pp. 715–716; Habermas 2024, pp. 164–165, 177–178).

In continuity with the first section, I will now apply the two previously introduced assumptions of convergence—

transcendent (1) and immanent (2)—to Habermas. This distinction clarifies both the similarities and the differences between the approaches of Habermas and Peirce, and it makes it possible to further identify the convergence motif that underlies Habermas's political rearticulation.

The starting point of Habermas's communicative conceptualization of politics is his universal pragmatics, where idealizing operations similar to those in Peirce are understood as norms necessarily presupposed by an inquiring community. His analysis begins with everyday speech acts and, through reconstruction, uncovers universal validity claims that are inherently presupposed in every single act of communication (cf. Habermas 1998, p. 24). Habermas, however, demarcates his own approach primarily in contrast to Apel, revolving around what I have called a transcendent assumption. Habermas nevertheless emphasizes that both his methodological and theoretical commitments deny the existence of any necessary presupposition that could be understood as equivalent to Peirce's reality notion. This denial is most clearly articulated in his rejection of Apel's next step—namely, the transcendental-normative reinterpretation in which Peirce's notion of a final opinion becomes the basis for a justification of certain norms as necessary, unavoidable, and ultimately binding (cf. Apel 1980).

In Habermas, however, the idealizing steps that mirror those in Peirce consist in a pragmatic demonstration of presuppositions that are justified solely through discursive procedures. For Habermas's position, what I have called the immanent assumption above appears to have an equivalent in his procedural conception of norms that essentially structure the formal-pragmatic space of argumentation.

This basic idea finds its expression in Habermas's systematically developed theory of deliberative democracy. Especially in his later works, the procedure of deliberation is understood as a socially mediated process of will-formation, through the institutionalization of which law is created (cf. Habermas 1994, pp. 150–153). Howev-

er, will-formation is described more as a dialectical process in which particular individuals, through reciprocal communicative exchange, reach a level of generality that is then fixed in the creation of law.

The deliberative processes are still captured within the formal-pragmatic framework, as they create the very possibility of reaching consensus—of reconciling the tension between the general will and the individual will. Just as in Peirce, where the method itself establishes the conditions for convergence toward the final opinion, so in Habermas the principle of discursive legitimacy is derivative from formal pragmatics and the conditions it posits for the possibility of consensus. In other words, the presuppositions or principles that constitute the “normative conditions for the possibility of understanding” (Habermas 1998, p. 22) ground the very idea of legitimate deliberation.

The immanent assumption of convergence therefore finds its equivalent in Habermas’s development of the principles of comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness within the broader notion of the communicative situation that ultimately underpins his theory of deliberative democracy. These principles include:

- (a) of public debate and complete inclusion of all those affected; (b) of equal distribution of the right to communicate; (c) of a nonviolent context in which only the unforced force of the better argument holds sway; and (d) of the sincerity of how all those affected express themselves. (Habermas 2003, p. 37)

However, Peirce’s original idea of long-run inquiry and convergence toward greater epistemic adequacy does not make sense in this context and is instead reformulated as an orientation toward mutual intelligibility. In other words, the fact that the procedural logic of idealization is present in every argumentative exchange means that each discourse implicitly aims at conditions of inclusivity and equality. Orientation and convergence are therefore not captured in terms of a long-term inquiry, but rather as a reconciliatory inclination toward consensus, one that remains always potentially attainable.

### 3. Regulative Ideals and the Form of Convergence

I think the structure of the convergence motif, as defined so far, already displays some essential features that can now be summarized and further developed. In Peirce and Habermas, convergence can be understood as involving an element of idealization and future orientation. Additionally, for both, idealizations serve as a tool for defining and grounding the improvement-oriented tendency toward increasing epistemic adequacy in Peirce, or mutual intelligibility in Habermas.

However, this future-oriented tendency does not result in the postulation of a metaphysical endpoint. It is now clear that the idea of convergence refers neither to concrete empirical facts corresponding to reality in the epistemological sense nor to any specific form of social order in the political sense. For example, it is neither a society free of ideological conflict, as imagined by Fukuyama (Fukuyama 1989, p. 12), nor one free of class struggle, as imagined by Marx and Engels (cf. Marx 1998).

It is the assumption that I have called immanent that underlies what is typically referred to as the regulative definition of the entire idea of convergence, whether epistemological or political in nature. There are textual reasons to follow this path, as Habermas himself interprets Peirce’s communicative notion of rationality within the context of Kantian regulative theory of truth and occasionally refers to his own “idealized presuppositions of communication” as the regulative principle of communicative practice (cf. Habermas 2022, p. 70). Precisely the Kantian analogion could help bridge the epistemological and political dimensions and add further features to the idea of convergence.

The regulative function of ideas in Kant’s philosophy primarily serves a heuristic and methodological role within his system. Following Kant, Dorothy Emmet distinguishes between regulative ideals and regulative principles. While the former represents concrete goals—though ultimately unrealizable—the latter denote the rules employed to ad-

vance toward these goals (cf. Emmet 1994, pp. 11–13). This distinction is crucial, as it underpins the conceptualization of convergence: it entails both the denial of the existence of “the end” in a realist sense—depicting it instead as already present in an idealized form—and the emphasis on procedural rules, which acquire specific meaning precisely through this denial. Moreover, Emmet captures the pragmatic aspect of Kant’s subsequent argument:

The Regulative Ideals have an explicitly practical function in which the question of existence need not arise – we might say it is ‘bracketed’. A Regulative Ideal provides a focus imaginarius, that is, a goal which can give a direction, an orientation, for a practice. (Ebd., p. 13)

Against this backdrop, a third motive crucial for convergence can be added, namely the orientational element, which also reflects historically significant echoes of Kant’s conception of regulativity in the pragmatic conception of truth. (cf. Apel 2016; Howat 2013). In particular, James’ conception of truth is grounded in the practical difference that knowledge makes within reality. Accordingly, knowledge must primarily serve an orientation-practical function, similar to the one Emmet attributes to Kant (cf. James 1987, pp. 573–576; Putnam 2017).

In Kantian thought, these motives are also directly tied to the conception of history. This is evident in Kant’s reflections on so-called universal history, the Enlightenment, as well as international relations viewed through the prism of eternal peace (cf. Kant 1999; 2007). For Kant, history appears to converge toward a happy ending, somewhat analogously to Fukuyama’s thesis. The Enlightenment and the idea of peace-order are introduced as part of a broader naturalistic metaphysics. Kant describes this especially in the 8th and 9th theses of his *Universal History*, where he connects the end of history with “Nature’s secret plan.” The end is then identified with a specific order of human society, organized particularly according to law-principles—whether in the internal, reciprocal interactions of citizens or in the external relations between states (cf. Kant 2007, pp. 116–118).

However, this seemingly naturalistic concept of history is underlaid by the conception of regulativity: the goal is not predetermined or metaphysically fixed, as the “plan” here refers heuristically to a tendency, not a necessity, and is understood as an idealized, orientation-based concept (cf. Ebd.). Similar to the way I have appropriated the ideas of Peirce and Habermas, this orientation points toward greater coherence and intelligibility while simultaneously preserving the openness of the end connected with human’s freedom that Kant presuppose (cf. ebd., p. 108). In this sense, Kant’s regulative ideas represent a structure compatible with the interpretation of convergence that I propose.

Nevertheless, what remains insufficiently clear is how the content of convergence, understood as a regulative idea, is to be determined. In Kant, the focus imaginarius of history at times appears to be identified with a cosmopolitan, peaceful order. Yet in order to avoid a metaphysical teleology of history, Kant repeatedly denies that the final state can be empirically described in determinate detail (ebd., pp. 116–117).

The same must hold for my reconstruction of both the epistemological and political terms of convergence. A determinate endpoint would contradict the very features that constitute the substance and value of the motif: orientation is not prediction; idealization does not postulate a metaphysical endpoint; and improvement must be articulated in terms of open-ended and free human agency.

A further structural feature of convergence can thus be identified: a form of essential openness. This does not imply an absence of content, but rather a continual need to determine the relevant conditions with some content. This content-determination, however, cannot be prescribed in advance. It must take place within the framework of concrete human lives, concrete disputes, and socially mediated forms of deliberation.

Something very similar is expressed in Dewey’s well-known account of the dialectic of means and ends, a central element of his experimentalist metaphysics. Dewey

argues that no goal is ever fixed or definitive. Goals are inherently variable, as their formation depends on the conditions under which they arise and necessitates continual adjustment in response to new experiences (cf. Dewey 1929, pp. 373–374). The conceptual distinction between means and ends is therefore derivative: means are included within ends and ends in turn refer back to the means.

Thus, the definition of the conditions of convergence can be situated within this logic of means and ends. Convergence cannot be prescribed or concretized a priori, because the conditions under which such a definition would be formulated are themselves variable. They depend on historically contingent and continually changing forms of experience characteristic of situated agents. These experiences repeatedly generate new and inherently inexhaustible demands. Only on the basis of such experience can content be assigned to any putative goal, and thereby the means implicated in its possible realization be identified and justified.

Once the affinity between convergence and the regulative function is uncovered, its basic traits become much more visible: it contains a normatively conceived orientation toward the future and toward one's own situatedness. In this sense, a pragmatic-regulative understanding of convergence allows—when applied to the field of history—for a conception of history as a future-directed process. History can then be understood as having a distinctive quality that provides future orientation in terms of its integrity and unity, rather than as a mere series of contingently occurring individual points. The same holds for a situated, present-based orientation: the present moment is grasped within a broader unity that constitutes a whole.

As in James's theory of truth, some ideas have a greater potential than others to establish desirable practices. Even if grounded in idealized conditions, the idea of convergence seems capable of imparting, in a Jamesian sense, a dimension of meaning to an individual's be-

haviour—including her choices and possibilities. Or, in Emmet's terms, it can provide direction and orientation for practice. The term meaning here captures precisely this function. Presupposed convergence thus helps articulate a basic distinction between a life understood and lived as oriented or meaningful and one that is not. This resonates, in a broad sense, with Wittgenstein's claim that "the world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy" (*Tractatus* 6.43; Wittgenstein 2016, p. 83), as well as with Jan Patočka's remark in the *Third Heretical Essay* that it is impossible to live without meaning, even if that meaning is relative and problematic (cf. Patočka 2007, p. 67).

#### 4. Improvement Orientation as a Structure of Agency

In the conclusion of the previous section, I indicated that the orientational and open-ended structure of convergence appears to be linked to a conception of agency. As discussed above, the idea of convergence contains an inherent orientation. However, this orientation has not been systematically developed by previous authors in terms of an existential and affective attitude. In my view, another motive from the pragmatic philosophical tradition—namely, William James's conception of meliorism and truth—exhibits traits similar to those I have ascribed to convergence and can therefore be understood in the context of an improvement-oriented tendency, this time more directly connected to human agency.

In James's account, meliorism is originally formulated with respect to the question of the world's salvation, i.e., within the philosophy of religion. Whereas optimists hold that salvation is inevitable and pessimists consider it impossible, meliorists defend a third position: salvation is neither guaranteed nor precluded but remains a genuine possibility (cf. James 1987, pp. 612–613).

Rather than remaining with the somewhat vague, quasi-religious terminology characteristic of James's period, one can instead consider how James conceptualiz-

es a melioristic relation to salvation as a possibility. He writes:

It treats it [meliorism as regards salvation] as a possibility, which becomes more and more of a probability the more numerous the actual conditions of salvation become. (James 1987, p. 612).

Precisely this formulation reveals that meliorism is not a belief but a hope (cf. Shade 2001). That is, it need not be understood only in a religious context. The distinction between faith and hope can be made on the basis of James' seemingly subtle emphasis on the conditions that guarantee the possibility of salvation. Meliorism thus does not involve a Kierkegaardian leap into the absurd (as accepting something that is not based on reason) – the leap of which is a resignation to the validity of secular or better ethical standards as a necessary condition (cf. Kierkegaard 2006). To the contrary, it draws on a confidence in being successful that is based on conditions that seem to be exclusively secular.

It could be said that meliorism in this form is a kind of appropriation or analogy of what I called above the scientific optimism of the nineteenth century, or of modernity and its expression as such (cf. Koselleck 2002; Löwenstein 2009). It is no coincidence that there is in Peirce many statements very close to this Jamesian meliorism, for example:

All the followers of science are animated by a cheerful hope that the processes of investigation, if only pushed far enough, will give one certain solution to every question to which they can be applied. (Peirce 1992, p. 138).

Although it is not fully evident directly from this quotation, both authors agree that the possibility of an eschatological element depends on the conditions which are its *sine qua non*. But these conditions need to be concretized. While Peirce understands them as a true method of science, James conceives them in the spirit of pragmatic humanism and his own conception of truth (cf. also Koopman 2006). James associates meliorism with a dynamic and open notion of experience in which there is quite a lot of room for initiative, understood in terms of individualism and individual freedom, respectively.

This is to be explicitly connected to James' theory of truth, whose core lies in the rejection of a straightforward correspondence between things and their representation, favouring instead a processual understanding of verification. In James' account, truth is considered in the context of experience—or more precisely, in the context of events—which determine whether an idea can be regarded as true or plausible. Truth is not solely a matter of correspondence; it also carries existential connotations. Its realization depends significantly on human intervention and agency, requiring active engagement with the truth. This becomes clearer in light of James' "humanist view of reality" (James 1987, p. 599), which forms an integral part of his theory of truth:

In our cognitive life as well as in our active life we are creative. We add, both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hands. Like the kingdom of heaven, it suffers human violence willingly. Man engenders truth upon it. (ibid.)

Returning to meliorism in this context, the main condition of the world's salvation according to James can be understood as grounded in a subjectivist-existential conception of human agency, effort and initiative. It is not the aim here to further develop or problematize this idea, or to offer a more precise definition (e.g., whether it also entails an endorsement of individualistically conceived freedom). Importantly, such initiative must operate in conjunction with certain concrete conditions (e.g., material), since without this complementarity the concept would risk appearing naïve.

However, it is possible to reinterpret meliorism in the context of convergence, in part due to the general character of hope. Convergence is not conceived as a fixed goal, nor does it possess a determined referent; the same holds for hope. Experience suggests that hope can sometimes be directed toward a specific outcome, yet at other times it constitutes a more general "leaning" into the future—a vague combination of ideas, possibilities, and their cautious engagement with reality.

The regulative function of convergence explicitly entails openness, alongside the requirement to determine the content of meaning-projection. Nevertheless, the specific form of this projection remains unspecified. In this sense, it remains “waiting to receive its final touches” through human initiative. The openness of the end, together with the means employed to pursue it, thus underscores the necessity of active engagement and initiative.

### Conclusion

I have followed concepts that I take to be internally connected, and the explication of these connections has made it possible to define the concept of convergence gradually, in what I have called a pragmatic sense. Peirce’s notion of scientific inquiry, Habermas’s conception of procedural idealizations, Kant’s regulative ideas, and James’s conception of truth and meliorism, although distinct and operating in different domains, share a deeper structure that I have tried to articulate. I take the functional notion of convergence to be what unifies these concepts and enables us to treat them as related. Put differently, I have tried to show that they can be understood as structurally similar instantiations of a single pragmatic-regulative concept.

This convergence framework serves as a conceptual tool for providing orientation toward epistemic and normative improvement over time. It emphasizes a future-directed, normative orientation of actors in their present situatedness, highlighting openness, initiative, and melioristic motivation. In negative terms, the framework rejects teleological metaphysics, predetermined ends, historical skepticism, and naïve optimism.

Instead of offering a conventional conclusion, I add a few remarks that connect the preceding analysis to the much-discussed motif of the “end of history” with which this text began. On the one hand, the “end of history” in Fukuyama’s sense no longer appears conceptually tenable (if it ever did). As Derrida observes, even the intellec-

tual climate of the 1950s was marked by recurrent proclamations of various “ends”—of philosophy, of Marxism, of man—that ultimately failed to materialize (cf. Derrida 2006, p. 16). One plausible interpretation of this recurring apocalyptic tone is Ther’s historizing gesture: the “end of history” becomes symptomatic of a particular period and its characteristic self-understandings. Yet it is doubtful that such historization suffices when normatively laden questions about historical orientation remain at stake.

On the other hand, the very motif of “an end” need not be dismissed as misguided or naïve. It may retain conceptual value when understood as part of the epistemological convergence-structure reconstructed above. Pragmatism itself arose in response to the transformative dynamics of modernity (Tindall and Emori Shi 2013, pp. 821–845). Although it participated in the period’s characteristic forms of optimism, it also cultivated a distinctive sensitivity to what modernization overlooks, obscures, or undermines.

This sensitivity is especially evident in Dewey’s reflections on the emergence—and crisis—of democracy amid the transition from eighteenth-century feudalism to the industrial and mass society of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (cf. Dewey 1991). Dewey underscores the fundamental ambiguity of modernity: unprecedented technological and material progress coincides with intensified social stratification, disintegration, and individualization. It is therefore unsurprising that Derrida, to invoke him once more, counters Fukuyama’s thesis with a similarly ambivalent sensibility:

Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history ... let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact ... no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, never have so many men, women, and children been subjugated, starved, or exterminated on the earth. (Derrida 2006, p. 106)

Derrida’s formulation is undoubtedly polemical, and its empirical accuracy is contestable. Yet it expresses a form

of vigilance—a consciousness of ambiguity and historical fragility—that is also characteristic of pragmatist thought.

A conception of convergence grounded in intersubjective rationality and accompanied by melioristic agency similarly acknowledges the indeterminacy and contestability of every purported “end,” including Fukuyama’s.

*This work has been supported by Charles University Research Center program no. UNCE/24/SSH/026.*

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