A Reflexivity Worry for Global Pragmatism

1 Introduction

Over the past few decades, Huw Price has developed and argued for a distinctive philosophical view: global pragmatism (see Price 2011, 2013, 2015, 2019 and Macarthur and Price 2007).[1] It has also been more recently defended by Amie Thomasson (2019).[2] If we adopt global pragmatism, metaphysics is radically transformed from a traditional investigation of the objects and properties existing in the external world into an exercise in linguistic anthropology (MacArthur and Price 2007).

Global pragmatists believe that no discourse has a representational function. In this paper, I develop a worry for global pragmatism: the Reflexivity Worry. The Reflexivity Worry identifies a particular discourse, which I call pragmatic discourse, as a discourse which problematizes global pragmatism. Even if the global pragmatist is right that all other discourses can be unproblematically accepted as non-representational, the global pragmatist will have trouble showing that pragmatic discourse, because of its special status in pragmatist projects, can be treated non-representationally. My worry does *not* show that global pragmatism is incoherent by the global pragmatist's own lights. But, it *does* uncover a hidden cost that comes with accepting global pragmatism. Therefore, consideration of the Reflexivity Worry is essential to proper assessment of the plausibility of global pragmatism. An imagined neutral party, someone agnostic about global pragmatism, should agree that the Reflexivity Worry amounts to a serious objection against the view. Whether one takes my Reflexivity Worry to constitute a defeater for the plausibility of global pragmatism, or just a puzzle to be addressed, it nevertheless does constitute a deep and puzzling *worry* for global pragmatism. I will present the worry in section 3, after discussing the more general No Exit phenomenon in section 2. I want to use the remainder of this introduction to describe global pragmatism.

Global pragmatism consists of two elements, one negative and one positive. The first element is a rejection of representationalism across the board, a global anti-representationalism. Representationalism about a discourse is the view that the discourse is in the business of rep-

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[1] Price often uses the terms "global expressivism" and "global pragmatism" interchangeably (cf. Price 2015). Capps (2018) argues that we should reserve "global pragmatism" for his own more radical picture and call Price's view "global expressivism." Price himself (2019, 133-134) notes that "expressivism" might be a slightly misleading label for his views, and explicitly suggests "pragmatism" as a replacement. I will follow Price's suggestion (and Thomasson's 2019 discussion) by using "global pragmatism."

[2] Other defenders include Brandom (2008), Williams (2010), and Gert (2018).

resenting or describing the world. For example, a representationalist about modal discourse believes the function of our modal discourse is to describe the modal portions of reality.

Global anti-representationalism is surely a radical thesis, but let's examine one motivating benefit of the view. Price often speaks of "placement problems" (see his 1997 and 2011). If one is a naturalist and thinks that modal, mathematical, moral, and mental discourses (just to name a few) are all in the business of representing the world, then one faces the immensely difficult problem of integrating modal, mathematical, moral, and mental facts and truthmakers into the scientific worldview. These are the placement problems: we must "place" these facts into the naturalistic worldview. Price (2011, 8-9) discusses familiar naturalist options regarding such problems: (i) Attempt to eliminate the facts, that is, argue that the discourse is systematically false since there are no referents for it (like error theorists do to morality, eliminativists do to the mental, and fictionalists do to mathematics). (ii) Reduce the problematic facts to a less-problematic naturalistic base (like Jackson's (1998) Canberra plan does, and as reductive physicalists and moral naturalists do). Or (iii): extend the remit of what counts as "natural" to include such facts (as the liberal naturalists McDowell (1994), Macarthur (2019) and Chalmers (1996) do). Price, however, thinks there is another option. Deny representationalism and the placement problems dissipate. Since these discourses are not in the representational business, there are no special sort of facts to place. If, for example, we are non-representationalists with regards to the modal, then modal discourse is not about accurately representing the modal facts, and hence we need not "place" any metaphysically-troubling modal truthmakers into our naturalistic metaphysics.

It is important to point out that Price thinks that representationalism is false *wholesale*. Representationalism is not just false for the discourses that give rise to the placement problems. Price believes that *no* bit of language is fully in the business of accurately representing the world.[3] So, for example, Price will have to reject that the function of table- and chair-talk is to describe elements of the world.

Global pragmatism also involves the promise of *positive*, non-descriptivist treatments for every linguistic discourse/practice. These non-descriptivist treatments involve developing functional-genealogical stories for the discourse in question. This aspect of global pragmatism, developing the right functional-genealogical stories, is what Price recommends in place of traditional philosophical activity.[4] Notice how the positive and negative elements of Price's pragmatism interact: if one denies representationalism about a discourse, one should say something about the non-representationalist – that is, expressive – function of it.[5]

Here it is useful to stress one way in which Price characterizes his view. He takes it to be a global version of what is more familiar when taken locally. Consider moral expressivism as originally developed by Stevenson (1937) and reformulated in Blackburn (1984) and Gibbard

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[3] I add the qualification "fully" here because of (2013, ch. 3) where Price argues that some discourses are more environmentally tracking than others. However, there is still no purely representational discourse. This tension will be clarified in section 4.1 of the present paper.

[4] Sometimes, I will call these stories "pragmatizing" stories or "pragmatizations."

[5] It does not strictly have to be *expressive*. But ascribing some non-descriptivist function is essential. I will continue to focus on expressivism as the relevant sort of non-descriptivism, since Price is apt to focus on expressivism.

(1990). This is what Price would term a local pragmatism or local expressivism. It claims that moral discourse is not in the business of representation because it is instead in the business of expressing attitudes of approbation and disapproval. This is an example of a functional-genealogical story about a discourse that avoids ascribing a representational function to the discourse. Moral expressivism is a merely local pragmatism in that it still maintains what Kraut (1990) calls the bifurcation thesis: the thesis that some declarative portions of natural language are descriptive/representational and some are expressive/non-representational. Price, of course, rejects the bifurcation thesis.

Putting the negative anti-representationalist thesis together with the positive non-descriptivist one, I can now present a very helpful definition, due to Blackburn, of what it means to be the relevant sort of pragmatist:

> You will be a pragmatist about an area of discourse if you pose a Carnapian external question: how does it come about that we go in for this kind of discourse and thought?... And then you offer an account of what we are up to in going in for this discourse, and the account eschews any use of the referring expressions of the discourse;... Instead the explanation proceeds by talking in different terms of what is done by so talking. It offers a revelatory genealogy or anthropology or even a just-so story about how this mode of talking and thinking and practising might come about, given in terms of the functions it serves. Notice that it does not offer a classical reduction, finding truth-makers in other terms. [2013, 75]

Price should find this account of pragmatism amenable. Price claims the pragmatist philosopher "doesn't ask about the role of causation itself in human life, but about the role and genealogy of the notion, term or concept 'causation'" (MacArthur and Price 2007, 94). If these functional investigations are successful, the placement problems would be recast as investigations into linguistic anthropology and "genealogy" (MacArthur and Price 2007).

Amie Thomasson agrees on the nature of pragmatism and the need for pragmatizing stories. She writes: if pragmatists "hope to get a different line of explanation that avoids some of the traditional metaphysician's problems, the explanation of the relevant sort of talk must say why employing a language or conceptual scheme like this is useful for us, and yet do so without appealing to the supposed objects we are talking about" (2019, 238).

This is global pragmatism then: a denial of representationalism for every discourse accompanied by the promise of expressive treatments for each discourse. What is the argument for it? It is an argument that takes as its starting point deflationism about truth and reference and concludes that if we are to be semantic deflationists, we must be global pragmatists. I cannot detail the argument here.[6] To do so would take me beyond the scope of the present paper.[7] My challenge concerns the tenability of the result: global pragmatism.

In the next section, I will explain what has been the called the "No Exit" worry for a pragmatist view of some discourse. The No Exit worry says that our functional-genealogical stories must refrain from employing terms of the discourse we are trying to offer a functional

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[6] It is offered in Price (2009a) and Macarthur and Price (2007).

[7] Various criticisms of the argument from semantic deflationism to global pragmatism can be found in Horwich (2013), Haug (2014), Knowles (2017), Haug (2018), and Simpson (2023).

explanation of. Simon Blackburn (2013) employs a version of the No Exit worry to argue that Price's global pragmatism is untenable.[8] I'll finish section two by discussing that argument of Blackburn's. In section three, I will present the problem I take to *really* give trouble for global pragmatism: the Reflexivity Worry. In section four, I'll address some potential replies, offered on behalf of the global pragmatist. I will conclude with some discussion of what options the pragmatist-inclined have in light of the Reflexivity Worry.

2 The No Exit Problem

2.1 The General No Exit Problem for Pragmatisms

Robert Kraut raises a potential problem for pragmatisms – No Exit.[9] The problem concerns the sort of functional-genealogical stories that the pragmatist must tell in pragmatizing some target discourse. The problem, perhaps it is better understood as a warning, is that these functional-genealogical stories must not use the resources of the target discourse. The aim of a pragmatist's functional-genealogical story is to show that the function of the discourse is something besides representing the entities mentioned in the discourse. But if the only functional-genealogical story a pragmatist can tell about x-discourse is one that *uses* (and not just mentions) x-talk, the pragmatist is in trouble.

The contemporary pragmatist, with sympathies aligned with the Carnap of "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" (1950), wants to say our continued use (or our abandoning) of a discourse ought not be an ontological matter.[10] That is, if we are pragmatists about a discourse, our justification for continuing to use or discontinuing use of the discourse ought not be a matter of ontological justification.[11] The pragmatist position on number-talk, for example, is that "we do not need to first do a metaphysical check, to see if there really are numbers, in order to be justified in introducing nominative number-talk" (Thomasson 2019, 239). The justification ought instead to be a matter of the discourse successfully allowing us to achieve our various goals.

The No Exit worry, fundamentally, is the worry that appealing to x's in our story for why we go in for x-talk implies that our justification for using x-talk is *hostage* to the existence of the x's. A pragmatist story about x-talk, says the No Exit worry, must refrain from using x-talk, because, if it does not, then the justification for x-talk is an ontological matter: we are justified in speaking in x-terms only when there are x's. And this is just an admittance of representationalism. It shows that the discourse is, partially at least, in the business of

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[8] In conversation with X, I've heard that Blackburn has recently sided with the global pragmatist. Nevertheless, I want to use the structure and discussion of Blackburn's charge against global pragmatism to develop my own.

[9] It seems to have been first observed, in published writing, as a potential problem for pragmatist views in Kraut (2007).

[10] Price discusses his Carnapian inspirations and the similarities between his own views and Carnap's in Price (2009b). Thomasson, also a defender of global pragmatism, discusses her pragmatist debts to Carnap in her (2015).

[11] This interpretation of the No Exit worry is primarily drawn from Thomasson (2019, 238-240).

representing x's.[12]

To get a clearer grip on what this general No Exit problem for pragmatisms amounts to, let me briefly discuss an example of a local pragmatism that may fall afoul of it. Take the causal expressivism that is sometimes attributed to Hume.[13] Hume's account of causation starts with some facts about the features and capacities of our mental life and concludes with a story of why we go in for the causal talk that we do, whether or not there are such things as causes out there in the world. However, and here is where Hume's view falls afoul of the No Exit problem: causal discourse is smuggled into the functional-genealogical story. Hume claims "A cause is an object precedent and contiguous to another, and so united with it, that the idea of the one *determines* the mind to form the idea of the other, and the impression of the one to form a more lively idea of the other" (*Treatise*, I, III, xiv, para. 31; my italics). Here Hume uses a causal term, "determines," in giving his functional-genealogical story. Since Hume, on my illustrative reading, takes ideas to "determine" or *cause* the mind to do something, he falls afoul of the No Exit problem. Hume's use of a term for a cause in his functional-genealogical story of causal discourse undercuts his claim to have dispensed with a representational understanding of causal-talk. For if Hume's pragmatizing story is right, we must still appeal to causal notions to explain the purpose of causal talk for creatures like us. This is beginning with metaphysics; it is admitting that the justification of causal-talk is dependent on the existence of causes. That, in turn, is an admittance that we use causal-talk *because there are causes*. And this, of course, is just representationalism about causal discourse: the claim that the function of causal-talk, or, at least, part of it, is to describe the causal portions of reality.

An astute pragmatist, wary of where this general No Exit concern might lead, could respond:

> Sure, sometimes we might use x-talk in the story for why we use x-talk. But that does not necessarily imply that we use the discourse *because there are x's*. And *that* claim, that the pragmatizing story implies we use x-talk because there are x's, is what must be the case if x-employing functional-geneaological stories of x-talk are to imply representationalism about x's.

This is a plausible first response. Perhaps a causal pragmatist could develop some intricate line of reasoning to show that, despite appealing to causal notions in his own pragmatization of *cause*, Hume's account remains ultimately non-representational. But it is up to the pragmatist to develop the details of this defense. A neutral party will not be convinced of the plausibility of this sort of causal pragmatism until those details are developed. I will say more about this line of reply in relation to my own Reflexivity Worry in section 3.

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[12] Price (2010) is sensitive to No Exit-like worries with regards to semantic-talk. There he says: "The expressivist's motto should be that vocabularies should be mentioned but not used—theorised about but not employed... As long as the expressivist keeps this in mind... there's no danger that her own casual deflationary use of the metalinguistic semantic vocabulary will lead her into the metaphysical trap..." This seems to express exactly the heart of No Exit worry.

[13] This illustration does not require that Hume actually held this position, but I will assume this for simplicity.

The upshot of the general form of No Exit worries for pragmatisms is that if one offers a functional-genealogical story of why we go in for a certain discourse which uses the elements of that target discourse, then one surrenders to representationalism. This is why a pragmatist story about some target discourse must not use elements of the target discourse in the pragmatizing story.

2.2   Blackburn's No Exit Problem for Global Pragmatism

Blackburn deploys this general No Exit schema in developing an argument against Price's global pragmatism. This Blackburnian No Exit problem begins with the observation that:

> A Humean genealogy of... values... talks of natural propensities to pain and pleasure, love and hate, and an ability to take up a common point of view with others.... A broadly Fregean genealogical story of arithmetic and then mathematics more generally would start by placing us in a world of kinds of objects with distinct identity conditions, such as tigers and eggs and warriors, and then a capacity to tally them.... Such genealogical stories start with a common-sense background of us, and a world of physical objects, with distinct locations... [2013, 78]

Functional-genealogical stories must use resources other than the resources of the target discourse and a common base stock of resources that pragmatists can turn to in telling pragmatizing stories about moral, mathematical, etc. discourse is the base of medium-sized dry good discourse. Blackburn continues:

> If we insisted... on posing the Carnapian external-sounding question: how come that we go in for descriptions of the world in terms of surrounding middle-sized dry goods?–then the answer is only going to be the flat-footed stutter or self-pat on the back: it is because we are indeed surrounded by middle sized dry goods. That answer, obviously, draws on the referential resources of the object language, and according to the account in front of us, amounts to a victory for representationalism over pragmatism. [2013, 78-79]

Blackburn is claiming that ordinary object discourse is the base discourse we must turn to in telling all of the various pragmatizing stories we want to tell. Perhaps we can tell the functional-genealogical story of moral discourse, for example, in terms of y's, but eventually our explanatory functional-genealogical stories about the purpose of y-talk must bottom out in ordinary object discourse. And, more importantly, we cannot, in turn, tell any pragmatizing story about ordinary object discourse without using ordinary object talk. Because no non-circular pragmatizing story (that is, a story which avoids the No Exit problem) for ordinary objects seems forthcoming, we are forced to claim that ordinary object discourse is useful *because there are ordinary objects*. For this reason, we must be representationalists about ordinary object discourse. According to Blackburn, medium-sized dry goods must be our bedrock: the objects denoted by the terms of the discourse at which our functional-genealogical and explanatory stories end and our spade is turned. (He also adds the discourse of the "coastal waters of science" as being in the same situation as ordinary object discourse.

This discourse consists of our talk of things like *energies* and *currents*.) There is, therefore, at least one locale for which we cannot be pragmatists, and thus we have a counter-example to global pragmatism. This is Blackburn's No Exit-based argument against global pragmatism.

Thomasson (2019), Price (2013), and Blackburn (2013) himself have all responded on behalf of the global pragmatist to this argument. I save discussion of their responses until section 4. I think that while Blackburn's problem for global pragmatism can probably be solved, my problem, though similar in some ways, is a more serious, different problem, in the sense that it cannot be addressed in ways Blackburn's problem can be addressed. I want to now identify what I take to be a deeper and more troubling instance of the No Exit phenomenon: the Reflexivity Worry.

3   The Reflexivity Worry

The Reflexivity Worry begins with the observation that when a functional-genealogical story is told about some discourse, pragmatists appeal to a certain family of notions. I will call the members of this family "pragmatic notions." Here are some: *social practice*, *linguistic practice*, *assertion*, *norm*, *function*, *genealogy*, *social utility*, *discourse*, etc.

Each pragmatizing story employs some of these notions and must do so by necessity. If it did not it would not be a functional-genealogical story, and the pragmatist must develop a functional-genealogical story about a given discourse in order to be pragmatist about it. Take the pragmatizing story of modal discourse for example. This story will contain elements like: "The linguistic practice of saying 'it is possible that' has as its purpose...", "The function of modal talk is to promote social utility in such and such ways", etc. This *just is* what it is to tell pragmatizing stories. Appealing to some of the pragmatic notions is necessary to carry out the pragmatist project for any discourse.

The Reflexivity Worry can now be presented: call the discourse which employs the pragmatic notions 'pragmatic discourse.' No Exit tells us we must seek resources outside of the target discourse in telling the functional-genealogical story about it. Otherwise, the pragmatizing story is not really a pragmatizing story, it is a representationalist one. Now, what if our target discourse was pragmatic discourse? We could not tell this functional-genealogical story without falling into pragmatic-talk in virtue of what functional-genealogical stories *are*. As stated above: appealing to some of the pragmatic notions is necessary to carry out the pragmatizing project for any discourse. Pragmatic discourse is a discourse we must pragmatize if we are to be *global* pragmatists. After all, global pragmatism is only true if every single discourse is pragmatizable, at least in principle.

Perhaps each functional-genealogical story employs just one core pragmatic notion. *Function/purpose* seem like a promising candidate for a pragmatic notion that is probably used in every functional-genealogical story. I have trouble imagining what a story about the non-representational *function* or *purpose* of a discourse is which doesn't use *function* or *purpose*. Or perhaps it is the case that each functional-genealogical story just has to use some pragmatic notion or other. Either way, my Reflexivity Worry should go through.[14]

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[14] I'll discuss whether the worry does in fact go through on this second assumption (the assumption that we only need to use some pragmatic notion or other in our pragmatizing

For an illustrative example of how functional-genealogical stories for pragmatic notions must use pragmatic notions, it is worth considering what a just-so functional-genealogical story for function-talk might look like. Presumably, it would start with a historical conjecture on why we came up with any notion of *function* in the first place. Perhaps we initially came to speak of functions in order to teach others what to do with some artifact. The first to use the atlatl (a spear-throwing device used during the Upper Paleolithic) needed to communicate to inquisitive minds what to do with the thing. Perhaps this is the original *function* or *purpose* of function-talk: to communicate to other people what to do with certain human artifacts. But notice my use of *function/purpose* here: I do not see how we can tell this story without employing some pragmatic notion.

Let us continue with the just-so story nonetheless. As language and thought matured, function-talk became more widely applicable. We began to speak of the function of biological organs, the religious function of prayer, the function of *social practices* like marriage. The functions of social practices is particularly relevant to the pragmatist. What is the non-representationalist function of social function-talk?

One plausible suggestion has recently been made by Showler (2021), drawing on Bernard Williams (2002): the *function* of discussing the function of social practices is to vindicate, debunk, or reform those social practices.[15] But what is it to vindicate or debunk a social practice? It is to say, in the case of vindication, that the practice has positive *social utility* and should continue, or in the case of debunking, that the practice is no longer (or never was) beneficial for *social utility* and should therefore end. Notice, though, that endorsing this account of this discourse involves the *use* of pragmatic notions such as *practice*, *social utility*, and once again, *function*. My claim is that there will always be some residual pragmatic notion used at some point in giving these stories. And so the global pragmatist has no account of the non-representational function of these pragmatic notions that will avoid the Reflexivity Worry.

Since we cannot tell the functional-genealogical story for pragmatic-talk without employing the pragmatic notions, on the account of the No Exit problem outlined above, it seems that we use the pragmatic notions because *there are those things the pragmatic notions represent*: functions, social practices, social utilities, etc. A neutral party would be reasonable in thinking that pragmatic discourse is representational on these grounds until proven otherwise by the pragmatist. To see global pragmatism as a viable position, our imagined neutral party must be able see that pragmatic discourse is pragmatizable (at least, in principle). But it is not plausible to think pragmatic discourse is pragmatizable until pragmatists have shown that despite offending the Reflexivity Worry, pragmatic discourse is still ultimately somehow non-representational. The Reflexivity Worry shows that if global pragmatism is to be seen as plausibly tenable, pragmatists owe us a functional-genealogical story about pragmatic discourse that explains how exactly, despite the problematic circularity, it is still ultimately non-representational in nature.

Barring that promised illustration then, there is then at least one discourse, pragmatic discourse, that we seemingly can't pragmatize, and thus there is at least one discourse which

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stories) in section 4.2.

[15] Showler also draws on Craig (1990) and (2007). Cf. Queloz (2021) for a book-length treatment of pragmatic genealogies.

problematizes global pragmatism. Perhaps our bedrock should be the objects corresponding to the pragmatic notions (societies, languages, functions, etc.) in addition to, or at least in lieu of, medium-sized dry goods. If the Reflexivity Worry is right, we should not share Blackburn's (2013) relatively optimistic view that in every case *but* the medium-sized dry goods case, "there is every prospect of bracketing the existence [of the relevant entities] and coming to understand why we go in for the mode of thought in question in other terms. In other words, there is every prospect of giving an anthropology or genealogy which is itself free of the commitments in question" (2013, 83). The pragmatic notions themselves are another place where we should be pessimistic about achieving No Exit-avoiding pragmatizing stories. I now want to address some potential responses offered on behalf of the global pragmatist.

4 Potential Responses

The following responses offered on behalf of the global pragmatist are variants of Thomasson's, Price's, and Blackburn's responses to Blackburn's own No Exit-inspired challenge for global pragmatism. I want to show that even if their responses to Blackburn work, they do not work for the Reflexivity Worry. Thomasson's response will be presented first as it is also a way of developing the suggestions, to be presented afterward, of both Blackburn and Price.

4.1 Thomasson's Response

Thomasson's (2019) paper, "What Can Global Pragmatists Say About Ordinary Objects," is devoted to answering Blackburn's No Exit challenge. Thomasson makes an admirable clarifying move by disambiguating the functional-genealogical project, specifically regarding ordinary object discourse:

> When we ask why we go in for descriptions of the world in terms of surrounding middle-sized dry goods, we could be asking this with at least three different contrasts in mind:
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> 1. Why do we go in for descriptions of middle-sized dry goods, as opposed to not employing descriptive modes of speech at all?
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> 2. Why do we go in for descriptions in terms of, say, tables and trees, as opposed to descriptions, say, in terms of dragons and phlogiston?
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> 3. Why do we go in for descriptions in terms of tables and trees, as opposed to in terms of particles arranged table-wise, in terms of its tabling here, or in terms of sequenced temporal parts rather than enduring objects – that is, why do we employ a thing-language instead of employing some ontologically alternative language? [2019, 242]

Thomasson says "once the question is clarified in this way, I think that whichever way we read the demand for explanation, the pragmatist has an available line of response..." (ibid.). She says the pragmatist has a ready-made answer to disambiguation 1: adopt Brandom's

(1994) account of the general function of assertive talk. On this picture, while our ordinary object discourse *appears* descriptive, it still is ultimately expressive. I do not want to get into the details of Brandom's account of assertion here because I want to grant that this saves the pragmatist regarding disambiguation 1.

Let's move to question 2. Thomasson claims that there is an important difference that a pragmatist can appeal to, between table and tree discourse on the one hand, and dragon- and phlogiston-talk on the other. "[T]he first set of concepts (unlike the second) turns out to be successful in prediction, explanation, navigation; to not be based on imaginings, misperceptions, and other empirical mistakes" (2019, 245). It seems that the function of ordinary object discourse is "prediction, explanation, and navigation," and table- and tree-talk succeeds at those functions, while dragon and phlogiston discourse do not. But, this should raise the question: what does it mean to say that a discourse's function is to predict, but not to represent, or to navigate, but not to represent?

Thomasson does not address this question explicitly, but I would like to address it as it likely occurs to the reader. I have a pragmatist-friendly reply. The suggestion is to adopt a move that Thomasson and Price do in fact adopt, just in a different context. To do so I need to go into a digression on Price's separation of e- and i-representation. Price wants to distinguish between "two distinct focii" (2013, 36) of representation which he thinks have tra-ditionally been packaged together. E-representation is the "environment-tracking paradigm of representation" (ibid.), prototypically instantiated in co-varying indicatory systems, like a fuel gauge. As for i-representation: "something counts as a [i]-representation in virtue of its position or role in some cognitive or inferential architecture. Here it is an *internal* role of some kind – perhaps causal-functional, perhaps logico-inferential, perhaps computational – that takes the lead" (ibid., italics in the original). Price believes that these notions of representation are actualized in our various discourses.

This should seem striking. Price has been presented, and presents himself, as an *enemy* of representationalism. But now, it seems that Price is endorsing the thesis that our lan-guage involves *two* forms of representation! To understand how Price maintains the sort of global pragmatism presently at issue, while also believing that our language involves both sorts of representation, we should examine two caveats Price adds to this view. First, Price claims that "although some vocabularies are more in the e-representational, e-world-tracking business than others, there are no pure cases" (2013, 63). That is, there is no pure e-representation, and thus there is no discourse for which we should accept pure representa-tionalism. The second important caveat is contained here:

> [A]t least by the time we get to language there isn't any useful external notion, *of a semantic kind* – in other words, no useful, general, notion of relations that words and sentences bear to the external world, that we might identify with truth and reference. [ibid., 37]

Some portions of our discourses may have a function that involves them covarying with aspects of the environment. But, that does not imply that any portion of any discourse solely (or purely) has that purpose (caveat 1). Moreover, it does not imply that there is any scientifically useful notion of *truth* and *reference* applicable to any discourses (caveat 2). There may be some other more pragmatic use for "reference" or "truth" discourse (see Price (2003)). But, there is no notion of *truth* and *reference* of ultimate use in semantics.

Enough of caveats on digressions on friendly suggestions. Let's return to Thomasson, plugging in this helpful notion of e-representation to keep any representationalism from seeping in. Thomasson has said, with regards to disambiguation 2:

> [T]he first set of concepts [tables, chairs, etc.] (unlike the second [dragons, etc.]) turns out to be successful in prediction, explanation, navigation; to not be based on imaginings, misperceptions, or other empirical mistakes. [245]

One set of notions is successful in helping us do some things we do. Dragon-talk is not. These things that table- and chair-talk are more useful for involve the more e-representational side of representation, but given the caveats introduced above, all this can still be said by the global pragmatist. Notice the functional talk here: both in the Thomasson quote and in Price's account of e- vs. i-representation, it is the *function* of some aspects of language to be more e-tracking than others. It is the navigational *function* of ordinary object discourse that is better served by talking of trees than dragons. This will be important soon as I return to the Reflexivity Worry.

Let's move to disambiguation 3: "Why do we go in for descriptions in terms of tables and trees, as opposed to in terms of particles arranged table-wise... – that is, why do we employ a thing-language instead of employing some ontologically alternative language?" (2019, 242). This is a particularly pressing question for the pragmatist, because there is a lot of intuitive pressure to answer this question with what Blackburn calls a 'stutter': "we use chair-talk instead of some sort of mereological-nihilistic alternative because *there are chairs.*"

In response, Thomasson claims that we can explain why we talk of chairs instead of particles-arranged-chair-wise in terms of the evolutionary advantages conferred to us in doing so. She adds:

> Perhaps the case could be made that it is more cognitively efficient for creatures like us than simply... individuating the world in terms of sequenced temporal parts, or tracking particles and ways they are arranged. Plausibly, it fits better with the constraints of our evolved perceptual system (since we can't perceive particles). [250]

I think this is a good response to the challenge Thomasson is addressing. But, I want to highlight here what was also highlighted in her response to disambiguation 2: the use of pragmatic and functional talk. Thomasson discusses how, because we have evolved to conceptualize the world according to the object concepts discussed by Carey (2009) and Spelke (1990), table discourse is more "efficient" (250), "useful" (257), and "user-friendly" (255) for "creatures like us" (257). Thomasson says "[a]ll of this can be understood in *perfectly pragmatic terms* that simply appeal to that fact that having" ordinary object concepts compared to ontological alternative concepts "is very *useful* to us" (249, first use of emphasis added). All of the quoted or italicized elements in the previous few sentences I take to be members of pragmatic discourse.

Thomasson's strategy for escaping Blackburn's No Exit worry seems promising. The global pragmatist has something non-circular to say under any disambiguation of the functional-genealogical project as applied to ordinary object discourse. Perhaps we do not need to

adopt medium-sized dry goods as our bedrock. But, as I've shown, everything the global pragmatist can say here in their defense relies on explaining the various *functions* of ordinary object discourse in *functional-genealogical* terms. For this reason, I cannot see how a Thomasson* could use a similar strategy (with any similar disambiguation) to answer the Reflexivity Worry. Thomasson's discussion of evolutionary psychology and the discussion of bio-functional notions contained within her answer to the third disambiguation are acceptable when trying to develop an answer to *Blackburn's* No Exit, but they cannot help for my Reflexivity Worry. One still has to speak of *function*, even if prefaced with the adjective "biological." One is still using *function* and efficiency-talk. These are elements of pragmatic discourse. So while Thomasson's response might work for ordinary object discourse, it will not work for pragmatic discourse. Thus the Reflexivity Worry stands.

4.2 Rolling Pragmatism?

Rolling pragmatism is Blackburn's suggestion for defending global pragmatism from his own version of the No Exit challenge. He does not ultimately endorse it, but he suggests it is the best route for the global pragmatist to take in response to his challenge. I think that Thomasson's suggestion regarding disambiguation 3 can be seen as a way of adopting rolling pragmatism. This will become clear soon.

The idea of rolling pragmatism is this:

> Whenever an area of discourse becomes a target for philosophical theory... step aside to a place which, at least for the moment, seems not so worrisome, and essay a pragmatic story about the utility of the target way of thought and talk, given an environment composed in the other, less demanding way. A rolling pragmatism would differ from a foundational pragmatism in that there would be no objection to patching it together from piecemeal, and together potentially circular, explanatory projects. [Blackburn 2013, 80-81]

It seems that, for Blackburn, all we need for a specific pragmatizing story to avoid falling afoul of No Exit is to employ the resources of *just one* other discourse that's not currently under question. An explanatory circle of *two* discourses is big enough to avoid his No Exit challenge.

But, rolling pragmatism will not save the global pragmatist from the Reflexivity Worry. We cannot even employ the resources of a single alternative discourse in pragmatizing pragmatic discourse. It is the nature of the functional-genealogical project that we must use pragmatic discourse in pragmatizing any discourse, including pragmatic discourse. There is no other discourse to which we can turn. This is where Thomasson's suggestions regarding disambiguation 3 come back into play. I take Thomasson's suggestion there as a way of "going rolling" when ordinary object discourse is the target discourse. Thomasson asks us to look to evolutionary biology to tell the story of why we go in for table-talk instead of particles-arranged-table-wise-talk. That is, she looks to a discourse not currently under fire, evolutionary biology, to safely pragmatize ordinary object discourse. However, this move is unavailable here. The discourse under question is itself pragmatic discourse. And because of the nature of functional-genealogical stories, the best story we'll be able to tell, even with the resources of evolutionary biology, still invokes functional and genealogical notions.

A *reduction* of *function simpliciter* to something biological would not be a pragmatizing story. The global pragmatist strategy forces the pragmatist to find a functional-genealogical story for each discourse: a reduction will not do. Blackburn said this above in laying out what the pragmatist is up to: "Notice that it does not offer a classical reduction, finding truth-makers in other terms" (2013, 75). To seek a reduction is to adopt the reductive naturalist strategy (in the style of Frank Jackson, et. al.) with regards to placement problems; the pragmatist strategy seeks to dissipate the need for placement from the start, so a reduction will not work.

But what about a different sort of rolling pragmatist strategy?[16] We cannot help but appeal to the pragmatic notions in offering a pragmatizing story and therefore cannot turn to something like evolutionary biology in an attempt to pragmatize pragmatic discourse. But, perhaps, we can use some pragmatic notions to safely pragmatize *other* pragmatic notions.

Let us assume that there is no core pragmatic notion, that is, let us assume there is no notion that is necessarily used in every functional-genealogical story. As I noted in section three, this is a substantial and undersupported assumption. But given the assumption, we can grant, for example, that we can pragmatize *function* in terms of *social utility*, and *social utility* in terms of *social practice*. The present suggestion is that there is some circle of pragmatizations available between the different elements of pragmatic discourse. This would be a sort of intra-mural pragmatizing effort. We are pragmatizing one notion within pragmatic discourse in terms of another notion within pragmatic discourse (which, in turn, might be pragmatized in terms of a third pragmatic notion, etc.). We can call this suggestion: *intra*-pragmatic-discourse rolling pragmatism (whereas the Thomassonian suggestion above can be understood as *extra*-discourse rolling pragmatism). Let me explain, via a discussion of 'legitimation,' or vindication, why this intra-pragmatic-discourse rolling pragmatism will not work.

The pragmatic notions, for the pragmatist, are, partially at least, in the legitimation business. Offering a vindicatory or legitimating pragmatizing story for a discourse involves showing how the discourse serves well a goal of ours; a legitimation involves the claim that the practice succeeds at getting certain goods. The discourse is legitimated via a certain kind of pragmatizing story which identifies the discourse's non-representational role and shows how the discourse helps us succeed at that goal. It also involves an explanation of why that practice should continue in its current form.

Importantly, the pragmatic notions themselves must be legitimated. As I've shown above, the pragmatic notions are necessary to tell any pragmatizing story whatsoever. But in order to do any of this work, in order to be coherently employed in any pragmatizing story whatsoever, the pragmatic notions have to be in good standing. They have to be vindicated themselves. It is incoherent to debunk the pragmatic notions. Necessarily, because of what pragmatizing stories (of which debunking stories are a type) *are*, you would have to employ the pragmatic notions to debunk the pragmatic notions. The pragmatic notions must be vindicated for any pragmatism to be a coherent position.

Now, imagine what intra-pragmatic-discourse rolling pragmatism would have to look like. One pragmatic notion, call it P_2 would have to be employed to pragmatize another,

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[16] The discussion here is relevant to my suggestion in section three that my Reflexivity Worry goes through whether there is a core pragmatic notion or not.

P_1. Because the pragmatic notions must be legitimated and because a legitimating story involves the claim that the practice succeeds at achieving certain goods, the pragmatization of P_1 needs to say something like: "P_1 is legitimate because it has social utility." This would be a case where P_2 is *social utility*. But notice what this pragmatization is doing. It is saying P_1 is worth continuing to employ because it has some feature. *Prima face*, this is a straightforwardly *descriptive* thesis about P_1 and the features that it has. A natural reading of what is occurring here is that the explanatory story about why P_1 is legitimate is one that genuinely captures a feature involving social utility. *Prima facie*, whenever you use a notion to legitimize another notion, the one that you're using must have a representational role *because* it must be delivering a genuinely descriptive account of what is good (worth keeping) about the target notion. This *prima facie* representationalist commitment, is, of course, only *prima facie*. The *prima facie* representationalist commitment can be defeated if P_2 is, in turn, successfully legitimated in pragmatist fashion. But this is not possible in the case of intra-pragmatic-discourse rolling pragmatism.

If the person giving the legitimation of P_1 in terms of P_2 was a representationalist about P_2-talk, then they could endorse the claim that the pragmatization given in terms of P_2 successfully applies to this discourse and there would be no further issues. They would accept the *prima facie* representationalism regarding P_2. This is why the argument I'm presenting here is not an argument against moderate pragmatism; it only applies to global pragmatism. We know the *global* pragmatist does not want to be a representationalist about P_2 because they don't want to be representationalists about any talk. For the global pragmatist, the first story, the pragmatizing story offered for P_1, must be suspended until P_2 is safely pragmatized. The pragmatization of P_1 cannot be endorsed by the global pragmatist until a nonrepresentational reading of P_2 is established. And thus we cannot use P_1 in that further story for P_2, since the very legitimacy of P_1 is still in question. And we cannot use P_2 to legitimate P_2, because that would be a clear-cut case of falling afoul of the Reflexivity Worry. We must therefore look outside of P_1 and P_2 to ultimately legitimate P_1 via a legitimation of P_2. We would thus need to bring in a P_3. This third pragmatic notion, P_3, must be legitimated in terms of some fourth pragmatic notion, and so on. The problematic regress should now be clear. The positive normative status (legitimacy) of the first pragmatic notion is offloaded to the next. The burden will accumulate, but never pay off.

This discussion of rolling pragmatism has become intricate, so let me now summarize this subsection. The extra-mural sort of rolling pragmatist strategy (the sort embodied by Thomasson's biological suggestions) may succeed at blocking Blackburn's original No Exit worry from going through. But, it will not work to block the Reflexivity Worry. This extra-discourse rolling pragmatist strategy will not work for the same reason the Reflexivity Worry gets its force to begin with: by virtue of what functional-genealogical stories *are* one cannot tell a functional-genealogical story about pragmatic discourse without relying on pragmatic discourse. A circle of two different discourses might be enough to stop Blackburn's version of No Exit from problematizing global pragmatism. But, with the Reflexivity Worry, we cannot move to another currently safe discourse. The discourse we must use in any functional-genealogical story is exactly what is at issue.

With Blackburn's original No Exit worry, there was no need to examine the plausibility of the intra-mural sort of rolling pragmatist strategy suggested above. There is only pressure to examine its plausibility after the Reflexivity Worry is raised as the Reflexivity Worry points

out a discourse whose constitutive notions *must* be employed in the functional-genealogical story of itself. But, after close examination of intra-pragmatic-discourse rolling pragmatism, which says we can preserve global pragmatism by pragmatizing one pragmatic notion in terms of another, it can be seen that it will not work against the Reflexivity Worry either. This is because, even after granting the assumption that function-talk is non-essential to every functional-geneaological story, we must show that the pragmatic notions can legitimate themselves one by one. But, to vindicate one pragmatic notion in terms of another, the one used in the vindication must already be vindicated itself. In this situation, we face a regress of legitimation and therefore intra-pragmatic-discourse rolling pragmatism is not a viable option.

With both the intra- and extra-discourse rolling pragmatism options exhausted, we should conclude that rolling pragmatism may successfully thwart Blackburn's original worry, but it will not save global pragmatism from the Reflexivity Worry.

4.3   Price's Response

Price's (2013, 155-160) response to Blackburn begins with his presentation of Kraut and Blackburn on the No Exit problem. He then asks: "[W]hy, precisely, should a global pragmatism need an exit, of the kind Blackburn and Kraut have in mind?" He adds:

> The view that it does so seems at least in part to be a legacy of the cases with which the expressivist began, such as that of ethics. There, it was important that the distinctive ontology of the ethical viewpoint – values, moral properties and the like – not be in view, from the pragmatist's external standpoint... At least to the extent that the ethical conundrums arise from a commitment to naturalism, the case of science is different. There isn't a placement problem for scientific language, at least at first pass. So there isn't any pressure to escape to a theoretical standpoint from which one doesn't need to mention such things. [ibid., 157-158]

I reconstruct Price as follows: No Exit-esque thoughts grew out of the need for expressivist stories about ethics to not appeal to distinctly moral ontology. Then Price turns to science. Blackburn has put science (at least the "coastal waters" of it (2013, 79)) in the same boat as ordinary objects. Both ordinary object discourse and discourse concerning the coastal waters of science, according to Blackburn, seem to be needed to pragmatize other discourses yet at the same time not pragmatizable themselves without reference to their own constituent notions. Price focuses on Blackburn's remarks on the coastal waters of science (*energies* and *currents*) here, but Price's response should apply equally to ordinary object discourse. Price says because there is no placement problem for scientific language (or for ordinary object discourse), we do not need an escape to a "theoretical standpoint from which one doesn't need to mention such things." Generalizing, Price is claiming that the No Exit worry does not apply to discourses that don't give rise to naturalistic placement problems. Discourses that are already part of the naturalistic world-view, discourses like ordinary object discourse, for example, can be given a pragmatizing story which employs ordinary object talk. Only discourses, like moral or mathematical discourses, which lead to anxieties over placement into

the contemporary scientific worldview need to be pragmatized in ways that don't appeal to the resources of the discourse in question.

Here is a dilemma. Either pragmatic discourse is more like moral discourse in being not naturalistically acceptable enough, or pragmatic discourse is naturalistically acceptable, like ordinary object discourse is, and therefore, on Price's line of reasoning, not in need of being pragmatized in a No-Exit-avoiding way. I want to show that if Price takes the first horn, he quickly and readily admits pragmatic discourse needs non-circular pragmatization and thus this response to Blackburn will not be a response to the Reflexivity Worry. Assuming then that Price will take the second horn, I will argue, contra Price, that discourses *are* in need of non-circular pragmatization even if they are acceptable from the naturalistic perspective. And thus the Reflexivity Worry will stand on this second horn too.

Plausibly, pragmatic discourse is more akin to moral discourse than ordinary object discourse. For example, *function* seems considerably less mundane than *chair*, and *positive social utility* is a lot more like *morally good* than *table*. To be fair, the pragmatic notions are not usually under fire for lack of naturalistic bona fides in the way moral properties often are. But, many pragmatic notions are normatively loaded in ways that make them seem much more akin to the naturalistically worrying elements of moral discourse than not. If what I've said above on pragmatic legitimation (and debunking) are right, then it is essential and central to many of these notions that they are normatively loaded. In which case, pragmatic discourse is naturalistically problematic in a similar way as moral discourse is, and therefore it is the type of discourse that *does* in fact need pragmatizing, in a No Exit-avoiding way on Price's own reasoning. If the Pricean takes this horn and claims pragmatic discourse is more like moral discourse than ordinary object discourse, the Reflexivity Worry stands.

My reasoning regarding this first horn is rather straightforward and obvious. For that reason, I think Price would instead want to adopt this second horn: claiming that pragmatic discourse, its apparent similarities to moral discourse aside, is actually naturalistically acceptable. After all, or so this response goes, biology makes use of functions and many of the notions belonging to pragmatic discourse are naturalistically-acceptable elements or analogues of notions employed in the social sciences. Adopting this second horn is to adopt the sort of perspectivalism discussed in Price (2011) and (2013). With this kind of perspectivalism adopted, Price can just claim that pragmatic discourse is a discourse that he, from his naturalist perspective, is fine with. Pragmatic discourse belongs to a perspective that he already occupies and is starting from, and thus it does not produce placement problems.

I do not think this response is ultimately successful. Why should we agree with Price that discourses that do not lead to naturalistic placement problems need not be pragmatized in ways that avoid the No Exit problem? Or, in other words, why agree that discourses that are kosher from the particular naturalistic perspective Price starts with are exempt from needing to be genuinely pragmatized (while also remaining a pragmatist with regards to them)? Certainly, avoiding naturalistic placement problems is one *motivation* for going pragmatist. But it does not follow that the *only* discourses which need to have their (supposed) non-representational status demonstrated are the naturalistically problematic ones.

If some discourse is claimed to be non-representational in function, then we should ask: what is its function? If its function can only be explained in ways that *use* (and not just mention) the target notions of the discourse itself, then we should be suspicious of the claim that the discourse is non-representational. The function of this x-discourse seems to be

hostage to the existence of the x's. If, at this point, the global pragmatist responds to our suspicions with: "The x's are naturalistically-acceptable so there's no problem with my functional story being circular", then we should not be satisfied. Whether a discourse's subject matter produces placement anxieties in the naturalistically-inclined is tangential to the question of whether a non-circular functional-genealogical story of the discourse can be given. And we have no reason to think that a discourse is non-representational until either (i) a non-circular functional-genealogical story is given or (ii) it is shown in detail how, despite offending No Exit, the discourse is nevertheless non-representational. Concerns about metaphysical status are not germane to this worry about representationality and circularity. That a discourse is non-representational in function is a substantial semantic thesis that a neutral party would want to see evidence for. This evidence could take the form of a non-circular pragmatization, but if no non-circular pragmatization is forthcoming, we should not be convinced that a non-representational view of the discourse is reasonable, whether or not we have concerns about developing a naturalistic worldview.

Consider ordinary objects. Ordinary objects are naturalistically-acceptable. But a neutral party would not think that ordinary object discourse is plausibly non-representational unless either (i) a No Exit-avoiding story about the discourse was developed or (ii) the details, of how, despite falling afoul of No Exit, ordinary-object-talk is nevertheless non-representational are developed. Luckily, as Thomasson has shown us, (i) can probably be accomplished. But, the analogue of (i) is not possible with pragmatic discourse because of the Reflexivity Worry. So the global pragmatist must achieve (ii). And this is exactly my point. The burden of proof falls on the global pragmatist to show that pragmatic discourse is non-representational despite its inherently circular pragmatization.

The Pricean can surely fall back on the claim that *they* are fine with the pragmatic notions from their perspective, and thus pragmatic discourse need not be pragmatized in No Exit-avoiding ways for them to remain consistent global pragmatists. But I am not arguing for the view that global pragmatism is incoherent by the global pragmatist's own lights. I am arguing that the Reflexivity Worry constitutes a serious objection to global pragmatism from a neutral party's point-of-view. Such a neutral party might not share the particular perspective that the Pricean starts from. Thus, the Pricean's retreat to claiming the pragmatic notions are kosher from their own perspective is not the buck-stopper it is intended to be. Until the neutral party has been given a successful pragmatization of pragmatic discourse (or at least shown that pragmatic discourse is pragmatizable in principle), global pragmatism should not be seen as a theoretically viable option. Therefore, even if pragmatic discourse is naturalistically-acceptable, a non-reflexive pragmatization is needed. I submit then that this part of Price's response to Blackburn will gain no traction against the Reflexivity Worry, even on this second horn.

I do not see how these sort of Pricean responses will save the global pragmatist from the Reflexivity Worry. We need to pragmatize pragmatic discourse and there does not seem to be a way in which we can do so that avoids appealing to the pragmatic notions themselves.

5 Conclusion

We began with a description of global pragmatism: the global pragmatist denies that any discourse is purely representational and also denies that *truth* and *reference* belong to the "theoretical ontology of a mature science of human linguistic behaviour" (Price 2009a, 113). Blackburn (2013) employs the No Exit worry-schema to develop an argument against global pragmatism, but Thomasson, Price, and Blackburn himself have offered promising answers to this original form of the No Exit challenge. However, I've developed a nearby challenge – the Reflexivity Worry: how can we avoid use of pragmatic notions in telling a functional-genealogical story of pragmatic discourse? No forseeable variant of Thomasson's, Blackburn's, or Price's responses to Blackburn's version of the No Exit challenge work for the Reflexivity Worry. Pragmatic-talk is inescapable. It is *function* and the other pragmatic notions that the pragmatist should treat as their bedrock, in addition to, or perhaps in lieu of, ordinary object and basic scientific notions.

This may seem strange: *function* and *discourse* are the bedrock notions of our explanatory starting point, not necessarily *tables* and *chairs*. But this suggestion should not seem so strange when one thinks about the nature of the pragmatist project: it would be stranger to think our fundamental explanatory notions would be anything else. What is problematic for the global pragmatist is not that *this* is the starting point, it is instead that there is a starting point at all.

If the Reflexivity Worry is right as presented, then we cannot easily maintain pragmatism about the pragmatic discourse *locale*, and thus pragmatism across the board should not seem plausibly tenable to any neutral party. Of course, the global pragmatist may have a way of responding to the Reflexivity Worry. I don't think that I've conclusively shown global pragmatism to be incoherent or anything of that sort. But barring the development of a satisfactory response on global pragmatism's behalf,[17] we should consider the upshots with global pragmatism off the table. One upshot is that some fault should be identifiable in the argument intended to establish global pragmatism from semantic deflationism. I think there is one, but that is a discussion for another time.

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[17] Specifically, a response that shows pragmatic discourse is non-representational despite its inherent need to be used in the pragmatization of itself.

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