PRAGMATISM AS A PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

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> When I gave the doctrine of pragmatism the name it bears, – and a doctrine of vital significance it is, – I derived the name by which I christened it from *pragma*, – behaviour – in order that it should be understood that the doctrine is that the only real significance of a general term lies in the general behaviour which it implies.
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> Charles S. Peirce, May 1912 cited by Eisele (1987:95).[1]

Introduction: Action ahead of knowledge on pragmatism's philosophical agenda

Although the very founder of the pragmatic movement is adamant that this philosophy is inherently related to action – or behaviour as Peirce laconically says here – philosophers have been curiously reluctant to recognize this. Of course one finds in the literature comments about how pragmatists often talk about action, and some commentators feel that they talk about it too often, at the expense of traditional philosophical problems. To see this is not yet, however, to see the essential pragmatist point; in what sense they talk about action. Their usage of this term and the underlying idea differ from what is customary in other philosophical approaches. Pragmatism namely approaches *all* theoretical and philosophical problems as problems that in final analysis are related to action.

In mainstream philosophy, both in its positivist-analytic and phenomenological versions, action is a contingent empirical phenomenon demanding an explanation. In pragmatism, action is a universal phenomenon which in itself begs no explanation but rather makes the starting point for explanations. For pragmatism,

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[1] In the original the Greek term "*pragma*" is in Greek letters.

action thus is not anything contingent; it rather is taken as "the way in which human beings exist in the world," as goes a happy phrase by Hans Joas, one of today's self-avowedly pragmatist social scientists.[2] The reason why pragmatism takes action to be human beings' (and also other living beings') natural way to be in the world stems from its character as the first post-Darwinian philosophy. As is widely known, ever since Philip Wiener (1949), at least, the context where pragmatism arose was discussion about the philosophical implications of Darwinian evolutionism. It is also established knowledge that the second generation pragmatists, John Dewey and G. H. Mead, were as committed evolutionists as their predecessors, if not more so. What is not as often realized is a theoretical consequence of this evolutionism: When classic pragmatists talk about action, they do not have exactly the same thing in mind that the classic European philosophers have.

There is an important exception to this rule. The eminent social philosopher Richard Bernstein once took up pragmatism from the viewpoint of action, and did this by contrasting it to what is known as "philosophy of action" in the analytic tradition. However, he did it by lumping pragmatism together with Marxism and phenomenological-*cum*-existentialist approaches, and made all these together represent an alternative to the analytic view. This comes out already in the title of his volume *Praxis and Action* (1971), where 'action' refers to the analytic approach, and the others are collated under the 'praxis' view. This made good sense at the time of Bernstein's writing, when neo-Marxism was in vogue and existentialism in fresh remembrance, but it does not do so any more. Marxism as a theoretical movement is dead, and from a pragmatist viewpoint it actually seems that phenomenology and analytic thought have more in common among themselves than either of them with pragmatism. As regards the theme action, both of them namely rely on what might be called, slightly sarcastically, "mind-first-explanation"[3] of action: on the idea that an intention, plan, or decision first has to be formed in the acting subject's mind and that it then is to be executed in concrete doings.[4] From the pragmatist viewpoint, this is a possible, but not at all the only possible depiction about how human action takes

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[2] Joas has used this expression in an interview which can be found in http://www.dialogonleadership.org/Joas1999.html.

[3] I borrow and generalize this phrase with which Daniel Dennett (1995) refers to the idea of "intelligent design" in discussions about evolution.

[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty's classic *Phenomenology of Perception* (originally of 1945) is a deservedly famous exception to this rule in the phenomenological tradition, but not an as dramatic counter-example in comparison with pragmatism. Cf. Rosenthal & Bourgeois (1991).

place. The reason why this philosophy does not treat it as the sole possibility, or not even as the paradigm case, stems from two sources. First, from its character as a philosophy of evolution where the mind-first model would constitute a radical hiatus between human and animal action – and such hiatus pragmatism wants explicitly to avoid. Furthermore, even without a commitment to evolutionism one easily sees that the mind-first explanation has its roots in the classic mind/body dualism. Pragmatism has right from its beginning taken as its task to build a bridge over that dualism, and the bridge to be suspended above that cleavage is for pragmatism a new idea about action (Joas & Kilpinen 2006: 324f.).

Bernstein's (1971) interpretation of pragmatism as a philosophy of "praxis" is slightly deficient even in another sense. Stephen Turner has since then called attention to the idea that praxis or practice is a more problematic notion than what most people think. His opinion is that it promises more than is able to keep. Turner's thesis rather is that the various discussions about practices tacitly assume a hidden and more prosaic notion: *habit*. It is the habitual behaviour of individuals that keeps social practices going, not so much traditions, rules, norms, *mentalités*, and so on, though these catch the main attention in the literature (Turner 1994; 2002; for a comment, Kilpinen 2009). But if so, then it turns out that pragmatism has more to say about action than most people have hitherto assumed. Pragmatism namely has radically re-interpreted the habit-concept and given it a new meaning: Not one of mindless routine any more, but as a process that is *open* for the acting subject's reflection and control during its self-propelling, ongoing course. "Knowledge is habit," Peirce once aphoristically said (CP 4.531; 1906) and explained the idea more closely to his friend and fellow-pragmatist William James by saying that "Consciousness of habit is a consciousness at once of the substance of the habit, the special case of application, and the union of the two" (CP 8.304; 1909).[5] I return to this idea later on, and try to explain in what sense exactly it means a revolution in the analysis of action. Already here we can be assured that pragmatism has important things to say about action, such that are not available in other traditions. This calls for further analysis, because the pragmatist revolution in the study of action has received surprisingly scant attention from philosophers, psychologists and social scientists. And the reason for the strange order in pragmatism's philosophical agenda, its preference to begin from action,

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[5] I follow Peirce scholars' established reference canon and cite Peirce's posthumous writings by a code of abbreviations. See the list of references.

instead of, say, knowledge, also stems partly from this conceptual upheaval that it has performed in regard to action.

There are also other reasons why action comes ahead of knowledge on the pragmatist agenda. Pragmatism has traditionally had a reputation as a relativistic position in epistemology, and this has aroused suspicion among other philosophers. "These disparagements are all boomerangs," answered the pragmatist G. H. Mead (1938: 97) in his time, but it is worth while to ponder how they may have come about and what the pragmatist position about knowledge actually is. It turns out that the reason why this philosophy does not begin from questions of knowledge – but in no way belittles their importance, either – is not immanently epistemological. It rather is *ontological*.

Pragmatists assume a process world

The founder of pragmatism was also the first to suggest that its ontology reflects the theory of evolution. As he put the matter in 1883-84, "Darwin's view is near to mine. Indeed, my opinion is only Darwinism analyzed, generalized, and brought into the realm of Ontology" (Peirce EP 1: 222). What then is analyzed and brought to the realm of ontology, when such a generalization is performed?

The generalized principle is not the famous "struggle for existence." Peirce means instead that now that evolutionary theory has demonstrated the mutability of species, and this depends on their varying adaptation to their environments, this suggests further that those very environments are also evolving. As David Hull (1989: 74) has summarized the question, "If species evolve, then it follows that laws of nature are evolving, the very state of affairs that [nineteenth century science and philosophy] was so concerned to avoid." The cited author is one of those who think that an inference like Peirce's is not unproblematic, but Peirce's enthusiasm for the evolving character of laws of nature is well known in Peirce scholarship. Accordingly, the ontological conclusion that he drew on the basis of Darwinian evolutionary theory is one of *process ontology*.[6]

The ontological question *par excellence* has traditionally been what kind of beings the world (or the universe) contains and consists of. Process ontology is

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[6] On Peirce's ontology and other metaphysics, see further Reynolds (2002).

instead interested in what *happens* in the world (or universe). Its leading spokesman today is Nicholas Rescher, besides Hilary Putnam and the late Richard Rorty also a major contemporary pragmatist, and as he says, "the supposed predominance and permanence of 'things' in nature is at best a useful fiction and at worst a misleading delusion" (Rescher 1996: 28). According to process philosophy it rather is that "We live in a world where nothing stands still and where change is the very essence of reality" (*ibid*., 25). If change is the essence of reality, it becomes apparent that "storms and heat waves are every bit as real as dogs and oranges," as Rescher adds elsewhere (2000: 4). The first assertions may be slightly polemical, but this latter statement I find an understatement. Storms and heat waves apparently are *more* real than dogs or oranges because they can affect the fate of dogs or oranges, but the opposite is not possible. Traditional ontology has been unnecessarily infatuated with individual entities, process ontology asserts.

This conception bears much to our topic, because all classic representatives of pragmatism have, to some degree, taken a process position in ontology. William James (1909/1977), who contrasts "a pluralistic universe" (his own position) against a "block universe," is perhaps the most conservative of them in this regard, the others are more radical process thinkers. In his introduction to this ontology, Rescher (1996) lists all classical pragmatists among its leading representatives, with the exception of Mead whom he just mentions in a couple of endnotes. However, even a modest perusal of Mead's *The Philosophy of the Present* (1932) and *The Philosophy of the Act* (1938) tells that he is one of the most consistent process philosophers ever. Accordingly, I think that we can trust the inference that the classic pragmatists are all process thinkers who agree that reality always undergoes change. Supposing that the world is like this, what does this mean to its denizens making their living in that world? In the first place it means that "We can be sure that if *we* do not change circumstances, circumstances will change nonetheless," as the British Marxist historian E. P. Thompson (1960/1978: 238) once countered the unnecessary pathos of his fellow-Marxists. But not only can circumstances change on their own in the process world. They can also change irregularly and abruptly to our detriment without us immediately noticing that they are taking such a turn.

The process world is a hostile world

Consider the following passage in John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (pp. 41-42 in the 1958 edition, emphasis in the original):

> Man finds himself living in an aleatory world; his existence involves, to put it baldly, a gamble. The world is a scene of risk; it is uncertain, unstable uncannily unstable. Its dangers are irregular, inconstant, not to be counted upon as to their times and seasons. Although persistent, they are sporadic, episodic. … We first endow man in isolation with an instinct of fear and then we imagine him irrationally ejecting that fear into the environment, scattering broadcast as it were; the fruits of his own purely personal limitations, and thereby creating superstition. But fear, whether an instinct or an acquisition, is a function of the environment. Man fears because he exists in a fearful, an awful world. The *world* is precarious and perilous. It is as easily accessible and striking evidence of this fact that primitive experience is cited. The voice is that of early man; but the hand is that of nature, the nature in which we still live.

This dramatic passage opens vistas to various directions. As for pragmatism, Dewey's account puts some descriptive flesh around the formal ontological skeleton that his predecessor Peirce introduced. Peirce is famous for his two ontological principles, for which he gave cryptic Greek-rooted names, *synechism* and *tychism*. He maintained that they almost counterbalance each other, but not quite, so that a small amount of genuine chance remains present in the world.[7] However, as Dewey's "aleatory" world undergoes continuous but irregular change it is also very much a "hostile world," as goes Kim Sterelny's (2003) apt term. It is hostile in the sense that in this world the acting being continuously has to watch over its shoulder, while pursuing its own interests. To me Sterelny's evolutionary account of the emergence of human cognition in such a world answers so closely to Dewey's original picture, that it perhaps is not unjust to call it a modernized version of his.

But the actual point that I wish to make about Dewey's above picture is the following. Mark the expression, "purely personal limitations." The human subject's

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[7] Biological mutation which fascinated also Peirce (CP 6.498; c. 1906) is a case in point. According to Richard Dawkins (1997: 66), "Darwinism is *not* a theory of random chance. It is a theory of random mutation plus non-random cumulative natural selection." This rhymes with Peirce's principles of *tychism* (randomness) and *synechism* (non-random law-likeness).

personal limitations have traditionally been taken as the source of error in knowledge, when the question of knowledge is addressed from an epistemological viewpoint. It now turns out that there are *two* possible sources for error. Besides traditional human shortcomings, the fault may lie also with the world itself, in that it can change on its own, and sometimes so abruptly that preparation is impossible. In brief, traditional epistemology and ontology have been predicated on the assumption that the human subject *approaches* the world of which she wishes to gain knowledge. Non-evolutionary approaches have not been sufficiently aware that the situation may also be one where the world approaches us! As long as we have the initiative, as is assumed in philosophy, we approach the world on the basis of our beliefs and expectations. If the world has the initiative, – as now turns out to be possible – it doesn't care a whit about our beliefs, it goes on its own course, and if its course mismatches ours, so much the worse – for us! The 2004 *tsunami* and the 2005 Mississippi flood are dramatic examples. "Facts are hard things," said Peirce while answering his own question 'Why Study Logic?,'[8] and went on to say that "It is those facts that I want to know, so that I may avoid disappointments and disasters, since [the facts] are bound to press upon me at last" (Peirce CP 2.173; 1902-03). This, he explained, is "my whole motive in reasoning." It is the main motive in reasoning for a denizen of a process world, whereas those who live in a static world may take a more theoretical attitude.

It now begins to dawn on us why pragmatism does not begin its philosophical project from epistemology and in what sense it even may be right in this. In a process world, action comes ahead of knowing, in the sense that the subject first has to establish a steady relationship to his or her world, before closer investigations about it and the truthful statements that they possibly yield come onto the agenda. In static ontology the steady relation is assumed as given. In pragmatism, the steady relation is established in the subject's concrete doings. As one leading pragmatism scholar has noted (Pape 2002: 13-14; English translation E.K.),

> Of decisive importance, for all forms of pragmatism, is the point of departure
> that people create through their action a relation to their surroundings. … In

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[8] 'Why Study Logic?' is the title of the second section of the second chapter in Peirce's unfinished 1902-03 manuscript 'Minute Logic.' Various parts of it are scattered around the *Collected Papers*.

pragmatism, accordingly, action decides how the world will appear to us and is to be known.

This passage tells how pragmatism understands the relation between the acting subject and the world, and the origin of knowledge in all this. However, it is also to be noted that this view is not idiosyncratic to pragmatism. The moral philosopher Alasdair Macintyre defends a neo-Aristotelian rather than pragmatist position, but is nonetheless aware that the relation between the acting/knowing subject and the world is not necessarily a steady, unproblematic one. It rather has to be *made* such:

> Each of us, individually and as a member of particular social groups, seeks to embody his own plans and projects in the natural and social world. A condition of achieving this is to render as much of our natural and social environment as possible predictable and the importance of both natural and social science in our lives derives at least in part – although only in part – from their contribution to this project. (Macintyre 1985: 104)

To render the world predictable and to make personal undertakings in it possible is the reason why pragmatism treats action as a central philosophical question, and grants to it as much importance as to knowledge, if not more so. According to pragmatism, "We act in the world and acquire knowledge about the world on the basis of our action," as Sami Pihlström (1998: 83) has well put it. As he continues, "All knowledge-acquisition begins, to use Dewey's terms, with 'problematic situations,' which we must be able to resolve through our action" (*ibid.*). This captures the starting point of pragmatism but by now it has also become apparent that traditional conceptual tools are not robust enough to carry the heavy burden of all this. A steady relationship to the world cannot be established on the basis of an instantaneous singular 'action,' even though this has been philosophy's basic term for human doings. A steady relation to the world needs a more durable foundation. And this is the reason why pragmatism has performed the conceptual overhaul of which I noted above, has made *habit* its basic action-theoretic concept instead of mere 'action.'

A Copernican revolution in the conceptualization of action

I use on purpose the audacious expression 'Copernican revolution.' I wish to make clear that pragmatism has performed a complete revolution in its conceptualization of action. This revolution can be called 'Copernican' because in it the basic concept and residue curiously change places. Pragmatism has not merely replaced the traditional term 'action' with its own preferred 'habit.' It has given to this latter concept a new, much enriched meaning, and treated the traditional 'action' (in the singular) as a residual in the analysis of action.

Habit is an established term in philosophy, extending its roots to Aristotle and scholasticism. It was also at home in social sciences (Camic 1986), but ousted in the twentieth century, due to its supposedly behaviouristic connotations. However, neither classical philosophers nor classical social scientists have used the term in the same reflective sense as the pragmatists use it.

In English-speaking philosophy, the habit-concept is mostly traced to David Hume, who uses it interchangeably with the term 'custom' (e.g., 1739-40/1985: 134). As he explains, "we call every thing CUSTOM, which proceeds from a past repetition, without any new reasoning or conclusion," because "the custom operates before we have time for reflection" (1985: 152-53; capitals in the original). This might be called the standard understanding of the habit-term (Turner 1994). In this understanding, habit or custom refers to repetitive behaviour where reflection or reasoning is not present. This understanding has received corroboration later on, when empirical psychology made the phenomenon of conditioning widely known.

Now, the point to be taken is that when classic pragmatists use their central term 'habit,' they *do not* have in mind this "slothful repetition of what has been done," as Peirce once says polemically (NEM 4: 143; 1898). Instead, they *do include* reflection into their habit-concept, so that even the very idea of knowledge is related to habit, as we above heard from Peirce.[9]

Philosophy has related 'habit' to repetitive behaviour. That what is being repeated is an original intentional 'action,' which in later repetition assumes a self-propelling character. Habit, in other words, is a derivative of an intentional action in this understanding. This is not how pragmatism understands it. Pragmatism not only

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[9] The idea about the possible reflexivity of habit is not original to Peirce or other pragmatists. They rather have developed further the insight in Joseph Murphy's 1869 work, *Habit and Intelligence* (Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, personal communication).

changes terminology but performs a theoretical overhaul, where the notions of basic concept and residue change places. The pragmatist meaning for the habit-term *includes* reflexivity, and in its usage the traditional singular 'action' is an exemplification of habit, in this sense its residue, because pragmatism situates intentionality *inside* the habitual dimension (Kilpinen 2000; 2009).

Repetitive, self-propelling behaviour as such is in pragmatism referred to by the technical term 'principle of parsimony.' It says that "the more details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers will be set free for their own proper work" (James 1890/1950: 1.122). In other words, it is bad economy "to employ the brain in doing what can be accomplished mechanically, just as it would have been bad economy for Napoleon to write his own dispatches," as Peirce added (NEM 4: 71; 1902). Classic pragmatists, we see, are aware about the existence of self-propelling behaviour. Nonetheless, human intentionality and rationality are *not* to be searched anywhere outside it, in the sphere of pure reflection, as has been the understanding in dualistic philosophy.

"To laud habit as conservative while praising thought as the main spring of progress is the surest course to making thought abstruse and irrelevant and progress a matter of accident," Dewey once made the point (1922/2002: 67). According to pragmatists, thought and habit are instead to be married together, so that when the talk here is about habits, "Involuntary habits are not meant, but voluntary habits, such as are subject in some measure to self-control" (Peirce EP 2: 549; 1907). I have recently given a detailed discussion about the pragmatist habit-concept (Kilpinen 2009), so that I here just quote a conclusion where the newly-interpreted 'habit' and logical thought are fused in a novel way together:

> The deliberately formed, self-analyzing habit, – self-analyzing because formed by the aid of analysis of the exercises that nourished it, – is the living definition, the veritable and final logical interpretant (Peirce EP 2: 418; 1907).

As Peirce scholars know, 'final logical interpretant' is for him a central technical term, the outcome of an interpretive-*cum*-reasoning process, where the cycle of inquiry is for the time being stopped at a temporarily dependable conclusion. However, this unique conceptual marriage between habit and logic has remained

unknown in philosophy.[10] Even Rescher, who teaches well about processes, is familiar with pragmatism, and does recognize (2000: 56) that "there are no ultimate 'atomic' actions" (though philosophy has so assumed) is still reluctant to think the matter the whole way through. His definition of action and habit namely follows the traditional 'Humean' lines:

> Clearly if an agent X did A unwittingly, and involuntarily, out of habit, an explanation along causal lines is called for, whereas if X did it consciously and deliberately we would require a motivational explanation. What someone does would not even qualify as an actual action if it were not the sort of thing standardly done for motives or out of motivated but automatized habits. In full-fledged action – unlike mere behaviour – the motivational aspect must always play a role, since some element of volition will always be present here. (Rescher 2000: 54)

In original pragmatism, motivation, volition and deliberation are situated *inside* the habitual dimension, not outside it as here. One way to prove that this makes a genuine revolution is to elaborate the above pragmatist principle, "knowledge is habit" (Peirce). It namely is not just an idiosyncratic insight of Peirce's, but characteristic of the entire movement. Dewey (1922/2002: 182-83) provides a first elucidation:

> The reason why a baby can know little and an experienced adult know much when confronting the same things is not because the latter has a 'mind' which the former has not, but because one has already formed habits which the other has still to acquire. The scientific man and the philosopher like the carpenter, the physician and politician know with their habits, not with their 'consciousness.' The latter is eventual, not a source.

Dewey's expression about consciousness as eventual is slightly ambiguous, in the sense that he seems to leave open whether it actually resides in the habitual

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[10] In his treatment of Peirce's theory of abduction, Jaakko Hintikka (2007b) *has* explicitly noticed that Peirce uses 'habit' as a logical concept. However, this important insight has not captured others' attention.

dimension or not. It resides inside it, is the pragmatist answer, forthcoming from G. H. Mead, who elaborates the idea even more down-to-earth:

> A labourer with acquired skill for which he has no theory approaches the condition of the purely instinctive animal. He becomes helpless the moment he is out of the environment to which his habits are adapted. … What is wanted in an ideal machine shop, where the tools are made to do certain work, is that the man who uses the tools should be able to criticize the tools. He should be able to go to the man who planned and made them and tell him how they work, and where the test of use shows that they fail and need to be improved. … Theory, after all is, nothing but the consciousness of the way in which one adjusts his habits of working to meet new situations. The man who has never made such readjustments is discouraged at the mere presence of the new situation. The man who has done it, who has some acquaintance with the processes and technical expressions by which it is accomplished has his interest aroused by the new situation (Mead ([1908-09], 2001: 166-69).

Habitual action and rule-following: Which comes first?

As one tries to explain these ideas to philosophers, particularly those of the analytic persuasion, one sooner or later receives the answer: 'Oh yes, rule-following is what you mean,' and then a lecture about this central concept in Wittgenstein's philosophy may ensue. There is some kinship between some of Wittgenstein's ideas and pragmatism, but one shouldn't make too much of it. Wittgenstein's famous dictum, "When I follow a rule I do not choose. I follow the rule *blindly*," (1953/1968 §219), apparently means that he does not choose *any more*. He has in repetition internalized the rule that he followed consciously while performing the deed in question for the first time. In other words, I think that even Wittgenstein is in this question closer to Hume than to pragmatism. For a pragmatist, namely, the steady behaviour pattern comes first; its possible *articulation* in the form of a rule comes second (cf. Mead's point above).

Similar conclusions arise in regard to another case from analytic philosophy, John Searle's (1983: 150) famous example about skiing, where the advancing skier

eventually finds originally useful rules redundant. A pragmatist does not take this as much as a case of rules becoming implicit than as cognition turning bodily. Peter Gärdenfors (2005: 79) quotes in this connection his compatriot, the champion skier Ingemar Stenmark, who has said that "when I'm competing, my feet think much faster than my brain." I agree that the skier knows best, and that the locus of knowledge in this kind of fast situations is in the acting subject's body rather than in his or her mind, where philosophy has tried to locate it. Unlike other philosophies, pragmatism does not find it necessary to suppose that "*am Anfang war die Tat,*" in the beginning there was an individual action. These famous words with which Goethe begins his *Faust* are sometimes taken as a case of implicit pragmatism, but in truth it is not quite so (Kilpinen 2009: 112-114). For pragmatism, steady behaviour patterns are human action's natural mode of being. A singular self-sufficient action is also real, but it arises mostly when the flow of the established pattern is hindered, due to disturbances from the outside world.

Conclusion: Toward a new theory of human action

Macintyre (1985: 204) identifies two opposite tendencies in contemporary philosophy and social thought, one characteristic of analytic philosophy, the other of existentialism and interpretive sociology. According to him, it is characteristic of analytic philosophy to

> think atomistically about human action and to analyze complex actions and transactions in terms of simple components. Hence the recurrence in more than one context of the notion of 'a basic action'. That particular actions derive their character as parts of larger wholes is a point of view alien to our dominant ways of thinking and yet one which it is necessary at least to consider if we are to begin to understand how a life may be more than a sequence of individual actions and episodes.

If this is the ailment, pragmatism may be able to provide the cure, in that it has come a long way toward a theory where particular actions do receive their character from larger wholes. In pragmatism, these larger wholes are called *habits*. The reinterpretation of this concept, charging it with intentionality and rationality, so to

speak, has enabled pragmatism to avoid stumbling at individual actions and episodes and to avoid the attempt to build comprehensive action theories out of these tiny ingredients. As I have maintained, the pragmatist idea of action is more general than the traditional one of individual actions, and it is so in a positive sense. Individual actions do remain at our disposal should a need arise. According to pragmatism, such a need may arise in normative contexts like ethics and jurisprudence, where we often have to concentrate on one action at a time. In these contexts we are interested in the particular singular action that is or was performed; say, Mr. Smith hit Mr. Jones in the face, and he thus deserves moral reprobation, perhaps is to be sued in court.

The point that the pragmatist 'habit' is a more general concept than 'an action,' can be made quite colloquially by analogy. Think about motion picture films (in pre-digital technology). If you have a motion picture film, you ipso facto have also a multitude of photographs at your disposal. One can ascertain of this by visiting the nearest movie theatre and seeing how they advertise their feature films: By showing still frames out of motion pictures' most interesting contents.

Philosophers have paid much heed to Hume's famous principle about how one cannot infer 'ought'-statements from 'is'-statements, to put the matter colloquially. What has not been realized, but is just as treacherous, is that one shouldn't generalize concepts that work well in normative contexts to serve as basic concepts in an empirically descriptive sense. My point in this paper has been that an error like this has often been committed, as Bernstein's (1971) and Macintyre's (1985) accounts also suggest.

The outline given here is not a comprehensive restatement of the pragmatist theory of action. I have concentrated on one central aspect in it, action as a reflective process. Another assumption that is self-evident for this philosophy, but not so much for others, is that *social action*, rather than individual action, is the paradigm case of human action. The reason why pragmatism takes this order is its realization that human cognition itself is a social phenomenon. Were it not, we would all be autists. "We must be others if we are to be ourselves," was Mead's original insight (1925/1964: 292), today corroborated by Bogdan (2000: 143), according to whom "It is the other, not the self, whom one must deal with and figure out first." In a comprehensive interpretation of the pragmatist theory of action, action as an inherent process and action as inherently social both need to be highlighted. Yet another point that is to be highlighted is the idea of human reason as a capacity whose task is

continuously to replenish our knowledge. Inquiry, rather than knowing as such, thus is the key term in this understanding of knowledge (cf. Hintikka 2007). This order is easy to grasp if one keeps pragmatism's process-ontological assumptions well in mind. On this occasion my purpose has been to drive home the pragmatist point that intentionality without habituality is empty; habituality without intentionality is blind.

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