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Cross-Currents of Pragmatism and Pragmatics: A Sociological Perspective on Practices and Forms

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Introduction: The Metaproblematic of Pragmatism

My brief in this article is to clarify the relations between pragmatism and pragmatics from a contemporary sociological perspective. To begin with, it should be noted that these two words are closely related. Not only do they derive from the same etymological root, but they also stem from the same philosophical source.

Etymologically, both pragmatism and pragmatics derive from the Greek word *pragma* (πράγμα) meaning deed, act, enterprise, doing, acting and so forth. Philosophically, their most immediate source is Peirce, but the name of Kant also needs to be mentioned in this regard. As the founder of a unique American philosophy, Peirce coined the word 'pragmatism' in the early 1870s to denote this new departure. However, due to some of his followers' tampering with this position, particularly James, he later chose to rename his approach 'pragmaticism' instead – which he said was ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers. He admitted that he owed his inspiration for the name of his philosophy to Kant whom he regarded as having been his philosophical mother's milk. To understand pragmatism or pragmaticism, therefore, one cannot avoid having at least some recourse to Kant's fundamental innovation, what he himself regarded as his Copernican revolution.

As far as the word 'pragmatics' is concerned, Morris introduced it in the 1930s in the context of the philosophy of language. Of this neologism he said that it was coined with reference to the term pragmatism. In fact, he depended on Pierce whom he highly respected, particularly on his semiotic theory of the three-dimensional sign which is essential to grasping the process dimension of pragmatism. In Morris' terminology, pragmatics represents one of these three dimensions, the others being syntax and semantics.

Despite their common etymological and philosophical sources, however, the relations between pragmatism and pragmatics are rather complex. One consideration alone that already accounts for this complexity is that there are different versions of both of these intellectual positions and, hence, a variety of different relations which have developed between them over a relatively long period of time. To obtain an adequate understanding of this complexity, therefore, a sufficiently comprehensive and differentiated perspective is required. In order to facilitate the acquisition of such an understanding, one would be well advised in my view to keep in mind what may be called the metaproblematic of pragmatism. The question is: What precisely is generally at stake in the process that gave rise to and underpinned the development of the different versions of pragmatism and pragmatics? What is the overarching issue or problematic, meta-theoretically speaking? One way in which this matter can be made visible is to focus on the logic of the whole development from the late eighteenth century to the present. Figure 1 below is a representation of this development.

Figure 1: Logic of the Development of Pragmatism-Pragmatics

	2 Transcendentalism: Kant	3 Historicized idealism: Hegel	6 Phenomenology: Husserl Heidegger	
1 Empiricism/ Positivism: Hume		4 Materialism & praxis: Marx	7 Philosophy of language/pragmatics: Morris Wittgenstein Searle	8 Transcendental/ formal pragmatics: Apel Habermas
		5 Pragmatism & action: Peirce James Mead Dewey	9 Pragmatic sociology: Boltanski & Thévenot	10 Cognitive-pragmatic sociology

From the logic of the development of pragmatism it should be apparent that the metaproblematic amounts to this: that pragmatism, including pragmatics, is above all about moving beyond the limitations of empiricism or positivism in order to deal with what is implied by the relation between *pragma* (action or praxis) and form or, in contemporary social-theoretical language, between practices and sociocultural forms. What Figure 1 suggests is that at the different stages under historically specific conditions, not only *pragma* and form were both understood in distinct ways, but also the relation between them has been conceived in variably unique senses. To approximate an adequate grasp of the cross-currents of pragmatism and pragmatics, therefore, demands that close attention be paid to these differences and variations. In the following paragraphs, accordingly, the argument is unfolded in terms of the metaproblematic of pragmatism, while allowing it to be guided by the logical steps in its development from the late eighteenth century to contemporary sociology.

1 From Empiricism to Pragmatism

Peirce: pragmatism

As early as 1871, Charles Sanders Peirce suggested a tentative version of what became known as his 'pragmatic maxim', but it was not until some years later, after having founded pragmatism in 1877-78, that he was able to give it a definitive formulation (1992: 131). According to him, the acceptance of this maxim constitutes pragmatism. In a dictionary entry dating from 1902 on pragmatism he repeated this formulation: 'Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object' (1960: paragraph 5.2). While he immediately added that he was led to this maxim by reflection on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he also invoked Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, thus giving an indication of the source of the name he chose for his philosophy and maxim. As signalling a unique approach, pragmatism represents an onslaught against nominalist empiricism or positivism, the precedent for with is to be found in Kant. Empiricism or positivism simply settles for the direct observational empirical experience of a positively given object. By contrast, Peirce insists on taking into account that the object, far from simply being positively given, is rather constituted by a general concept and, further, that we fully understand the object only once we have worked out all the possible practical effects or consequences

accommodated by this general conception. Instead of mere empirical experience obtained through direct observation, therefore, he appeals to the mediation of such experience by recourse to possible experience, as stressed by Kant. In other words, Peirce sees the object in relation to its form, and also the action or practice of engaging with the object in relation to the form of that action or practice. To allude to Kant's example, to be able to identify a particular dog as a dog at all presupposes that one has a general concept of dog; and depending on whether the particular dog is engaged with as a pet or as a working sniffer, the general concept would in each case be filled out by a range of very different possibilities of how the relation to and the activities undertaken with the dog could be understood and organized.

Kant: transcendentalism

In the formulation of his pragmatism, Peirce drew on what Immanuel Kant (1968), in analogy to Copernicus' shift from the Ptolemaic to the heliocentric view of planet earth, regarded as his Copernican revolution. This radical innovation can be regarded as having two aspects. In the first place, it required the introduction of his transcendental approach which stressed the acknowledgement of the necessary and unavoidable presuppositions, the *a priori*, of thought and action. For instance, to have an object in respect of which knowledge can be obtained, presupposes an antecedent grasp of objects of possible experience – that is, something *a priori*, ideas of reason and categories which enable us beforehand to formally identify objects. Demanding that form be taken into account, this approach thus entailed the reversal of the traditional relation between knowledge and object. Instead of our knowledge being directed and guided by our knowledge object, the object should follow our rationally, categorically directed and guided cognition. It should be noted, however, that this reversal did not mean that Kant embraced rationalism instead of empiricism. To the same degree that he sought to go beyond empiricism, while nevertheless retaining empirical knowledge of objects, he also distanced himself from his own rationalist origins. In the second place, therefore, he rejected the traditional ideal of pure theory. For this reason, he reversed also the traditional relation between theory and practice. Although the shift from the object to general concepts meant that theory was effectively given priority over objects, Kant nevertheless stressed that henceforth theory makes sense only within practice. Theory is in principle theory within the framework of practice. Virtually alone amongst the Enlightenment thinkers, moreover, Kant took seriously the fact that reason could harbour groundless pretensions and be delusive and self-destructive. This accounts for why he made the critique of reason itself the core component of his transcendental philosophy.

Kant's Copernican revolution was decisive for Peirce in arriving at the idea of pragmatism. This is evident from his dictionary article referred to above. He did not just react against empiricism or positivism by stressing the importance of general concepts or form, but he actually framed the dictionary entry as a whole by reference to Kant's understanding of the word 'pragmatic'. The opening sentence reads: 'Pragmatic anthropology, according to Kant, is practical ethics. Pragmatic horizon is the adaptation of our general knowledge to influencing our morals' (Peirce 1960: 5.1). In other words, our general knowledge, theory or reasoning is ultimately in the service of contributing to the creation of a proper human world, one in which truth, rightness and authenticity prevail. For Peirce, this meant that pragmatism and the pragmatic maxim are about contributing to the development of what he called 'concrete reasonableness' (1960: 5.3) – that is, participating responsibly in social and natural evolution by contributing to the development of clear ideas and dependable knowledge, of a justifiably organized social world, and of a harmonious universe.

2 *Pragma* in Relation to Form

Action and praxis

Although pragmatism was basically rooted in Kant's philosophy, Peirce understood transcendentalism in a deflated sense in the wake of Hegel's (1967) historical transformation of Kant. Rather than just unhistorical, abstract, formal presuppositions underpinning thought and action, Hegel's idealism entailed that ideas, such as for example mind, freedom or the state, were located within the historical process where they themselves orchestrated the unfolding of their own actualization and realization. While Peirce followed this historical deflation of transcendentalism, he objected that Hegel's idealism was marred by ignoring reality – a dimension that pragmatism must cover. Peirce's pragmatic transformation of Kantian transcendentalism thus paralleled Karl Marx's (1967) earlier materialist transformation of Kantian-Hegelian idealism. The difference in emphasis between these two contemporaries is evident, however, from their distinct understandings of *pragma*. Whereas Marx (1967: 400) stressed 'praxis' in the sense of revolutionary world transformation, Peirce (1992: 129, 1998: 499) put his faith in 'action' in the sense of problem-solving and responsible world-creation.

Form: general ideas and historically accumulated potentialities

Like Marx when he turned Hegel from standing on his head back onto his feet, Peirce also emphasized the importance of human beings as actors or agents who establish relations to the world and engage with its various dimensions. But for neither of them was it simply a matter of engagement with the world and praxis or action alone or the practical facts thus produced. In keeping with Kant and Hegel, the ideas that not just direct and guide *pragma* but simultaneously also constitute and regulate the very context of praxis and action must be included as well. In other words, both *pragma* and its form need to be taken into account at one and the same time. We have already seen that pragmatism for Peirce turns in Kantian fashion on general concepts or, as he said, 'general ideas as the true interpreters of our thought' (1960: 5.3). It is in this vein that he criticized James' popular rendition of pragmatism. Far from being based on the assumption that 'action is the end of man', pragmatism rather recognizes that 'action wants an end, and that that end must be something of a general description' such as, for example, 'concrete reasonableness' as 'the ultimate good' of action (1960: 5.3). On numerous occasions, he also stressed the importance of such ideas as truth, right and beauty. In fact, in Peirce's view, ideas such as these have a power of finding or creating their own vehicles and of conferring upon such vehicles the ability to transform the face of the earth: '…without the influence of ideas there is no potentiality' (1998: 121). Some years before Peirce, Marx (1967) developed a comparable position which has attained the status of the most basic principle of left-Hegelianism, namely: historically, a set of rational potentialities has accumulated, including for example an idea such as an equal, associational and solidary society, which encourage human beings to actualize those very potentialities in an attempt to realize them as fully as possible under the new historical conditions and thereby to transform the world for the better.

The conclusion follows, then, that action and praxis, or practices of all kinds, must in principle be regarded within the context constituted by their form.

Peirce's pragmatist architectonic

As for Peirce's understanding of such a contextualizing form, it should be noted that he insisted that pragmatism represents an 'architectonic construction' (1960: 5.5) embracing a number of different dimensions. This framework specifies the minimum of essential components, the most basic elements of which he regarded as 'indecomposable' (1998: 425). First, at the centre of the architectonic is the pragmatic maxim as a mode of thought geared toward preparing for action by comprehensively clarifying the end of action, but it is embedded in a number of progressively

broader and deeper dimensions making the pragmatic mode of thought, analysis and practices possible. Second, the ability to determine the kind of action required to be taken by clarifying its end, as we have seen earlier, calls for general concepts. Such general concepts must obviously be concretely specifiable and directly relevant to the action situation in question if they were to direct and guide thought and action. On the one hand, such general concepts contain concretely realizable possibilities and, on the other, their directing and guiding function implies that they possess normative force. By contrast with this dimension delineating meaning possibilities and having a regulative function within the situation, the third broadest and deepest level harbours the range of potentialities and limits that constitute the situation in the first place and hence far exceed or transcend it, although remaining rooted in it since they are the potentialities and limits of that situation. Peirce conceived this level as a meaningful categorical dimension in order to signal that it consists of two closely intertwined aspects. At bottom, there are three *a priori*, formal, universal categories of experience – 'Firstness', 'Secondness' and 'Thirdness' (1992: 247, 1998: 233) – that indicate how things might be supposed to be and is ultimately justified by pure mathematics. But then the content of these formal categories has to be filled in, something accomplished by what Peirce at first called 'phenomenology' and later 'phaneroscopy' (1998: 145, 403). In this case, he took cues from examples of universal categories, namely, Kant's 'quality', 'relation' and 'modality' and Hegel's 'immediacy', 'struggle' and 'reconciliation', to arrive at his own 'Quality of feeling', 'Reaction' and finally 'Representation' in the sense of generalizing mediation (1998: 160). With these phenomenologically or phaneroscopically filled universal categories we are touching on the formal, meaningful presuppositions necessarily and unavoidably made by all those belonging to any situation. With reference to Kant, Peirce and Husserl's respective conceptions of transcendentalism, this dimension can be regarded as the transcendental structure of the situation or world, in which case it can be describe as containing the blueprints or design principles for constructing a possible world.

Husserl's transcendental phenomenology

The mention of Edmund Husserl here is in order since, by returning to Kant to reinvestigate the problem of transcendental logic, he managed in an innovative move to secure the phenomenological sense of this contextualizing form which resonates with Peirce's phenomenology or phaneroscopy. Husserl started from *pragma* abstracted into what he called 'intentionality' which on investigation turned out to be an orientation that presupposes the establishment of a relation to the world. From this he concluded that 'the stream of mental processes can never consist of just actualities' (1950: paragraph 35) but must at the same time embrace also potentialities. Intentionality as actuality always and everywhere correlates with potentiality in the form of what he called 'eidetic' or 'noematic' structures, 'formations of meaning', 'idealities' (1969: 242, 245, 262), 'field of unities', 'validity unities' or 'world' (1950: 137, 70). These represent the horizon of meaning, the continually shifting 'horizon of determinable indeterminacy' (1950: 101) within which we always inextricably find ourselves situated, which defines Husserl's new version of phenomenological transcendentalism. The crux of his innovation, it should be noted, was to disclose the double status of the world. As in the case of Kant's pragmatic horizon, the phenomenological horizon suggests a circular closure of reference. Here, however, it was not theory and knowledge referring to human concerns, but rather meaning referring to further meaning – that is, actualized meaning in a situation referring to potential meaning beyond the situation. Accordingly, the world has a double status. Humans are in the world yet they simultaneously appeal to the world as the ultimate horizon of meaning; the world simultaneously contains itself and transcends itself. This implies that actuality and the potentiality it presupposes and refers to must both be attended to at one and the same time. This accounts for Husserl's insistence on the need for what he called 'continuously two-sided research' (1969: 263, 37). By the way, his successor Martin Heidegger followed this same line by on the one hand introducing what he called 'being-in-the-world' (1967: 149), interestingly elaborated by actually borrowing from pragmatism, and on the other stressing the 'history of Being' (1975: 1) in

the sense of the presupposed yet essentially uncontrollable higher-level happening of meaning. Unlike Peirce, however, Husserl and especially Heidegger moved too strongly in an idealistic direction.

Particular meaning possibilities and formal combination potentialities

As will become graphically apparent in due course, the distinctions and relations among the different dimensions of Peirce's pragmatist architectonic are of the greatest importance for grasping the philosophical and social scientific significance of pragmatism and pragmatics. Particularly crucial is to appreciate the distinction between the dimension of general concepts necessary for the clarification of the ends of action and the transcendental formal-meaningful or categorical-phenomenological set of conditions making it possible. In the former case, we have the meaning possibilities available in a particular situation. In the latter, by contrast, we are concerned with the meaningful formal or logical combination potentialities which are the conditions of possibility of a situation or, more generally, of a given world as such. This distinction is important, even decisive, as Peirce's pragmatism which depends on it demonstrates. The differences between distinct versions of pragmatism and, indeed, between divergent types of sociology which are in some sense informed by pragmatism can be traced to whether or not they observe this basic distinction in their respective conceptions of the form of practices.

3 Varieties of Pragmatism

In 1898, having publicly acknowledged Peirce as its originator, James embarked on a popularization drive of pragmatism which gave it momentum in the United States as well as resonance in an international debate which lasted until 1914, the year of Peirce's death and the start of the First World War. Although James himself represented an existential version, the debate was largely focused on a utilitarian interpretation of pragmatism. In the interwar period, pragmatism's uptake was strengthened by its fusion with the classical republican tradition which animated the American political context with its ideal of democratic communal self-organization. This context fostered the appearance of varieties of pragmatism possessing social scientific and political relevance, thus confirming that pragmatism is by no means a unified school. Considered from the metaproblematic perspective, it is evident that these varieties differ from one another on the basis of the divergent ways in which they conceive not only *pragma* but especially also its contextualizing form.

James: subjective-psychological pragmatism

William James (1978), a psychologist, confined pragmatism to subjective experience in particular contexts of situated action in which practical events served as a test for ideas. It represented a translation of Peirce's pragmatic maxim directly into the practice of everyday life which foreshortened general ideas to particular actions and conceivable practical consequences to psychological effects. This served the entirely defensible purpose of dealing with pressing individual existential problems, but the fact that James did not always present his arguments with the necessary care created the impression of a utilitarian variety of pragmatism. This interpretation was strengthened by the availability in the international context of Nietzsche's notorious definition of truth and its echoing in close contact with James by F. C. S. Schiller (1903), the most prominent British pragmatist of the time who opposed democracy, promoted eugenics and lauded fascism. According to Nietzsche, who scorned general concepts, 'Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for *life* is ultimately decisive' (1968, Aphorism 493). Not only Peirce criticized James both privately and publicly for his actionist and subjectivist reduction of practice and form, but an international reaction levelled an objection against the tendency to reduce truth to individual self-interest and utility. Among the critics was Emile Durkheim who delivered a course of lectures in the winter semester of 1913-14 under the title of 'Pragmatism and Sociology' (1983).

Mead and Dewey: sociological pragmatism

Mead and Dewey both transferred pragmatism, originally founded by a philosophizing natural scientist, to the social sciences. By contrast with James' subjectivist version, they represented a more sociological one.

George Herbert Mead developed what turned out to be the classical theory of symbolically mediated social interaction in which communicative action and interaction take place in an expansive form. At the first level, he identifies a vital general concept that enters and regulates the experience, thinking and action of the members: 'The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called "the generalized other"' (1974: 154). Then on the second higher level beyond the community or group, he locates such universal ideas as 'democracy', 'universal discourse' and a 'universal human society' (1974: 281, 327, 310). With this differentiated understanding of the form of social action, Mead maintained a closer relation to Peirce's deflated Kantian transcendentalism than his colleague and friend Dewey did.

In the wake of the post-First World War industrial-capitalist transformation of America which rendered classical republicanism increasingly ineffective, John Dewey made a remarkable contribution by focusing on the regeneration of democracy, supported by writings on ethics and education. In a number of important works, he elaborated a theory of the communicative organization and self-control of the community in which he gave a central role both to the participating public and to social inquiry as part of the democratic resolution of collective problems. However, the limits of his position on the form of democratic communication are evident from these very works. In *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), the collective engagement sustaining the process of problem-solving is subject to self-regulation strictly in terms of collective standards generated internally to the process itself, the most general idea being that of communicatively enabled cooperative self-governance. In a study of logic in the service of developing his theory of inquiry – indeed, the first systematic attempt at 'pragmatic' logic since Peirce – he formally confirmed his rather narrow acceptance of what he himself called 'forms' (Dewey 1939: iii). Logical forms arise strictly only from within the operation of inquiry itself, implying that there are no relevant universal categories – e.g. validity or truth – beyond inquiry. The rationality of logic is exclusively a matter of the relation between means and consequences. It is conceptions such as this that account for the widespread, yet not entirely justified, criticism of Dewey as an instrumentalist. It should be noted that this particular conception of logic is the exact opposite of Peirce's view which accords social significance to logic: 'Logic is rooted in the social principle' (Peirce 1992: 149). But what is particularly remarkable is that besides traditional and his own pragmatic logic, Dewey's study contains no reference to the significant modern development from Kant's transcendental logic to Husserl's endeavour to lay a new foundation for logic.

Mills: critical sociological pragmatism

In his early writings in which he incorporated pragmatism in a sociological approach, C. Wright Mills (1964) started from Peirce's pragmatic maxim but simultaneously depended heavily also on Dewey. Despite this dependence, however, his conception of the form of social action and communication is considerably different from the latter's. He actually attacked what he regarded as Dewey's nakedly utilitarian scheme and undertook to correct it by stressing the intrinsically social character of the motives driving action. In his famous late work, *The Sociological Imagination*, he unmistakably still adhered to this same approach. Stressing the need to bear in mind the framework of society as a whole, he here sketched the task of the sociologist as being the identification of socially and politically significant problems manifested both as 'personal troubles of milieu' and as 'public issues of social structure' (1970: 14) and their critical analysis with reference to their moral substance. This latter requirement reveals Mills' sense of form possessing motivational and social relevance.

Problem situations are not structured solely by general concepts directly relevant to the socio-political problem at issue or by criteria generated in the struggle over them, but more importantly still also by what he called 'master symbols of legitimation' (1970: 46). And to this he sagaciously added: 'the relations of such symbols to the structure of institutions are among the most important problems in social science'. Among such symbols he singled out the situation-transcendent ideas of freedom and reason. For Mills, their significance resides in the fact that such forms are not only used for the justification of the status quo, often by obfuscating, manipulative and repressive means, but also serve as a basis for questioning and criticizing the organization of power and related positions.

It should be obvious, to reiterate, that the marked differences between distinct varieties of pragmatism can be attributed to how they conceive of *pragma* – individual utilitarian action, individual existential action, communicative action, symbolically mediated social action or communication – and whether or not they observe in their respective conceptions of the form of practices the basic distinction between immanent situation-bound and situation-transcendent criteria.

Although pragmatism after its developmental spurt between the 1890s and 1930s continued to have some small influence in the philosophy of science and in symbolic interactionism, it had gone into decline from the 1930s due to the ascendancy of analytical philosophy and the changed conditions ushered in by the Second World War. For decades, consequently, it languished in the doldrums in American universities. It is only since the 1970s that what in the 1990s came to be called 'the renaissance of pragmatism' is observable, in large part due to Apel and Habermas' earlier innovative reception of Peirce's pragmatism and to the efforts of American scholars like Richard Bernstein, Richard Rorty and, more recently, Robert Brandom to revive it.

4 From Behaviouristic or Empirical to Transcendental or Formal Pragmatics

It is only with Morris' books, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938) and *Signs, Language, and Behaviour* (1946), giving evidence of his appropriation of Peirce, that the cross-currents of pragmatism and pragmatics were unleashed. But it would take until the late 1960s and 1970s, marked by the publication of Apel's Peirce studies and Habermas' adoption of the resulting perspective, before the implications of this complex relationship would become visible.

Morris: pragmatics

Charles Morris turned to Peirce's work at a time when the philosophy of language, within the framework of the development of analytical philosophy, had passed its syntactic phase and was in the process of articulating its semantic phase which, in turn, corresponded to the logical-positivist phase in the philosophy of science. On the basis of the appropriation of Peirce's pragmatism and semiotic theory of the threefold sign-relation, he was able in parallel with the later Wittgenstein to take the innovative step of opening the third phase by adding what he called 'pragmatics' to the previous two phases. Whereas the first phase was exemplified by the early Wittgenstein's concern with logical form or syntax and the second by Tarski and Carnap's logical-semantic frameworks, pragmatics referred to the active, concrete process of 'semiosis' (1938: 3) in the sense of the generation, communication, reception and acting upon information and meaning. Instead of structure or meaning, the focus thus shifted to the actual use of language. In his main work, Morris went beyond the syntactics-semantics-pragmatics subdivision of the earlier book to investigate 'semiotic' in terms of the nature of signs, situated signification processes and 'formators' and 'formative discourse' shaping such processes (1946: 153). The fact that his work was published under the auspices of the positivist programme for the unification of science, however, accounts for the constraint that enforced a narrowing of his perspective. Semiotics in general and pragmatics in

particular were explicitly conceived from a behaviouristic perspective which stresses the disinterested observation of external behaviour at the expense of attending to the actor, the interpreter and their sociocultural context.

Wittgenstein, Winch and Searle: language-games, rule following and speech acts

Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1968: paragraph 7) concept of 'language-games' was his attempt to capture the use people make of language in specific situations – i.e., pragmatics – within the context of a form of life of which there is a plurality. While he, like Morris, also tended toward a behaviouristic emphasis on custom, training and lack of reflexivity, however, Winch and Searle went some way toward redressing this inadequacy by their contributions to pragmatics. Peter Winch offered an influential interpretation of Wittgenstein that focused on the concept of 'following a rule' (1959: 25), with rules being available as *a priori* forms of life or conceptual understanding. This is indeed an explicit conception of the form of practices, yet it suffers from being confined to the 'conventions' (1959: 181) of particular closed language-games. John Searle broke through this particularistic barrier by putting forward an institutional theory of the performance of speech acts as realizations of the 'conventions' of any one of a range of particular languages – e.g. English, French or German – all of which are underpinned by 'the same underlying rules' (1965: 39). Being both convention- and rule-governed implies that a speech act has 'formal features which admit of independently study' (1965: 17). These features are by no means restricted only to a particular conventional form, but simultaneously also take a rule-like or universal pragmatic form. And Searle insisted that participation in such universal rule systems entails 'a committed use of words' (1965: 198) and, hence, reflexivity beyond custom and tradition.

In Winch and Searle we thus see a progressive shift from a behaviouristic to a formal type of pragmatics which Apel and Habermas would later make fully transparent – Apel (1981), for example, using his own well-established 'transcendental-pragmatics' in a critique of Morris' behaviourism.

Apel: transcendental-pragmatics

It is on the basis of his early study of Heidegger's replacement of Kant's unhistorical transcendental presuppositions by *existentialia* or temporal principles of human existence which shifted the attention to the 'fore-structure' or pre-understanding shaping the relation to the world that Karl-Otto Apel (1973: 24) arrived at his understanding of the basic structures of the human form of life as 'quasi-transcendental'. No long after, however, he discovered Peirce's much earlier and more thorough-going semiotic transformation of Kant's rigid consciousness-based transcendental philosophy. This discovery, supplemented by his investigation of the development of the philosophy of language from an emphasis on syntax via semantics to pragmatics, prompted him to adopt 'transcendental-pragmatics' as the title of his own philosophical position. Apel's (1967/70, 1995) seminal Peirce studies not only played a key role in kick-starting the renaissance of pragmatism, but they also had a formative impact on his collaborator, colleague and friend Habermas (1979: 1-68) who chose the parallel title of 'universal-pragmatics', later renamed 'formal-pragmatics'. It is at this juncture that the relations or cross-currents between pragmatism and pragmatics for the first time became palpable.

By having made the unjustly neglected founder of pragmatism, Peirce, the centre of attention and having unearthed the quasi-transcendental Kantian assumptions exhibited by his combination of the pragmatic maxim with a scheme of categories, Apel effectively highlighted what I earlier called the metaproblematic of pragmatism: that pragmatism, supplemented by pragmatics, concerns action that is accompanied by a concurrent reflexive directing and guiding understanding of the very form of such action. Peirce understood the process of the interrelation of action and form in terms of semiosis in the sense of the sign-mediated process of the generation and signification of information and meaning that is intelligible and thus interpretable by others. Mead, Dewey and Mills had already

taken the step of thematizing such semiosis in terms of symbolic social and political communication, but it is the introduction of pragmatics that made possible its analysis in terms of the use of language in specific situations, language games, forms of understanding, speech acts and accompanying formal features such as conventions or institutions and formal rule systems. Pragmatics thus allowed not only the internal articulation of pragmatism in terms of its two major reference points, action or practices and the forms of such engagements, but also the generalization of those features to a more complex level – for example, taking the illocutionary binding force of speech acts to public discourse and following how learning in specific situations gives rise to constitutive and regulative forms. Leaning on Apel, Habermas advanced this process.

Habermas: universal or formal pragmatics

As early as 1968, Jürgen Habermas (1972) drew on his insight into Peirce's pragmatist linking of action and form to analyse the different types of empirical-analytical, interpretative and critical social science in terms of the transcendental framework each presupposes – the mode of engagement relative to a particular kind of problem and the type of knowledge aimed at on the basis of the relevant cognitive interest. But it was when he, inspired by Apel, developed his universal or formal pragmatics that he took his most decisive step. While there is a widespread empirical view of pragmatics as the use of language in specific situations, for instance the object of conversation analysis, Habermas (1979: 1-68) started from the assumption, not unlike Searle, that such use has universal or formal features which can be studied in their own right. His formal-pragmatics represents the extrapolation and articulation of exactly those features. According to it, the most basic formal-pragmatic categories are the three objective, social and subjective world concepts presupposed by all experience, thought, action and interaction. And to these worlds correspond the validity principles of truth, rightness and truthfulness respectively which are introduced into action, interaction and social relations and given effect there through the implicit or explicit discursive raising and acceptance of validity claims.

The next step for Habermas was to restate social theory from the formal-pragmatic perspective in his major sociological work, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/87). While there are different kinds of speech acts that through validity claims bring the formal presuppositions or universal pragmatic forms into play in concrete situations, Habermas singled out the illocutionary type carrying 'communicative action' (1984: 94-101) as the sociologically central one. As regards form, he treated 'the lifeworld' (1987: 119-52) as being complementary to communicative action, which implies that the lifeworld encapsulates the form of action. It is quite a complex concept. That it is conceived in both a situation-immanent and a situation-transcendent manner is confirmed by Habermas' (1992: 103) later introduction of the concept of 'immanent transcendence'. On the one hand, the lifeworld embraces immanent personality structures and social and cultural institutions or conventions and, on the other, it has what could be regarded as a transcendent, meta-conventional, meta-cultural dimension which harbours the three formal-pragmatic world concepts and their phenomenologically specified validity principles. Validity claims have a concretizing pragmatic mediating role between these two levels by drawing on the formal, ideal, ought validity of such principles as truth, rightness and truthfulness in order to stimulate and shape the formation of the social validity of particular norms and values or conventions relevant to the given situation. From the current perspective, it is significant that in a late work Habermas (2003: 8) gave his thought the philosophical backing of a theory of knowledge which he calls 'Kantian pragmatism'.

As in the case of Apel, then, we see that Habermas developed a philosophical-sociological position that theoretically drew basic insights from pragmatism and pragmatics and their interrelations. The pragmatist relational complex of action and form is given central place and it is then articulated in sociological detail by means of expanded ideas deriving from pragmatics. Apel and Habermas'

seminal contribution did not remain without consequences for sociology, but the same can of course be said also of pragmatism in general.

5 Contemporary Sociological Appropriations of Pragmatism-Pragmatics

Boltanski and Thévenot's pragmatic sociology

It is apparent from *De la Justification* (1991) that Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot did not derive their pragmatic sociology, as it has come to be called, from the tradition of pragmatism running from Peirce to James, Mead and Dewey. And although a chapter heading reads 'Toward a Pragmatics of Reflection' (*Vers une pragmatique de la réflexion*) devoted to a look back at their own work, there is no sign that they have any connection with the tradition of pragmatics either. Despite all this, however, there is no doubt that they follow in the slipstream of pragmatism. What confirms this above all is the core concern of their sociology of the critical and justificatory practices of the ordinary members of society: the relation of practices to the diverse forms giving shape to them. This much is incontrovertible if one assesses their work from the perspective of the metaproblematic of pragmatism. But it is also confirmed by their display of other pragmatist hallmarks, such as an approach focusing on the 'situation' (1991: 11) and the model of 'discord' (1991: 270) or dispute which starts from a breakdown or problem and ends with the re-establishment of agreement. They trace their concern in that context with the problem of general concepts or 'forms of generality' (*formes de généralité*) (1991: 20) neither to the pragmatists nor to Kant, but rather to Rousseau's concept of the general will and Durkheim's concepts of collective consciousness and society. Remarkably, Boltanski and Thévenot do not register that Kant developed Rousseau position and that Durkheim owed much to Kant. Having started from Rousseau, it is obvious not only why they turn to an extensive study of political philosophy in order to draw concepts of forms of generality or the common good from it, but also why they failed to see, when they felt compelled to supplement the moral aspect by adding the technological and the aesthetic ones, that Kant had already gone beyond Rousseau's exclusively political focus in exactly this manner with his three critiques. The question here, however, is how precisely Boltanski and Thévenot conceive of what they call 'forms of generality' – a particularly pressing one since they are not nominalists. Do they maintain the two-level conception of situation-bound and situation-transcendent forms, as suggested by Peirce, or do they accept the more limited conception of strictly situation-bound forms, as forcefully defended for example by Dewey?

From their analytical framework it is apparent that Boltanski and Thévenot's approach has three major dimensions. In keeping with the practices-form relation it incorporates a 'general/particular' axis (1991:188). Second, on the particular extremity are located a plurality of actors possessing a reflexive and critical competence and engaging in practices and, on the general one, are a plurality of forms of generality. These forms are conceived as the 'grammar' (1991: 33, 177) of a properly organized human socio-political order. They are referred to by a variety of names, including particularly 'order of worth' (*ordre de grandeur*) (1991: 99), but also 'common goods', 'principles of justice', 'principles of equivalence' and 'principles of order'. At times, the authors' intention is apparently to distinguish between the 'orders of worth' and the principles, as when they more fully describe the latter in terms of 'a higher common principle' (*principe supérieur commun*) (1991: 33) possessing a constraining significance. So, for instance, they see the principles playing a role by securing justifications in disputes through which an agreement is forged about the attribution of different degrees of worth to the persons involved. But even beyond the series of principles relative to the plurality of orders of worth they also identify a few still more general principles of legitimacy. The third dimension is occupied by things and objects of different kinds, depending on which types of practices and forms they correspond to, which consolidate and lend an objective existence to distinctive worlds. It seems that what these things and objects are could most conveniently be

identified with reference to the institutional complex relevant to a world. Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 200-62) distinguish six such worlds each with its own characteristic features. Table 1 below is a partial reconstruction of their view of the six worlds with their associated institutional-object dimensions, orders of worth, higher common principles and finally the principles of justice constraining all the worlds.

Table 1: Pragmatic Sociology's Six Worlds

Situation-Immanent				
WORLD	INSTITUTION/OBJECTS	ORDER OF WORTH	HIGHER PRINCIPLE	ULTIMATE PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE
Inspiration	Religion/art	Ethereal state	Inspiration: creativity	Common humanity & Legitimate distribution and coordination
Domestic	Personal relations	Hierarchical superiority	Tradition: trust	
Opinion	Public relations	Fame	Public: recognition	
Civic	Community relations	Rule-governed	Collective: equality	
Merchant	Commerce	Desirable	Competition: market	
Industrial	Production	Functional	Performance: efficiency	

Boltanski and Thévenot exhibit a pronounced concern with the pragmatist metaproblematic of the relation between practices and forms and they moreover offer a differentiated approach to its treatment. This approach allows them to develop illuminating analyses of different worlds, the critical and justificatory practices typical of each world, cross-purposes and conflicts of different worlds in particular dispute situations, and processes leading to the closure of disputes. The crucial question in the present context concerning pragmatism and pragmatics, however, is what limits their particular appropriation of the pragmatic legacy imposes on their sociology.

First of all, it is noteworthy that Boltanski and Thevenot distance their sociology of critique from behaviourism, positivism and culturalism. The argument for this is that the human sciences must be true to their subject, namely, persons whose identities and justifiable relations presuppose 'a reference to a principle that extends beyond themselves' (1991: 33). This is a highly commendable position which is in line with the pragmatist metaproblematic, but what precisely this principle is and what its status amounts to remain rather fuzzy. Indeed, the concept of forms of generality is the most central yet the fuzziest part of their work. One gets the distinct impression of authors shuffling between the two options played out against one another in the pragmatist debate, whether between Peirce and James, Apel and Wellmer or Habermas and Rorty: either a situation-transcendent principle or a situation-immanent principle. Beyond their gerrymandering, however, Boltanski and Thevenot's appeal to a principle that extends beyond persons is decisively put in place by the fact that their project is a sociology of ordinary people's criticisms and justifications, a sociology of critique, which is conceived in opposition to a critical sociology. Not only are all persons unrealistically and uncritically assumed to possess the same reflexive and critical competence which is developed to exactly the same level and backed by the same level or resources, but all forms of generality, whether orders of worth or principles, cannot occupy any other position than strictly only within the bounds of a situation. If these forms, while remaining rooted in situations, were to extend beyond or transcend situations, then the limits of a sociology of critique would be shattered. Whatever the impression they give, therefore, it is not possible for Boltanski and Thevenot to entertain the idea of situation-transcendent ideas or principles. It is for this reason that they, by contrast with their apparent appeals to transcendent principles, reject the efficacy of transcendental rules in favour of the constraints of pragmatic forms and, by extension, confirm – not unlike Winch – that 'there is no higher vantage point above any of the worlds, no external position from which the plurality of justices could be considered from a distance, as a range of equally possible choices' (1991: 285). But what then is meant by a 'higher common principle'? It is simply declared a

'convention', a 'metaphysical' entity (1991: 177, 183) that defines the humanity of persons and determines or qualifies their value or worth. There is no suggestion of a possible connection with evolution or phylogenesis, a topic of interest to the pragmatists. By contrast, ontologically Boltanski and Thévenot (1991: 168) insist that what appears in a situation alone counts, while the existence of anything else is of no interest.

It is due to the inadequacies and limits of a strictly immanent, situation-bound sociology of critique that both Boltanski and Thévenot each in his own way subsequently were moved to undertake corrective steps by returning to the project of a critical sociology.

Apelian-Habermasian cognitive-pragmatic critical sociology

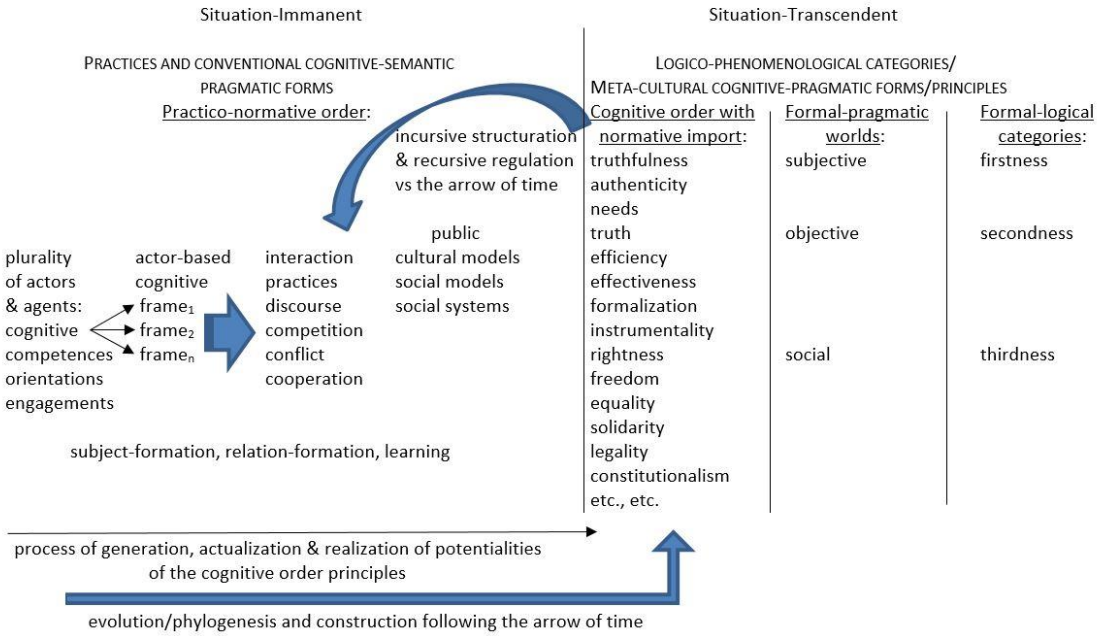
An alternative sociological project which draws directly from pragmatism and pragmatics is what may be described as the cognitive-pragmatic critical sociology that stems from critical theory as represented by Apel and Habermas. It proceeds from the acknowledgement that critical theory and pragmatism both derive from the left-Hegelian tradition which the contemporaries Marx and Peirce represented at the time of its emergence in the nineteenth century against the background of Kant and Hegel (Strydom 2011; Delanty 2013; O'Mahony 2013). A comparison of this alternative version of sociology with Boltanski and Thévenot's shows that there is a significant difference between them based on the former's more thorough appropriation of pragmatism and, indeed, its mastery of the cross-currents of pragmatism and pragmatics.

In accordance with Marx and Peirce's respective detranscendentalized emphases of historically accumulated rational potentialities and general concepts as well as Apel and Habermas' quasi-transcendental conception of necessary and unavoidable conditions, this alternative sociological project adopts a consistent approach to the complex of forms of practices. Rather than wavering and gerrymandering, it draws a sharp analytical distinction between general forms like Boltanski and Thévenot's orders of worth and common goods, on the one hand, and universal forms such as principles, on the other. By contrast with pragmatic sociology's confinement of all forms to one conventional type, the separation of the universal kind secures the character of the alternative as a version of critical theory. The distinction between distinct types of forms is maintained on the basis of the key left-Hegelian concept of immanent-transcendence (Strydom 2011) according to which universal principles indeed remain rooted in a given situation yet transcend it in the sense of being applicable to all situations. From this emanates a coherent grasp of the implied process in which practices constructively follow the arrow of time and cognitive-pragmatic forms structurationally go against it. As regards the principles, accordingly, far from being conventional, they are meta-conventional; and far from being purely metaphysical entities, they are meta-cultural outcomes of evolution, particularly of the phylogenesis of the human brain and mind (Strydom forthcoming). With the last enlargement of the brain some 40,000 years ago, the mind acquired a meta-representational faculty accompanied by an unprecedented degree of cognitive fluidity or flexibility. Universal principles as presuppositions that humans *qua* humans necessarily and unavoidably make are given with this meta-representation and fluidity. As such, they are part of the phylogenetically evolved form of the human mind which every normal individual acquires through the process of ontogenesis. Irrespective of whether form is phylogenetically common and meta-cultural or ontogenetically singular and in the head, therefore, it is a cognitive phenomenon, one that is cognitively maintained and activated in concrete situations.

The stark difference in the impact of pragmatism on Boltanski and Thévenot's pragmatic sociology and the Apelian-Habermasian cognitive-pragmatic critical sociology respectively is especially apparent in the complex area of forms. This key point, alluded to earlier, cannot be over-emphasized. While pragmatic sociology confines the different kinds of form – both orders of worth

and principles – in a somewhat fuzzy state immanently within the parameters of a situation, cognitive-pragmatic sociology by contrast in keeping with the concept of immanent-transcendence sees forms operating both immanently and transcendently. On the immanent side, it locates cultural models, including Boltanski and Thévenot's orders of worth and common goods, which are indeed structured by transcendent principles but articulate closely in the situation with social models, social systems and administrative and organizational units. On the transcendent side, it has a multi-layered view of form. Peirce's three formal-logical categories form the basis, followed secondly by his and Husserl's phenomenological specification of their meaning content and, thirdly, by Habermas' formal-pragmatic scheme of the objective, social and subjective worlds erected on that foundation. It should be stressed, however, that Habermas' formal-pragmatic worlds are in turn sociologically radicalised so as to give rise to 'the cognitive order of society' which contains the cognitive-pragmatic forms functioning as the constitutive principles of any and every situation in so far as it is a human situation and, therefore, has some degree of rationality in it, irrespective of whether subjective, social or objective rationality (Strydom in press).

Figure 2: Cognitive-Pragmatic Sociology's Multidimensional Model



The comparison of Figure 2 with Table 1 above should make the marked difference between the two approaches, notwithstanding their shared pragmatic core, graphically apparent. This decisive difference determines the form of their respective modes of analysis. Pragmatic sociology takes the quite arbitrarily chosen six worlds as the basic elements that must be analysed in their conflictual and reconciled relations in order to understand the constitution of a situation and the practices transpiring in it. Cognitive-pragmatic sociology, by contrast, does not take substantively defined worlds as the most important form elements but, adopting a cognitive perspective, breaks down such totalities by shifting the attention to the constitutive and regulative role of the multiplicity of meta-level principles of the cognitive order. On this basis, an investigation is conducted of the competitive combination of a selection of these principles in practical contexts where cultural models at a lower level incorporating values and norms also structure and regulate practices (e.g. Strydom 2012; O'Mahony 2013). Further, instead of obviating the need to consider actors by treating them all as in principle equal, as does pragmatic sociology, cognitive-pragmatic sociology carefully considers the relevant range of cognitively, socially and culturally different actors and agents. On the whole, then, the arbitrary theoretical fixing of the analytical perspective beforehand by a conception of worlds is avoided by employing a more flexible theoretical approach. And

simultaneously the perspective is also broadened beyond the situation in order to provide both meta-cultural and natural ontological footholds for normative and explanatory critiques respectively (Strydom 2011, forthcoming).

Conclusion

In this article, an attempt was made to clarify the relations between pragmatism and pragmatics. The argument was that pragmatism is a concern with practices and the forms shaping them, while pragmatics is an articulation empirically of the unfolding of form-guided practices and/or formally of the pragmatic forms as such. Engaging in the world and undertaking generative practices are of great importance, but it is their deployment in and through processes reflexively directed and guided by pragmatic forms of different levels and scales that attracts special attention. Lower level conventional pragmatic forms that can be found within particular situations are complemented by meta-level forms that are rooted in situations, transcend any and every particular situation, and work back in a structuring and regulative way on situations. The analysis of such pragmatic forms can on the one hand be given formal-logical and philosophical support and, on the other, be sociologically sharpened by mobilizing the principles of the meta-cultural cognitive order of society while keeping their phylogenetic origin in mind.

The crucial theoretical point made by the argument, however, concerns the significance of the orientation toward cognitive-pragmatic forms. It presents itself in two distinct versions: an orientation toward conventions, or convention-reflexivity, and an orientation toward principles, of principle-reflexivity. Pragmatic sociology restricts itself to convention-reflexivity even when it mentions principles. Ideally, however, an adequate sociological approach informed by pragmatism and pragmatics should combine both convention- and principle-reflexivity. This is the aim of cognitive-pragmatic sociology.

The real thrust of the article, however, is the practical insight that the urgent challenge of our troubled times is precisely the recovery of the orientation toward cognitive-pragmatic forms, not only in our renewed understanding of sociology, but also in our own ordinary everyday practices and those of others whom we study sociologically.

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