Introduction to the Symposium "Wittgenstein and Pragmatism: A Reassessment"

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1   The connections between Wittgenstein's philosophy and the pragmatist tradition are often alluded to, but seldom thoroughly explored. It is commonly assumed that Wittgenstein was scarcely acquainted with such authors as Charles Sanders Peirce or John Dewey (a false idea, as we shall see), even though he had a rather extended knowledge of the philosophy of William James. Nevertheless, the converging features between Wittgenstein and pragmatism are quite striking: we shall hardly need to mention Wittgenstein's claim that meaning is use, his insistence on the pictorial dimension of mathematical proof, or again his emphasis on action in his characterization of will and intention. On the other hand, modern and contemporary pragmatist philosophers (R. B. Brandom, H. Putnam...) have often developed a complex and intricate relationship to Wittgenstein's philosophy, since they sometimes use it as a support to their own arguments, but sometimes also point at its insufficiencies, and try to amend them. Hence the following questions: in what sense may Wittgenstein's philosophy be described as 'pragmatist'? Symmetrically, in what sense may contemporary pragmatist philosophy be described as 'Wittgensteinian'? What are the incompatibilities, if any, between these two traditions? Lastly, what part has been played by such 'middlemen' as C. K. Ogden or F. P. Ramsey in the interactions between Wittgenstein and pragmatism? Answering these questions should provide an opportunity to explore the dialogues and/or misunderstandings between a European or continental tradition in philosophy, and a more specifically American analysis of the notions of meaning, reasoning, action, etc.

2   On one side, to compare Wittgenstein with pragmatism has become a classical topic since the 'pragmatist turn' in American philosophy in the eighties-nineties, and since the pragmatism's revival due to such philosophers as Putnam, Rorty or Brandom, to speak only of the greatest. On the other hand, many British philosophers, more or less

connected to Wittgenstein, are self-avowed pragmatists: there is a 'Cambridge pragmatism' illustrated by Ramsey, Anscombe, von Wright, Mellor, Blackburn, all of them having something to do with pragmatist topics. And Wittgenstein himself, when he returned to Cambridge in 1929, developed a philosophy that was very different from the *Tractatus*, and distinctly pragmatist in its nature.

3   In this special issue, we would like to submit to our readers the hypothesis that Wittgenstein's return to Cambridge in 1929 was also a pragmatist turn. This event is often imputed to the acquaintance with Ramsey and Sraffa. But it seems to us that we could also impute it to his having read Dewey, especially *Experience and Nature* (1925). The whole theme of the return of philosophy to the ordinary which permeates the *Philosophical Investigations* is probably borrowed from Dewey's *Experience and Nature*. The idea of equating meaning with use, the emphasis on instrumentalism, the quest of the ordinary, the account that is now taken of the context of language and of the practical consequences of what is said, the conception of language as a set of deeds makes up an overwhelming evidence for the similarity between Wittgenstein and Dewey, as well as for the affinities between Wittgenstein and pragmatism in general.

4   The papers collected in this issue browse the various aspects of these connections between Wittgenstein and pragmatism, by focusing on the necessity to reevaluate such connections. In "A New Look at Wittgenstein and Pragmatism," Sami Pihlström reconsiders Wittgenstein's relation to this tradition by discussing three key issues of Wittgenstein studies: the distinction between the propositional and the non-propositional; the tension between anti-Cartesian faillibilism and what has been called the "truth in skepticism" in Wittgenstein; and the relation between metaphysics and the criticism of metaphysics in Wittgenstein's philosophy. In her paper: "Who's Calling Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?," Judith Hensley addresses the debate that surrounds "pragmatic" interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein. She draws in particular on Hilary Putnam's lecture "Was Wittgenstein a Pragmatist?" and on Stanley Cavell's response "What's the Use of Calling Emerson a Pragmatist?." Anna Boncompagni's paper: "Streams and River-Beds. James' Stream of Thought in Wittgenstein's Manuscripts 165 and 129" focuses on a picture common to Wittgenstein and William James, namely the image of the flux, stream, or river, by referring to some notes belonging to Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*. This analysis leads to the theme of the relations among science, philosophy and metaphysics, and to the conclusion that Wittgenstein did appreciate James for his intuitions and for the power of his imagination, but could not agree on the explicit formulation of his ideas. The specific connections between Wittgenstein and British pragmatism are addressed by Mathieu Marion in "Wittgenstein, Ramsey and British Pragmatism," where he examines the transmission of some ideas of the pragmatist tradition to Wittgenstein, in his "middle period," through the intermediary of F. P. Ramsey, with whom he had numerous fruitful discussions at Cambridge in 1929. Marion argues more specifically that one must first come to terms with Ramsey's own views in 1929, and explain how they differ from views expressed in earlier papers from 1925-27. One is then in a better position to understand the impact of Ramsey's astute critique of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* in conjunction with his pragmatism, and explain how it may have set into motion the 'later' Wittgenstein.

5   The issue then proposes a series of paper devoted to the relationships between Wittgenstein and Dewey. Christiane Chauviré's "*Experience and Nature*. Wittgenstein Reader of Dewey" focuses on Dewey's influence which is seldom mentioned in the

literature when the relationships between Wittgenstein and pragmatism are addressed. Yet, it should be known that Dewey's philosophy is clearly echoed in Wittgenstein's later philosophy, as it is expressed in his *Philosophical Investigations.* In particular, Dewey's *Experience and Nature* develops many creeds also taken up by Wittgenstein: for instance, the critical attitude towards artificial notions that break with primary experience (e. g., the "Self"), the will to bring philosophy back to the ordinary, or the emphasis laid on the necessity to pay attention to what lies open to the view. James Luntley's "Training, Training, Training: The Making of Second Nature and the Roots of Wittgenstein's Pragmatism" is then interested in the influence of pragmatism on Wittgenstein's conception of practice, and argues that Wittgenstein's appeal to practice is much closer to Dewey's than to Peirce's. In "Wittgenstein, Dewey, and the Practical Foundation of Knowledge," Jorg Völbers compares the philosophies of Wittgenstein and Dewey in their connection to a theory of practice: Wittgenstein and Dewey both express a defense of the "primary of practice"; yet, their philosophies are extremely different in style, and considering those differences may allow us to examine what kind of knowledge we should expect from philosophy, a question to which Wittgenstein and Dewey provide very different answers. In "Group Morality and Forms of Life: Dewey, Wittgenstein and Inter-subjectivity," Rick Davis tries to establish connections between the pragmatist philosophical tradition and the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, and argues that among these connections is the affinity between John Dewey's account of the development of group morality and Wittgenstein's concept of "form of life."

6   Lastly, this issue addresses more contemporary issues regarding the connections between Wittgenstein and pragmatism. In "A Philosophical Bestiary," Joseph Margolis notices that different readings have been provided as for the connections between Wittgenstein and pragmatism, such as for example H. Putnam's picture as opposed to R. Rorty's description that packages Wittgenstein and Dewey together as 'postmodern' pragmatists. Joseph Margolis tries to broaden the discussion by including an examination of Wilfrid Sellars, Gottlob Frege, Robert Brandom, and Huw Price. His aim it to review the newer challenges of naturalism and deflationism, which, by their own instruction, should bring us to the decisive contest between the 'pragmatism' of the *Investigations* and that of Brandom's *Between Saying and Doing.* The larger purpose of this exercise is to assess pragmatism's best prospects currently, in meeting the gathering challenges of the day. Guy Bennett-Hunter's paper: "A Pragmatist Conception of Certainty: Wittgenstein and Santayana" draws on Duncan Pritchard's recent reading of Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, and identifies two important and related points of affinity between this Wittgensteinian line of thought on certainty and the line of thought on the same topic articulated in Santayana's *Scepticism and Animal Faith.* First, both lines of thought reflect a pragmatist concept of certainty. Secondly, one may examine the way in which the pragmatist concept of certainty functions, for the two thinkers, as a response to scepticism, since both point towards the possibility of a distinctively pragmatist response to scepticism which involves an anti-epistemological model of the intimate relation of the human self to the world. Francesco Callegaro's "Having Social Practices in Mind. Wittgenstein's Anthropological Pragmatism in Perspective" seeks to explain why and how Wittgenstein's idea of social practices should be considered as expressing a fundamental pragmatist commitment. In this purpose, Callegaro focuses on R. Brandom's attempt to understand Wittgenstein's second philosophy as belonging to an intellectual tradition from which his own rationalist pragmatism derives. A

confrontation follows between Brandom and Wittgenstein, whose aim is to highlight the specific tactics of Wittgenstein's pragmatism as a refusal of Brandom's idealist rationalism.

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