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M. Hartmann, J. Liptow, M. Willaschek (eds.), *Die Gegenwart des Pragmatismus*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013, 364 p.

The book collects the papers presented at a conference held at Goethe University Frankfurt in 2007, which celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the publication of James' *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*. It contains contributions from leading scholars, who discuss the relevance of pragmatism for addressing current problems in epistemology, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind, political philosophy, the philosophy of religion etc. It also contains papers that consider pragmatism in its relationship with other philosophical traditions, such as continental and analytic philosophy. The book thus presents a stimulating examination of the various fields in which a pragmatist approach to philosophy can be significant for philosophy today.

The collection is composed of 13 articles, preceded by an introduction, and it is divided in three parts. The first part, which contains articles by Philip Kitcher, Cheryl Misak, Barbara Merker, and Marcus Willaschek, considers pragmatism from the point of view of the original methods it introduced in philosophy. The second part, with articles written by Christopher Hookway, Martin Seel, Jasper Liptow, Bjørn T. Ramberg, and Jennifer Welchman, takes into consideration the contribution of pragmatism to discussions in theoretical philosophy, including logic, epistemology, the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind. In the last part, Elizabeth Anderson, Martin Hartmann, Susan Haack, and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann address issues having to do with practical philosophy and, in particular, with the theory of democracy, legal philosophy and the philosophy of religion. Instead of commenting the articles following the order in which they are presented in the book, I will identify some themes that have major relevance in the collection and discuss first the Chapters that are directly connected with these themes. I will then comment on those papers that are equally significant, but do not have strong ties with other articles in the book.

The first theme I want to discuss concerns the evaluation of the place of James' pragmatic method within the pragmatist tradition, just as its relevance for contemporary philosophy. In this respect, it is really interesting to examine together Philip Kitcher's and Cheryl Misak's contributions, insofar as they propose very different views on James' pragmatism. In her article "Hundert Jahre Pragmatismus", Misak presents what is a quite common description of the tradition of pragmatism, where two streams are identified: one rooted in Charles S. Peirce's work, and one in William James'. The article focuses on how pragmatists have accounted for the way in which we fix standards of objectivity and attribute truth to our beliefs. She argues that, in this respect, Peirce offers us a convincing account of truth and objectivity, one that can be relevant for a new "renaissance" of pragmatism along lines different from those suggested by Rorty. Even if she recognizes some commonalities in the views

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on objectivity proposed by Peirce, James and Dewey (73-4), she follows Rorty's own reconstruction of pragmatism in attributing to James the germs of an approach to philosophy that does not see truth as a relevant concept in order to account for our practices (75-6). In her reading, Peirce offered us a better alternative to this approach, an alternative that was further developed in the work of the logical empiricist, of C.I. Lewis, and of Quine. This alternative does not throw away the concept of truth altogether, but it reinterprets it in the context of our historically determined inquiries as something that is in our reach, but that we cannot ever be sure to have achieved (73).

A quite different view on James' account of truth is presented by Philip Kitcher, who, in his article "Der andere Weg", reads James' pragmatism not as foreshadowing a degradation of the concept of truth, but as presenting an account of truth that shows its pragmatic meaning in the context of our lives. Kitcher argues that it would be wrong to understand James' (and Dewey's) pragmatism as proposing an alternative theory on the same problems which have been the central concern of philosophy for centuries (38). In this respect, among the purposes of James' pragmatism there is not the introduction of an alternative philosophical theory of truth which would reject the correspondence theory (44, 46). Rather, James wants to articulate our common sense understanding of truth as correspondence and to show how this correspondence should be understood in the context of our practices (46 ff.). James rejects the idea that interpreting truth as correspondence requires us to maintain that there is only one possible correct description of reality. By contrast, there are various ways of describing the same reality, which, while different with respect to the particular purposes and aims for which they are developed, are nonetheless corresponding with the reality they designate, insofar as they allow the establishment and the iteration of a praxis that puts us in contact with it (51). This pragmatic approach to the clarification of what correspondence means gives us also relevant insight on how to reconsider the role of philosophy within our society. In this respect, both James and Dewey understood philosophy as a discipline that should address problems that are of central interest for humanity in a particular historical moment. Philosophy should not be the professional undertaking of people considering some problems they inherited from their tradition. Rather, philosophy should be able to identify and answer those questions that are significant for the self-understanding of human beings in a particular historical moment (56 ff.).

A defense of James' pragmatism against superficial readings is also provided by Matthias Lutz-Bachmann, who, in his article "Was ist religiöse Erfahrung? Überlegungen im Anschluss an William James", argues that James' pragmatism should not be seen as a form of instrumentalism. Eventually, this becomes clear in James' writings on religion, where religious and mystic experiences are not the means to the realization of some purposes, but are meaningful experiences that have actual effects on our self-understanding as subjects (354 ff.).

A second theme that I want to discuss is the relationship between pragmatism and naturalism. This topic is directly considered by two articles in the second part of the book, written respectively by Bjørn Ramberg and Jennifer Welchman. In his

paper “Sprache, Geist und Naturalismus in der analytischen Philosophie”, Ramberg argues that a pragmatist standpoint on the mind-body problem can give us the possibility to develop a non-reductionist naturalistic philosophy, one which does not either try to reduce the mental to the physical or to propose an unbridgeable dualism (194). Ramberg develops this pragmatist standpoint along the lines of what he calls the “interpretativsit strategy” (198 ff.). Following the methodology of Davidson’s radical interpretation, he addresses mental phenomena taking the standpoint of an ideal interpreter who should rationalize the behavior of a human agent without having any previous knowledge of the agent’s intentions, beliefs, etc. From this perspective, a psychological “vocabulary” which attributes mental states like beliefs, doubts, intentions, etc. to this agent is inescapable in order to rationally explain the agent’s behavior (206 ff.). The need of this vocabulary should not be seen as causing unsolvable contradictions for the proponent of a naturalist conception of the world, insofar as a naturalist position, at least from a pragmatist standpoint, does not require the individuation of a fundamental ontology (217 ff.). Ramberg’s reflections are thus relevant for the development of a pragmatist naturalism that interacts with central figures in the analytic tradition, like Davidson. In this context, it would be interesting to address how this kind of non-reductionist naturalism relates to other forms of naturalism endorsed by the classical pragmatists.

The task of comparing contemporary accounts of naturalism to proposals advanced by the classical pragmatists is taken up by Jennifer Welchman in her article “Zwei Arten von Naturalismus, zweiter Natur und kommunikativen Praktiken. Eine pragmatische Antwort auf McDowell”. Welchman argues that McDowell and Dewey endorse a similar viewpoint when they criticize the reductionist view of nature that identifies the latter with the realm of natural laws. Accordingly, Dewey agrees with McDowell when he argues against the complete reduction of nature to the disenchanting nature of the natural sciences (225). Moreover, both use the idea of a “second nature” in order to make room for values and reasons in our conception of nature (227). However, this basic agreement notwithstanding, McDowell rejects a fundamental assumption of Dewey’s position, that is, the continuity between first and second nature (229 ff., 250-1), between natural and biological laws on the one hand, and reasons and values on the other. This strong separation between first and second nature, between the space of nature and the space of reasons, is evident in McDowell’s account of non-human animals, which for him are constrained in the realm of natural laws (231 ff.). For McDowell there is so an absolute gap between human and non-human life, where only humans have access to a second nature. Welchman argues convincingly that, from the fact that we must see two models of explanation (as the space of nature and the space of reasons are) as being discontinuous, we cannot infer that the reality they are used to describe is equally discontinuous (234). She supports her thesis with various examples from experiments on intelligent animals and she concludes that a form of second nature can be attributed to some of them (233-49).

The second part of the book contains also two articles discussing Robert Brandom’s work. In this respect, Martin Seel’s Chapter “Perspektivität und Objektivität. Überlegungen mit Rücksicht auf Robert Brandom” maintains that

Brandom's pragmatism, especially as it is presented in *Making it Explicit*, shows how perspectivity and objectivity are not two concepts in opposition (155 ff.). After praising Brandom's attempt of finding a balance between these two concepts, Seel also advances some critical points (162-3), as for example the observation that the fact that we must see our world as conceptually structured does not imply that it is so (a thesis that Brandom seems to defend). Seel accordingly describes a pragmatist as a moderate realist, who does not confuse the independence of the world from our thinking with the dependence of our concepts of the world on our thinking (154).

A more critical stance against Brandom's position is taken by Jasper Liptow, in his article "Pragmatische Bedeutungstheorien und das Prinzip der Autonomie der Bedeutung". Liptow claims that Davidson's *principle of the autonomy of meaning* makes evident that Brandom's theory of meaning is inadequate. A pragmatist theory of meaning, at least according to Brandom's account, argues that the meaning of a linguistic expression should be clarified by means of the pragmatic significance of the sentences that contain this expression (171). According to Liptow, this theory of meaning does not allow us to account for those cases in which propositions with the same propositional content have different pragmatic significance with respect to the different modes (declarative, imperative, interrogative, etc.) in which the proposition is asserted (173-80). This fact is grasped by Davidson's principle of the autonomy of meaning, which maintains that there cannot be any constitutive relationship between the syntactic-semantic elements of propositions and their illocutionary power, which is given in their complete expression (187). Liptow's criticisms are certainly compelling and deserve close attention, which here I cannot provide. One minor critical observation that could be made is the following: Liptow focuses on Brandom's pragmatist approach to the philosophy of language in order to reject the pragmatist theory of meaning altogether. However, Brandom's account of meaning is not the only one that can be called pragmatist, and there are other pragmatists that would deserve a closer consideration, like for example Charles S. Peirce.

Another theme that has a central significance in the collection is the theory of democracy. In the third part of the book, two articles by Elizabeth Anderson and Martin Hartmann address this topic from very different perspectives. In her article "Die Epistemologie der Demokratie", Anderson maintains that Dewey's model of democracy is the best one to account for the epistemic capacity of democratic societies to solve those problems, whose solution depends on the circulation of information in a social environment (255). Dewey's model is superior to concurrent ones, like Condorcet's jury theorem, or the Diversity-Trumps-Ability (DTA) theorem, because it (a) points out the epistemic capacities of the constitutive features of democratic societies; (b) manifests the epistemic strengths and weaknesses of these institutions; and (c) presents the guidelines for the improvement of their epistemic capacities (259). Only Dewey's model of democracy offers us a paradigm that is capable of accomplishing the first task (265 ff.). Moreover, Dewey's model is the only one that captures the epistemic relevance of dissent. It does that by highlighting the need of an institutionalization of dissent in a "loyal opposition" (271).

A quite different problem is addressed by Martin Hartmann, who, in his paper “Kann und sollte Demokratie epistemisch gerechtfertigt werden?” discusses Dewey in the context of a critique of epistemic justifications of democracy. Epistemic Justifications of democracy try to justify the use of democratic procedures on the basis of their capacity to produce a correct choice in various fields. Dewey is normally seen as a reference figure for this approach. Hartmann analyses three models of epistemic justification of democracy: Putnam’s (284-5), Misak’s (286-8), and Honneth’s (288-90) and he presents various reasons to reject each one of them (290-304). After advancing these criticisms, Hartmann argues that it is possible to find in Dewey a non-epistemic perspective on the justification of democratic procedures (304), one that offers a normative and non-instrumental defense of democracy (306).

These are the themes that obtain major consideration in the book and for this reason I have focused my review on them. However, even though they do not touch topics that are discussed by other articles, the papers of Barbara Merker, Marcus Willaschek, Christopher Hookway and Susan Haack deserve to be mentioned, because they propose relevant and original ideas. In particular, Willaschek’s article “Bedingtes Vertrauen. Auf dem Weg zu einer pragmatischen Transformation der Metaphysik” advances an interesting reading of Kant’s *postulates*, which, according to him, can offer the basis for a new pragmatic approach to metaphysics, one that justifies particular metaphysical sentences for their being implied in our praxis (116-7). This form of metaphysics is in accordance with a pragmatist account of rationality, which, in order to consider a belief justified, does not require us to answer to all the *possible* “why-questions” that can be asked in connection to that belief. The latter approach to justification would be what Willaschek calls the traditional account of rationality (107 ff.). By contrast, from a pragmatist perspective on justification, we are only required to answer the *actual* “why-questions” that are relevant in a particular context (110 ff.). Merker’s article “Phänomenologie und Pragmatismus” defends the quite original thesis that Husserl’s phenomenology contains pragmatic themes, especially in connection to his consideration of the concept of *lifeworld* (Lebenswelt) (92 ff.). In his paper “Peirce, Logik und Psychologismus”, Hookway analyzes an account of logic, which is certainly original within the pragmatist tradition, that is, Peirce’s anti-psychologic approach to logic (123 ff.). Last but not least, Haack’s article “Das pluralistische Universum des Rechts. Hin zu einem neoklassischen Rechtspragmatismus” shows how a pragmatist approach can be relevant for the philosophy of law. Haack develops her argument focusing on the work of Oliver Wendell Holmes (311 ff.), a Supreme Court judge who had strong connections with William James and Charles Peirce (he was a member of the “metaphysical club”).

This collection of essays surely presents a wide-ranging exposition of the various fields in which a pragmatist approach can be relevant and worth considering for philosophy today. Moreover, it shows how pragmatism can offer a bridge between very different philosophical traditions. The attention given to classical and contemporary figures in the pragmatist movement is well balanced and appropriately exemplifies the richness of this approach to philosophy.