

I will start by openly admitting that I was struggling with the candidate's work, both because of formal issues and its content. As for the formal issues, I cannot take very seriously candidate's comments that introduce his bibliography. He claims that due to the constant changes in web citation, he drops the appropriate URLs entirely, replacing them with a single word: *web*. Especially when contrasted with the word *print*, indicative, of all things, of print, this really looks awkward and, more significantly, is utterly uninformative. Also, transitions between chapters are often fairly random and a reader sometimes gets a feeling of them being glued together in a episode of an not particularly skillful collage making. This is especially striking in the case of the third chapter, *An instant A priori*, which given most of its content, should either be completely eliminated from the thesis or at best moved to an Appendix. The same abyss is found at the end of the 7th chapter (and it is my understanding that given his numbering, the candidate is aware of this gap) and once again the transition is at best *ad hoc*: "I have exhausted my thoughts on Wright, yet I need 70 more pages, so I will write on James and Peirce now a bit..." is how I read the rest of the thesis. Notes on James and Peirce are thus necessarily sketchy and stay in a sharp contrast to a very detailed look the candidate devoted to virtually each and every word Wright has put down in ink. None of this is fatal for the destiny of the dissertation, but it makes reading much more demanding and significantly more confusing than it should be. Being critical of the closing part of work doesn't mean that its very beginning is flawless. I couldn't help myself to realize that the actual dissertation only starts at p. 35, as most of what was indicated before are either irrelevant biographical notes or items with little relation to the core thesis of the submitted work.

Notes about the beginning make a bridge to a more substantial component of the candidate's work – its content. I take it that the main argument of the thesis is that early Pragmatist school, personalized by Wright, Peirce and James have based their theorizing on reading of Darwin and thinking his *Origin* through. The thesis attempts to distill what the author calls Darwin's Ontology and to demonstrate how it was initially introduced by Wright upon reading Darwin's main work, appropriated by Darwin himself as a very successful philosophical interpretation of his own theoretical and empirical work and then further developed in the Pragmatist school. Especially the first part of the argument, with the inspiration Wright takes from the *Origin* and his own speculations on its philosophical ramification is well argued and readily presented. Yet one has a feeling that given a very small number of publications that Wright has left behind, distilling his real intentions is often more than difficult and the candidate seem to find in Wright's writings more than is actually there. Thus despite the author's unceasing tendency to portray Wright as an adherent of

non-objectivist anti-Cartesian epistemology, the top quote on p. 41 seems to illustrate Wright's adherence to objectivism with full force. At other times, what Wright says seem to be simply untrue in light of our contemporary knowledge – as when he connect the desire to communicate with a desire to communicate the truth (p. 52). Machiavellian intelligence, which is, needless to say, fully Darwinian, teaches us otherwise – communication is quite often use to miscommunicate, to take advantage of exactly the belief that communication is truth-driven. Generally speaking, I am not particularly concerned with veracity of Wright's thoughts, but it puzzles me how he can be the contributor to Darwin's Ontology when some current Darwinian explanations are in direct opposition to his thoughts.

Speaking of Darwin's Ontology – though the thesis bears this title and it is apparently about this very topic, finding a precise full-fledged formulation of what it actually stands for is an impossible task and one that diminishes the value of the candidate's work greatly. While bits and suggestions of what it stands for are placed all over the place, its impossible to find a complete picture of this ontology in a single spot. What is worse, by about page 50 the author straightforwardly assumes that by now we all know what the subject matter is and provides no further clues on its actual content. So while we collect that Darwin's ontology (btw, why not Darwinian?) comprises of no eschatological progression in nature, entanglement of subject and object, holism and rejection of all traditional metaphysics, we are left puzzled whether this is a complete picture and why it deserve the title *ontology* if it doesn't answer many of the outstanding issues that trouble philosophers (what are values, prime numbers, relations, causality and zillions of others thigs). Indeed, Pragmatism later attempts to face many of these challenges and regardless whether one finds its answers satisfactory or not (I personally don't), the connection to Darwin at this stage is at best lost. Plus, and here is a crucial point, is it that Darwin's Ontology is present in all his works? Certainly I found very little of it in his last book *Expression of Emotions* which is full of utterly crazy metaphysical ideas on the attraction of opposites and similar non-starters.

So, let me therefore put forward a question to our candidate about how much is Darwin's Ontology indeed Darwin's own and why does he prefer to talk of Darwin's rather than Darwinian strategy. I have two more outstanding comments concerning the thesis. On one hand, there is a question of actual development of Darwin's Ontology. Undoubtedly, Wright was the one to make initial contacts across the ocean and actually disseminated Darwin's ideas among his circle. Yet he died relatively early on and the direct influence he exerts upon Peirce is fairly questionable. So the sole hereditary rights of the new ontology fall on the James' shoulders. However, a major bulk of James' work appears relatively late: *Principles* are published in 1890, *Will to Believe* in 1897 and *Varieties* only in 1901. While Wright might have planted a seed of Darwinism into James' head, the time gap is simply too large to assume that much of it is left intact by the time James works on his most

important philosophical contributions. To see a direct continuity between Darwin, Wright and James, more is needed than mentioning James' recollection of his heated discussions with Wright. So how does the candidate see the lineage of Darwin's Ontology in light of these chronological considerations?

Finally, the candidate's thesis, despite often warning against conflation between ontology and epistemology, seems to be committing the very same mistake. Darwin's Ontology, as the title clearly suggests, is primarily a thesis about how things are. Yet the text repeatedly (most strongly on p. 77) argues for epistemological implications of this thesis – epistemological subject should be aware that his position is influenced by how she came about to be the subject and this position is unthinkable without entanglement with what she is about to know. While such considerations are nowadays fairly common, there is some agreement that similar arguments play little role in actual epistemic practice. For being a knower requires none of this information. Instead, what one knows depends on her reliable epistemic mechanisms, coherence with other knowledge, or a proper warrant (depending on your preferred view of what constitutes knowledge). So my final question to the candidate would be to clarify his stance on relations between Darwin's Ontology and our position as knowing subjects, especially in light of the problem of whether accepting Darwin's Ontology forces us to change our epistemic practices.

Before closing, let me express two more objections to the course of the submitted work, which I, however, decided to ignore in my overall evaluation. The work is literally plagued with taking stance on an impossible number of side issues – being it the nature of aesthetics, memetics, free will, ethics and bulk of others. Most of them are treated with such a degree of superficiality that it makes the reader want to close the work at once and never come to it again. If there are any plans to pursue the work further, sticking with its central point and neglecting temptations to solve all philosophical problems would be more than welcome.

Also, while I understand that there is relatively limited secondary literature on Wright, there are many outstanding books on the history and roots of Pragmatism that the author simply neglects – e.g. Cornel West's *The American Evasion of Philosophy* and Paul Jerome Croce's *Science and Religion in the Era of William James* (the latter discusses Wright in some detail!). A serious scholarly work should not omit to comment on such renowned treatments of roughly the same issues.

Given that the author will answer my questions, I propose that his work satisfies the conditions put on doctoral dissertation and suggest to the committee that he should be awarded the PhD degree.

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