

## "Evaluation as Practical Judgment"

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### Abstract

What does evaluation mean? This paper studies the evaluative process as a practical judgment that links a situation to a set of values in order to decide upon a course of action. In the first part, the article follows Sen's account of an evaluative process. His critique of the monist, deductive and idealist theory of Rawls leads to a "relational" and "comparative" approach of the evaluation. Incompleteness, comparison, reality and deliberation are the key principles of this methodology. This is close to insights of John Dewey. Nevertheless, Dewey grasps the pragmatic dimension of the process more precisely than Sen. He firstly makes the distinction between prizing and appraisal, valuation and evaluation. And secondly, the singular situation is underlined as a component of any evaluation. Therefore, evaluation requires empirical inquiry and public deliberation. In a third step, the article focuses on the relationship between evaluation and norms in practical judgments. As e...

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# Evaluation as Practical Judgment

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**Abstract** What does evaluation mean? This article examines the evaluative process as a practical judgment that links a situation to a set of values in order to decide upon a course of action. It starts by discussing A. Sen's "relational" and "comparative" account of evaluation, built in critical dialogue with J. Rawls' deductive theory. Comparison, incompleteness, reality, and deliberation are the key principles of Sen's approach, which, in some respects, echoes that of J. Dewey. The second part shows the relevance of completing Sen's approach with Dewey's pragmatism, since Dewey's emphasis on practical judgment is a useful counterbalance to Sen's focus on evaluation as a cognitive process. Dewey introduces a shift from values to valuation and draws a distinction between prizing and appraising, which makes the logic of inquiry and the search for consistency between means and ends in a given situation the fulcrum of evaluation. The third part of this paper addresses the relationship between values and norms in evaluative processes. Neither Sen nor Dewey deals with this question in a systematic way, although norms, which are both similar and different from values, contribute to frame evaluations in different ways: as horizons, resources, or constrains. Bringing norms into the picture means completing the pragmatist account with an institutionalist perspective, as we suggest through the example of the evaluation of work.

**Keywords** Dewey · Evaluation · Institutions · Norms · Practical judgment · Sen

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## Introduction

What does evaluating mean? This question has taken on crucial importance in contemporary debate. From the 1960s to the 1990s, sociology largely ignored the question of values; today, however, normative interrogations have returned full-force. They have been spurred by advances in the fields of political and moral philosophy, which have revisited questions of justice and goodness with renewed energy in the past 40 years. These interrogations have also been buoyed by a reevaluation of the social sciences' critical stance and a renewed interest in the analysis of action. This renewed interest in critic and the analysis of action raises the question of normative action, and, more broadly, of the links between action and values. How are values manifested through action? How to think about the relationship between general values on the one hand and individual values on the other? Are values norms? These questions remain largely disputed and unanswered in contemporary social sciences.

The resurgence of these theoretical questions has occurred in conjunction with the development of public and private governance methods that, to an ever-increasing degree, are placing evaluation processes at the center of their approach. Post-industrial firms have made the evaluation of work one of the cornerstones of reforms intended to conjoin fairness and efficiency. This has become a great preoccupation in public policy, as well, where new evaluative tools are developed in the name of new public management. In both arenas, experts are consulted to build tools for empirical exploration and instruments that measure the value of accomplishments. A "discipline" of evaluation, often with fairly scant theoretical foundations, but highly prized for its usability, is being put together in a variety of sectors. It mobilizes practitioners, consultants, and experts, and generates intense polemic over the question of what evaluating means.

Despite the current fashion for evaluation, it has remained under-theorized in contemporary thought. Most often, this has resulted in the reduction of evaluation to one or several of its parts, which are selected with a precise operational goal in mind, but with little or no regard for its complexity. Only a more systematic and more theoretical approach can make up for this shortfall. It will help providing answers both to the practical issues raised by the growing "discipline" of evaluation and to the theoretical questions it addresses to the social sciences. With this goal in mind, this article will defend a *pragmatist approach* to evaluation. The pragmatist tradition places *practical judgment* at the heart of its epistemology and its social theory. As opposed to theoretical judgment, practical judgment is characterized by a particular type of object: it bears on things to do or to be done in relation to a given situation (Dewey 1916). Understood in this way, practical judgment is an act of evaluation in that it links a given situation to values in order to decide upon a course of action. This is a very ordinary skill: all actors are called upon to make practical judgments. But it may also be understood as an expert competence in situations where evaluation is equipped with systematically elaborated concepts and supported by empirical evidence collected according to specific methodology and tools.

What can be inferred about evaluative judgment from this definition? We will open our discussion by examining the epistemology of evaluation proposed by

Amartya Sen, whose work has the unusual merit, in contemporary social sciences, of explicitly problematizing the basic principles of evaluative science. Sen invites us to avoid the limitations of deductive philosophy without sacrificing a normative approach to values (involving justice, freedom, well-being, etc.). His approach follows four guiding principles: the diversity of evaluations rather than their reduction to a single hierarchy of values; the incompleteness of evaluations; attention to accomplishments; and the importance of deliberation. These four principles provide an alternative to the monist and idealist theory of evaluation put forward by numerous philosophers, notably John Rawls.

Sen paves the way to a pluralistic and realistic theory of evaluation. But he does not say much about the constitution of the values that underlie evaluation and the way they fuel situated agency. In order to answer these questions, we turn to John Dewey's theory of valuation. Sen's proposals for evaluation will then be completed and put into perspective by the pragmatist distinction between *prizing* and *appraisal* to show how spontaneous valuations that occur in situ may be differentiated from evaluations that suppose comparisons, measurements, and recourse to generality. The epistemological principles advanced by Sen will thus be rooted in a theory of practical judgment based on inquiry. Whether individual or collective, evaluation implies a continual back-and-forth between ends and means, values and facts, attachment and distancing.

But what about norms? How do processes of evaluation relate to the production of norms? Neither Sen nor Dewey thoroughly discuss this question which will be examined in the third part of this article. Values have been opposed to norms, or supplanted by them, in sociological theory. Nothing, however, requires us to reduce the desirable (the value) to the obligatory (the norm), nor to affirm the primacy of one over the other. Values and norms have different functions in social coordination.

We will therefore defend the idea that norms and values are complementary. On the one hand, evaluations may lead to collective norms (in the case of a legislator, for example) or to individual ones (in life choices, for instance). But how can norms emerge in a context of plurality of values? The ideas of the partial overlapping of evaluative spaces and of incomplete judgments both deserve to be explored with regard to this question. On the other hand, norms are an ingredient in evaluation. They qualify and condition the situations dealt with in evaluations. In this sense, they may be considered as cognitive supports to valuation processes.

To conclude, we shall use the case of work evaluation to show how all of these facets of practical judgment must be taken into account in an evaluation process. Norms count as much as values, and their relation to one another is a dynamic one. But, in the end, neither values nor norms are sufficient to account for action in situ. Neither of them can assure the *relevance* of practical judgment. Relevance is rather a matter of "action that fits" (Thévenot 1990) or "creative design" (Joas 2000: 170) to account for the relationship an actor develops with a specific and incomplete situation. Because of the inexhaustible contingency of action situations, practical judgment involves singularity and situatedness.

## Epistemologies of Evaluation

Sen puts forward a theory of evaluation that not only breaks with the utilitarianism of neo-classical economics, it also disputes the approach of evaluation defended by Rawls. Contrasting the work of the two thinkers, we observe that the relationship between reality and values may be put together following two very different approaches, which underpin two epistemologies of evaluation.

### Two Relationships to Values

Sen is, it is well known, a fervent admirer of Rawls, but a rebellious one. He levels two critics at the author of *A Theory of Justice*. Both critics are concerned with the theory of evaluation presupposed by Rawls' approach. The first, substantial and widely noted, has to do with the "space of evaluation" (Sen 1992: 2f.), the yardstick against which to assess equality. As people are different, writes Sen, "the characteristics of inequality in different spaces (such as income, wealth, happiness, etc.) tend to diverge from each other". A "space of evaluation" is thus centered around a "focal variable" with which comparisons are made and inequalities assessed. And here Sen suggests that the space of primary goods and resources, championed by Rawls, should be replaced by that of capabilities. He argues that the scales of worth cannot be balanced with only resources, be they symbolic or material, because in any given situation, individuals may *use* resources in so many different ways (Sen 1992). True equality is the equality of capabilities to lead a life that one has reason to value. This critique opens up a new approach to justice (De Munck and Zimmermann 2008).

Alongside this substantial critique, Sen develops a second, epistemological critique, which is of interest to the discussion at hand. At its core, Rawls's theory promotes a certain understanding of what evaluation means. It methodologically accounts for evaluations of justice thanks to the notions of "original position behind a veil of ignorance" and of "reflective equilibrium between principles and intuitions" (Rawls 2001: 29–32). Furthermore, the values discussed in *A Theory of Justice* are carefully distinguished as "non-political". This distinction places an entire field considered as pertaining to incommensurable "goods" outside the realm of political evaluations.

Rawls's epistemology reveals a monist and idealist construction of value. His theory of justice projects the principles of a well-ordered society. Deduced from a counterfactual situation of a veil of ignorance taken as a "thought experiment" (Rawls 2001: 37), these principles may be applied to any historical situation. Such an approach requires no information about the real world and its actual possibilities. What counts is reasoning about how a system of rights and duties that allows fair social cooperation should be designed; reality is merely a matter of application. In the political realm, Rawls' approach exemplifies what idealist philosophy understands as the "theory of value": a thorough ranking of axiological principles and their consequences for individual choices.

Sen maintains that another approach is possible. Evaluative judgment may be untangled from this "transcendental" perspective to account for relative,

comparative, and contextual choices. There is thus no need for an absolute benchmark to hold up against the shortcomings of reality. Rather, from all possible worlds, the goal is to pick out the least bad options using a set of immanent values. The very idea of a theory of value thus takes on new meaning. It can no longer be expected to produce an order that is justified theoretically by reflexive thought, which must then be held up against a varying and unstable reality. Instead, one must seek heuristic principles that make it possible, from any given position, to determine a method for producing solutions that are, in relative terms, better than others. The distinction drawn by Rawls between the just and the good is no longer valid as an *a priori* distinction that defines the limits of political impartiality. If this border maintains any relevance, it is the provisional and unstable result of practical judgment operating in a given situation.

### The Critique of Rawls' Monist and Deductive Approach

The debate over these two relationships to values is not new. It is recurrent in the Western moral tradition: in a sense, Sen is to Rawls what Aristotle was to Plato or Dewey was to Kant. To fully understand Sen's objection to Rawls's epistemology of evaluation, it is important to follow his argumentation with regard to the construction of Rawls's theory of justice. In Sen's eyes, *A Theory of Justice* suffers from two fundamental epistemological weaknesses.

First, it maintains that rational individuals, debating in the strict epistemological framework of the veil of ignorance, would, beyond a shadow of doubt, agree on the two well-known principles put forward by Rawls. Principle (a) is that each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all. Principle (b) is that social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions. They must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society. (Rawls 1982: 161f.).

In reality, there is no reason that the outcome of an ascetic deliberation of the kind imagined by Rawls would not preserve the relevance of multiple frameworks for justice: "I have to express considerable skepticism," admits Sen (2009: 56f.), "about Rawls's highly specific claim about the unique choice, in the original position, of one particular set of principles for just institutions, needed for a fully just society". While it is true that the original position guarantees impartiality, it does not impose an unequivocal choice of a set of values. The impartial citizens imagined by Rawls will not be miraculously delivered from making the difficult choice between a definition of equality based on need and one based on merit; between a theory that prioritizes social utility and one that examines only individual rights; between a negative idea of liberty and a positive one, etc. Faithful to the epistemology upon which he models his theory, Rawls believes that reducing the information base of deliberation processes guarantees decidability. But even so, the original position leaves us faced with a variety of possible responses to the question it claims to answer, which is, what is a just society?

The second objection: the decision process leaves entirely open the problem of how principles of justice are put into practice. Rawls prudently avoids all empirical issues: he seeks only to build abstract rules capable of guiding fair institutional choices. The question of real accomplishments that will be carried out in the context of these institutions is not envisioned as a question of principle but rather as a simple question of application. This simplification of social choice is not very credible, however: “The idea that people will spontaneously do what they agreed to do in the original position is Rawls’s own” (2009: 61). Indeed, even the most cursory look at social and historical experience shows that this is untrue. The mere existence of a social contract—even assuming it is shared by all—does not in any way guarantee a just social order. A society’s choice of concrete institutions will depend on the real behaviors of individuals (that is, on one or many political cultures) and on the multiple consequences (due to social factors) of these behaviors. A theory of justice cannot ignore the question of undesired effects of institutional rules and practices. Sen is very attentive to this in his work: “the inescapable relevance of actual behavior” (2009: 67) raises a consequentialist question. This is true of moral relations among individuals, who cannot remain indifferent to the impact of their decisions in the name of an ethical conviction that knows nothing other than its own thought (Sen 2000). And it is even truer on the level of collective and institutional choices, whose complexity is vast. What good are theoretically just institutions if they lead to perverse and deviant behavior once they are put to work?

These two critiques of Rawls’s approach do not call for a simple revision of his theory; rather, they require a significant epistemological shift. Sen, inspired by the theory of social choice, makes out of this shift the basis of his capability approach.

### An Epistemological Shift

Sen builds his alternative to Rawls’s theory of evaluation on four principles.

*First principle: plurality and comparison.* We must abandon a monist theory that restricts practical reasoning to a single scale of worth. There are many possible frameworks for evaluation and there is no theoretical reason to curb this healthy plurality. The question of what constitutes “quality work” is an excellent example of this. Undeniably, it must be answered in terms of quality of work outcomes. But political questions (discrimination, participation) and working conditions are just as relevant, while the moral commitment of individuals to cooperate, which implies loyalty and respect, is incontestably of crucial importance. Political philosophy has often highlighted the variety of interests, but with few exceptions, (including pragmatists like Dewey, as we shall see further on), it has rarely cared about the plurality of evaluative frameworks.

But how can a judgment be formulated in the absence of a unified, coherent, transcendent normative criterion? Sen provides an answer to this question with a “comparative” and “relational” method inspired by the theory of social choice, rather than with a political philosophy that sets normative axioms that are supposed to be indifferent to the contexts in which they are applied. Sen proposes instead that different evaluative frameworks be compared, with attention to where they overlap

and diverge. This comparison does not require any “transcendent” criterion that would serve as a benchmark for comparison: when comparing a painting by Van Gogh and one by Vermeer, we do not need a third model by Gauguin, or by some kind of ideal or uber-painter, to decide on our preference. A judgment that one is better than the other may be formed using immanent values. But, in so doing, we must not imagine that we are ranking all possible cases according to a coherent hierarchy. These rankings may remain incomplete without ceasing to be reasonable.

Thus the *second principle: incompleteness*. We should not expect an evaluative theory to provide a complete ranking of values and norms for social choices. Rawls gives a fairly good example of what such a complete theory would look like, one with “no great fear of being accused of indecisiveness” according to Sen (2009: 89). It offers a detailed “plan” for a well-ordered society (Rawls 2001: 8), from the formulation of its principles to well-defined institutions. A theory sensitive to the contingency of situations, by contrast, would limit itself to offering a framework for democratic debate, and deliberately leave some of its propositions vague or imprecise. In such a perspective, the theorist’s goal is not to propose structures and rules for functioning, but rather to guide situated discussions. Sen reminds us that “the agreements arrived at need not demand that some proposal is uniquely just, but only that it is plausibly just, or at least not manifestly unjust” (2009: 135).

*Third principle: real accomplishments*. Tellingly, Rawls’s theory of justice is built without any empirical investigation of reality. Sen, on the other hand, gives careful attention to functionings, ways of being, and doing in his capability approach. Institutions are neither just nor fair in and of themselves—they are just and fair only if they generate just and fair behaviors and realizations of value. Values, therefore, ought to be examined in light of accomplishments, rather than principles or rules. The principle of equality is not met by institutions distributing resources according to just principles; it is met only if people actually have equal capabilities of accomplishment at the end of the process. Between values and accomplishments, between principles and behaviors, there are multiple and empirically contingent conversion factors. Physical, cultural, and social factors may explain the conversion (or lack thereof) of institutional good intentions into effectively observable practices.

Through this principle of realism, contingency finds its place within the theory of value: it may modify the supposed priority of the principles and lead to revisions in value judgments. Hence the call for empirical social sciences: they may account for causal mechanisms and unintended consequences. A discussion of values cannot be separated from an account of the facts; here, as we shall see, Sen lines up with one of the major intuitions of the pragmatist tradition, defended by thinkers from Dewey (1916) to Putnam (2002).

*Fourth principle: open deliberation*. Value may be distinguished from simple preference by a dimension of objectivity (understood in the sense of justifiability). This search for objectivity implies that an evaluative process must include empirical data and axiological parameters, discussed intersubjectively. Evaluation, in other words, assumes deliberation: “The evaluation needed for the assessment of justice is not just a solitary exercise but one that is inescapably discursive” (Sen 2009: 337).



Democracy is the regime most suited to realizing this process of unrestricted practical deliberation.

Like Rawls, Sen defines democracy not by the election of governors but by the exercise of unrestrained deliberation to formulate social choices. Unlike Rawls, however, he refuses to set theoretical limits to the public involved in these discussions. He hews more closely to Smith's theory of the "impartial spectator," arguing in favor of including the greatest possible number of those concerned in the public debate. Restricting those involved to a closed group of citizens poses two major risks. First, it overlooks interdependencies that reach beyond the limits of pre-identified publics. Second, this limitation runs the risk of unreflectively reproducing local prejudices and particularities, whereas the gaze of a non-community member might introduce a healthy distance from unquestioned traditions. Deliberation should not involve only members of a group, but must include all opinions that can foster "enlightenment relevance" in a given situation (Sen 2009: 132).

### The Limits of this Shift

As we have seen, Sen affirms that continuity exists between expert and ordinary judgment. The existence of this continuity never pushed him to develop a comprehensive approach of situated judgments, however (Zimmermann 2006). The author of *The Idea of Justice* never breaks with the intellectualism of experts. Even when enlightened by deliberation, judgment, for him, remains that of individuals defined by their intellectual insights, rather than their practical actions. It is as if the international expert Amartya Sen were projecting the image of his own practice onto social reality—a practice that takes place at a great distance from the attachments and commitments of actual situations. We might nevertheless ask ourselves where the criteria manipulated in evaluation come from, and how the values upon which evaluation processes are built take shape. Of course, practical judgment makes use of knowledge, more or less formalized methods and measurements to build the objectivity required for justified decisions. But this objectivity does not issue from the vacuum of a laboratory; it emerges in continuity with ordinary practical judgments (pragmatic, ethical, and political), through a reflective effort that is never separate from it. Intellectual evaluation implies practical valuation. The conditions of this valuation interest the sociologist, who sees in them the most elementary process by which socially shared values are constituted. To account for this link between evaluation and valuation, we turn to Dewey's pragmatism.

### (E)valuation and the "Logic of Judgments of Practice"

Dewey's approach to values may be seen as an extension of Sen's, to which it introduces new elements for discussion. Between the transcendental essentialist account of values and the subjectivist one, Dewey clears a third path, that of practice, which makes values the result of an active process of valuation that takes shape in the interaction between persons and their environment. He thus invites us

to approach evaluation as a judgment of practice, a matter of empirical inquiry, and a case for deliberation.

### From Values to Valuations

To demonstrate how Dewey shifts the discussion on values, we shall begin by mapping out the concepts he elaborates in his *Theory of Valuation* (1939). As the title suggests, his essay is concerned more with the formation, transformation, and expression of values than with values in and of themselves.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis on valuation rather than values is by no means a play on words: it shifts the approach from one that is strictly conceptual and abstract to one that is concerned with concrete and active processes. By focusing on the verbal rather than the nominal form of the term “value,” Dewey invites us to explore how values relate to agency and practice, to human activity, to doing. To him, valuation is a certain kind of human activity occurring in everyday life. He distinguishes between two variants of this activity, prizing and appraising, which he argues are both radically different and highly interwoven.

Prizing means valuing in the sense of esteeming, “of holding precious, dear”. Here, the “emphasis falls upon something having definite personal reference, which (...) has an aspectual quality called emotional” (Dewey 1939: 195). Prizing is akin to “value expression as ejaculatory” (1939: 196), to impulsion, and to instantaneous appreciation. It is nurtured through routines, habits, personal sensibilities, needs, and desires; it is intimately related to what people care for in the situation in which their immediate experience occurs. Appraising, by contrast, means valuing in the sense of estimating, “assigning value to” (Dewey 1939: 195). It is akin to an activity of ranking, comparison, and critical judgment. It involves an examination of the means involved and the consequences of action, and is dependent on the practical conditions of a given situation. Appraising requires access to knowledge and the implementation of cognitive procedures; indeed, knowledge and the comparative processes it makes possible are the features that distinguish appraising from prizing.

Appraising is primarily concerned with the assessment of the relational property between different objects; to appraise is to make a judgment involving cognitive and practical reasoning. Prizing, by contrast, expresses a relational property between an object and a person; it names a practical, non-intellectual attitude. In the workplace, for example, a line manager is supposed to use comparative and balanced reasoning about the different elements of a given problem or situation to guide her assessment of workers to determine the distribution of individual bonuses. In large and mid-sized companies, different procedural tools are available to support this activity and to collect the knowledge it requires (individual interviews, inquiry guides, grading and weighting tools, etc.). Empirical evidence shows, however, that even in companies where managers have access to many such tools, their evaluations of their collaborators are not necessarily cold, comparative studies of hard facts, but

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<sup>1</sup> On this point, see the introduction of Bidet et al. (2011) to the French translation of the *Theory of Valuation*.

also involve elements rooted in personal prejudices or feelings. Spontaneous classification of a worker by gender or ethnicity, the existence of personal affinities (a shared passion for horseback riding, for example), or of affectionate relationships between the manager and some of his subordinates introduce prizing into evaluation processes as well, even though the distribution of wage bonuses is supposed to be motivated by principles of justice such as merit and equity. This case illustrates the interplay Dewey underscores between prizing and appraising in the process of evaluation. The interconnectedness of these two concepts and the tensions that arise from it are just as important as the heuristic distinction between them.

What we may at this stage retain from Dewey is that valuations are the result—and possibly the resolution—of the tension between, on the one hand, what people care for and are attached to, and on the other hand, the examination of rating and assessment of facts and how they relate one to another. For Dewey, valuation is a way of defining what is good, but he differentiates between what is good in itself; that is, prized in the immediacy of experience, and what is good *for*; that is, oriented toward the future and requiring the contradictory assessment of means and ends (Dewey 1916: 29). He thus invites us to differentiate between finding or feeling something is good and being able to justify or prove why and how it is good. Valuing, in other words, is a matter of identifying what is good, whereas evaluation is a matter of justification and proof, for it involves a judgment likely to be publicly defended.

#### (E)valuation as Judgment of Practice

Dewey does more than simply delineate the semantic field of valuation; he also provides us with concrete guidelines for studying evaluative judgments. Arguing against the reductionism of strictly cognitive or formalist approaches, he emphasizes the double dimension, cognitive and practical, of evaluative judgments (Frega 2006). Because valuation is a judgment about doing something, Dewey invites us to define evaluative judgments as “judgments of practice” (Dewey 1916), calling attention to the relational aspects of taking action. Whereas Sen refers to a theory of values grounded in reason, Dewey paves the way for a theory of valuation grounded in practice. Both link evaluation to principles of plurality and comparison, incompleteness, achievement, and deliberation, but the two thinkers address these principles from different angles. Sen is most concerned with the procedural dimension of evaluation, while Dewey seeks to highlight its concrete workings, and to examine how its mechanisms actually shape normative agency in everyday life.

What does it mean to define evaluation as a judgment of practice? In “The Logic of Judgments of Practice,” Dewey (1916: 16) identifies four ways in which practical judgments<sup>2</sup> are different from other forms of judgment, that provide meaningful supports for social scientist to develop inquiries into evaluation. Practical judgments are action-oriented, they involve valuation about desired outcomes, they entail a means and end nexus, and they are grounded in empirical inquiry.

<sup>2</sup> Dewey (1916) uses both expressions “judgments of practice” and “practical judgment” indiscriminately.

A first critical difference between practical judgments and descriptive and narrative statements is that, *judgments of practice involve situations that demand action*; that is, situations that are incomplete or unfinished. This implies that the proposition resulting from the valuation judgment “is itself a factor in the completion of the situation, carrying it forward to its conclusion” (Dewey 1916: 16). If we agree with Dewey that evaluative judgments are geared toward action in the future, then an evaluative judgment must integrate the future it anticipates, as well as the fact that it is itself a determining factor in that future. For instance, when a line manager tells workers that a production goal has not yet been reached, he makes a descriptive statement. When he adds that they will therefore not receive any wage bonus this time, he is formulating a practical judgment, hoping that this sanction will push them to meet their goals in the future.

Second, “the subject-matter implies that it makes a difference how the given is terminated: that one outcome is better than another and that the proposition is to be a factor in securing (as far as may be) the better. In other words, there is something objectively at stake in the forming of the proposition” (Dewey 1916: 17). As in Sen’s principle of achievement, Dewey’s sense of practical judgment affects the subject-matter (for better or worse), for it is *a judgment about things to be done or not*. The line manager may also come to the conclusion that the production rates demanded are too high to sustain without damaging workers’ health; that workers cannot be blamed for this and that it might not help to cut down their wage bonuses, right on the contrary; but that a solution, by contrast, might be hiring additional employees and setting up night shifts.

Third, as shown by the previous example, practical judgment is concerned with more than ends. It is fundamentally “binary” (Dewey 1916: 17), in that *it involves ends—results to be achieved—and means—how to achieve them—at the same time*. In any given situation, the projection of possible ends cannot be separated from the means available. Practical judgment requires that both resources and constraints be assessed, as well as possible ends according to available means. The amount of the overall bonus package to be distributed and the possibility of actually organizing a night team will affect the practical judgment made by the line manager as well as its impact on workers and the production rate. By drawing attention to the nexus of means and ends, Dewey warns us of two pitfalls, that of idealism oriented toward ends but blind to means, and that of “mechanism,” strictly concerned with means and lacking any vision of future outcomes. “Practical judgments do not therefore primarily concern themselves with the value of objects, but with the course of action demanded to carry an incomplete situation to its fulfillment” (1916: 31). This reveals the nuance between Sen and Dewey’s understandings of incompleteness. As we showed, Sen associates incompleteness with the plurality of values and the partiality of comparison, making it an epistemological positive principle to be secured procedurally. Dewey, on the other hand, promotes a broader understanding, in which situations must be completed in order to be fulfilled. Doing so, he makes incompleteness an empirical feature to be investigated, one that triggers empirical inquiry. For Dewey, incompleteness involves the search for completeness, but not in the sense of exhaustiveness: rather, in the sense of “adequacy as respects ends and its means” (1916: 20).

Such an understanding of incompleteness leads us to the fourth property of judgments of practice, their *grounding in empirical inquiry*. “The judgment of what is to be done implies (...) a statement of what the given facts of the situation are, taken as indications of the course to pursue and of the means to be employed in its pursuit” (Dewey 1916: 20). Evaluative judgments involve a logic of inquiry intended to extend knowledge and produce empirical evidence about a given situation and how to complete it. Along with this emphasis on the logic of inquiry, Dewey introduces a distinction between judgment based on pre-established principles—which he argues risks approaching human problems in terms of moral approbation or condemnation such as “production goals have not been reached because the workers are lazy and uncommitted”—and logical judgment, which demands that the ends be assessed according to the actual available means and according to the different elements shaping a given situation. Reaching far beyond the issue of practical judgment the logic of inquiry is a fulcrum of Dewey’s approach.

### (E)valuation as a Matter of Inquiry

The type of inquiry required for logical judgment is inquiry into situated action. As the example of production rates shows, a decontextualized and disembodied rating approach based on numbers and modeling alone is not sufficient to exercise an evaluative judgment. Determining whether the production rate problem is one of workers’ commitment and motivation or of line capacity requires an in-depth study of the different factors affecting the production rate in a given work environment, and of how these factors interact with one another.

When Dewey contends that value judgments, like any other object, are a legitimate topic for pragmatist empirical inquiry, he is strongly rejecting the dichotomy between values and facts (Putnam 2002), as well as between normative and social inquiry (Dewey 1925; Festenstein 2001; Frega 2014). Along with A. L. St. Clair (2007: 149), we may qualify Dewey’s pragmatist methodology as “viewing values entangled with empirical accounts of reality,” pointing “towards the back and forth relations that occur between experiences, perceptions, theories[,] and practices and between knowledge and action”. This back and forth movement is essential to judgment. Rather than reducing inquiry to a search for the empirical foundations of evaluations, as any positivist approach would, it makes the very process of inquiry into an integral dimension of the constitution of values through a never-ending interplay and reciprocal shaping of knowledge and action.

Exercising one’s judgment means inquiring, and vice versa: it means elucidating and producing meaning. However, far from being the exclusive domain of experts and researchers, this process is a feature of ordinary agency. In correlation with the practical and logical dimensions of judgment (assessing the ends according to the means and conditions of a given situation), Dewey supports a consequentialist conception of inquiry (1938), which requires methodological procedures capable of putting facts, things, ideas, or desires to the critical test of lived experience. This anchoring of evaluative judgments in experience is a cornerstone of Dewey’s approach, and experience means interactions, be they with other humans, with

objects, or with institutions—in short, with any elements that shape the ecology of situated action. Experience and situations both arise from the interactions between people and their environment. Evaluative judgments therefore involve both a temporal dimension (connecting the present of situated action to the elements of the past that affect it, as well as to its future outcomes) and a relational dimension (linking environmental conditions to ends and means, persons and things). They imply a reflective actor, capable of learning from the past and projecting himself, and the others, into the future.

According to this consequentialist conception of inquiry, evaluative judgment is a kind of critical activity. We make evaluative judgments through the critical exercise of ordering the findings of inquiry (Dewey 1925: 295 ff). This is true for legal judgments, for example, which do not merely implement normative principles, but encompass a logic of inquiry into specific cases and situations, as well as the ordering of the elements produced by this inquiry (Dewey 1924). This moment of ordering involves deliberation.

### (E)valuation as Deliberation

Let us return to Dewey's distinction between prizing and appraising. The former can be hasty and impulsive, whereas the latter requires us "to stop and think" (Dewey 1922: 197). Reason involves time and deliberation, defined as "an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like" (Dewey 1922: 190). "What is deliberation," asks Dewey, "except [the] weighing of various alternative desires (and hence end-values) in terms of the conditions that are the means of their execution, and which, as means, determine the consequences actually arrived at?" (1939: 213). Without deliberation, there is no evaluation, just impulsive prizing. Deliberation is a condition for rational and reasonable stances (Dewey 1922: 196). The deliberative moment cannot be dissociated from the moment of inquiry, however: the process of ordering is part of the inquiry, for the production of data or facts can hardly be separated from the production of their meaning. Inquiring therefore involves deliberating.

Weighing and ordering is a complicated moment in the process of valuation, for it supposes that the options at hand will be reduced with regard to the means-end nexus. Different evaluation outcomes may result from the deliberative process depending how the end and means are framed in a given situation. For instance, there is no conclusive answer to the question of what constitutes a valuable job: it may vary among societies, individuals, and even different moments in the same life. At a given stage of his working life a worker may value extended working hours because they provide him access to experience, more money, career opportunities, or simply because he loves his job. At another stage, the same worker may value part-time work so he can spend more time with his children, on the novel he wants to write, or on the junior football team he is training. This example shows the many possible evaluations of what a good job might be and how they may be revised in one and a same life course. This does not mean that values are relative, but rather

that a given set of values is likely to be ranked differently depending on the practical features of a given situation.

The deliberative method of confronting and ordering things is valid for individuals as well as for groups, applicable to any problematic situation to be completed: (e)valuation is a matter of individual as well as public inquiry. Dewey's thinking on the public as a community of participants concerned with a shared problem (1927) substantially broadens Sen's formal conception of public deliberation, which is strangely lacking in any consideration of how a public might be identified. By linking individual and public deliberation, Dewey connects the construction of the deliberative subject to the practice of deliberative democracy. In doing so, he ultimately places the process of value formation within the experience of deliberative democracy.

Dewey's approach, rooted as it is in the tension between prizing (esteeming) and appraising (estimating), brings to the fore the concrete conditions for practical judgment. At the same time, it proposes a model for building collective intelligence. Although this is a stimulating approach for considering the question of evaluative judgment, we see two limits to it. The first, already noted by D. Trom and J. Stavo-Debaugé (2004) lies in the irenic nature of participation: Dewey views participation as a common good, without questioning its relevance and value for all participants. The second relates to his focus on the "instituting" to the detriment of the "instituted". Celebration of imagination and reflexivity cannot mask the fact that inherited normativity frames actors' inquiries. Dewey is definitely aware of this: when he discusses the way habits, impulses, and intelligence interfere with human conduct (1922), he underlines the role of institutions in setting the conditions that frame habits (1922: 20) or in securing positive freedom to act (1922: 166). However, his understanding of institutions remains vague, encompassing habits, organizations, law, trade-unions, and more; he sees them in terms of social construction, formalization, and regularity.

Dewey's interpretation of legal judgment offers insights that can help develop a pragmatist understanding of institutions. For him, the law is an important framework of evaluation. As he explained in "Logical Method and Law" (1924), formalist and syllogistic legal reasoning are to be criticized; instead, pragmatism should promote a consequentialist understanding of legal decisions. "Following a legal rule" is not a matter of application alone. According to Dewey, a judge's deliberations must take into account legal norms, the values pertaining to a given situation, and the constraints of reality. Legal reasoning is an inquiry that must follow "a logic relative to consequences rather than antecedents" (1924: 26). While this is an inspiring perspective on norms, it hardly provides a sufficient understanding of institutions. We contend that in order to study (e)valuation as a practical judgment, it is necessary to search for a clearcut empirical specification of norms and institutions. That means making them objects of inquiry in and of themselves, alongside individuals' agency.

## Evaluation and Norms

Values and norms have two remarkable properties in common: normativity and objectivity. As Pierre Livet puts it, “there is a difference between the substantive ‘norm’ and the qualifier ‘normative’. Clearly, norms are normative. But we might argue that any value also has a ‘normative’ status [...] Normativity is looser than a norm, because it does not necessarily imply obligation or prohibition. Opinions, advice, and even suggestions all have a normative aspect” (2006: 18). At the same time, like norms, values are not purely subjective. As we emphasized above, this is one way in which they must be distinguished from preferences. They claim to have a certain degree of objectivity, and therefore of justification. And they may be stabilized through intersubjective agreement.

### Reconnecting Norms and Values

So what is the difference between norms and values? First, norms, either implicitly or explicitly, impart obligations for those involved into an interaction. A proposal is not a norm if it is not possible to define with a certain amount of precision what its transgression means. Values relate to the action’s ends. They may imply obligations, but not always, and not necessarily: they are often limited to evaluative judgments. Norms have to do with what is obligatory or prescribed, while values relate to what is desirable. To return to our example, productivity, security, equity, health, or well-being are all values that may orient practical appreciations of work situations. The norms of labor law, of work contracts, and of company rules set out obligations and prohibitions in specific situations.

A second distinction between values and norms has to do with the relationship between concrete action and its motivation. In the case of a norm, sanctions and incentives orient behavior. In this sense, it may be said that norms motivate “from the outside,” even if, as Parsons suggested in his reading of Freud, “external” constraints and related sanctions may be “internalized” by actors. Sanctions may be positive or negative: they may take the form of material and symbolic forms of recognition or punishment, as well as expressions of contempt that are more or less institutionalized by a social group. Value, on the other hand, does not come with these kinds of control apparatus. It is not supposed to control behavior from the outside, but rather to motivate from within, with internal ends. In the case of value, the actor is expected not to conform, but to adhere, to commit, to put forth effort.

The similarities and differences between norms and values have sparked intense debate in the social sciences. In his functionalist theory of society, Parsons (Bohman 1991: 30–40) proposed a kind of ranking from the most general to the most specific. In a descending motion of specification, cultural values shared within a society take shape as norms for interaction; these norms, internalized by those interacting in regulated role-plays, ultimately modulate actors’ preferences, preventing them from being purely chaotic and unpredictable. This majestic construction is no longer acceptable in a pragmatist framework. The variety of possible valuations makes such theoretical coherence of values that might coordinate actors’ orientations before they act, impossible.



Other currents in the social sciences have sought to assimilate values with norms, or vice versa. Rational choice theories have a marked tendency to confuse norms and values, and to reduce norms to instances of control. This is notably the case for James Coleman, who establishes a theory of norms in which values disappear completely: there are only private and individual *preferences*, while *norms* are the expression of powerful groups (Joas 2000: 14f.). Sen and Dewey sometimes differentiate between norms and values (Dewey does so, for example, in his discussion of moral judgment in 1930).<sup>3</sup> But the difference is often blurred and is not a cornerstone of their approach; both seem to assume that the link between norms and values is simple and fluid.

From the pragmatist perspective, (e)valuative deliberation must lay out both differences and similarities between norms and values. It might of course be said that values can justify norms (or systems of norms). This is the case, for example, when a legislative norm regarding working hours is justified by the values of solidarity and of pooling available work. But in certain situations, a system of norms may also justify a value judgment (Livet 2006: 40): before a labor court, for example, legal norms may provide sufficient basis for upholding or condemning a behavior. Norms should not therefore be founded in values, nor values in norms, but rather considered as two buttresses for evaluative judgments.

The principle of incompleteness we applied to evaluations must be extended to norms. The latter may be considered as obligations defined at the confluence of multiple spaces of evaluation. They do not suppose ultimate justifications within a theory of goodness or justice. In his defense of “incompletely theorized” legal decisions, Cass Sunstein (1995) notes that numerous legal norms demonstrate only *partial* justifications. Reasoning does not make reference—contrary to what Dworkin (1986) presupposes in his analysis of judicial reasoning—to profound theories shared by all, but rather to small-scale, modest theories. Is worker subordination a matter of class domination or a form of contractual freedom? Labor law takes no position with regard to these two “profound” interpretations. It limits itself to establishing an ad hoc doctrine that allows actors to maintain their “profound” interpretations, and at the same time creates a theoretical space for partial compromise. It formulates norms that must be interpreted by judges who activate values in a given situation.

On the one hand, norms are on the *horizon* of evaluations, as their possible outcome. Although valuations are made with regard to specific situations, they may repeat themselves; and crystallize into controls and obligations. Conversely, if norms do not frame future mutual expectations about behavior, then values, in many cases have no chance of stabilizing into concrete social realities. For instance, what good is extolling the value of solidarity through work sharing if no norm exists to sanction businesses that take advantage of initiatives to reduce working hours and/or salaries for the sole sake of their profit and to the detriment of job creation? On the other hand, already existing norms *constrain* deliberation: they bear witness to previous deliberations, and require that the present be linked to the past; they express necessities from other contemporary situations of action, raising the issue of

<sup>3</sup> We thank Roberto Frega for drawing our attention to this reference.

how they should be included in a more general framework. As horizons and as constraints, norms introduce temporality into evaluations and shape them as learning processes.

As we have seen, norms and values are both constitutive of evaluative judgment. But, as Dewey has shown, evaluation takes place in specific circumstances: the question is what must be done here and now, given the actual state of the world. Practical possibilities in a given situation are not generated by applying norms, nor by invoking values: they result from a logic of inquiry whose central role Dewey has demonstrated. Inquiries are not made solely into the state of the world, but also into the specific alternatives of the actors involved and the way they relate to a given environment. They look into actual situations, and into their potentialities, as well. Evaluation therefore requires an indexing procedure that is never fully exhausted in the reflective game of norms and values. Alongside axiological aims and normative compliance, practical evaluation must confront a third core element: the principle of relevance. Balancing means, norms, and ends implies situated, informed judgment, which, when lacking, may lead to an action's failure. Whether an action fits or not depends on the material, symbolic, and institutional foundations that make its accomplishment possible. Each in his own way, Sen and Dewey convince us that no theory of evaluation can ignore the vital relationship of evaluation with the various elements that shape actors' capabilities and achievements.

### The Evaluation of Work

Evaluation in the workplace offers a perfect illustration of the process linking values, norms, and situations. For the past 15 years, an abundant literature has emerged that underscores the shortcomings and pathologies affecting work evaluation (Dejours 2003; Clot 2010). These shortcomings bear testament to the way evaluation has been dismantled into the three component parts (values, norms, and situations) identified above. Let us take the case of the (e)valuation of good work or quality work.

Work takes place within a highly normative environment. Labor legislation sets the standards for work conditions and industrial relations, while organizational prescriptions set the standards for work processes and outcomes. An important part of work evaluation, therefore, examines whether and how norms are being respected. Among the evaluations whose subject is norms, we shall distinguish between those that focus on work processes and those that focus on work outcomes.

In the case of process-based evaluations, work is identified as a set of rules that employees must follow. Good work, in this context, must correspond as closely as possible to prescribed standards, and doing one's job consists in respecting instructions. Work evaluation is then based on a de-personalization of job performance; it values discipline within a strict division of labor that sharply delineates planning from execution. Rooted in the industrial, planned model of production (Salais and Storper 1997) and characteristic of Taylorist work organization, it is still broadly applied, and has now expanded to the service sector, as illustrated by the scripts telephone workers must follow.

Although the Taylorist model for prescribed work is the first one that comes to mind when thinking about norm-based work evaluation, the goal-based model of evaluation, which has become increasingly widespread across sectors and occupations over the past few years, is norm-based as well. It focuses on work outcomes and performance, rather than processes. Once reserved for management and planning engineers, management by objective has been extended to all categories of employees. It assesses the performance of each employee with regard to quantitative and qualitative goals that are, theoretically, agreed upon during an annual evaluation meeting between the employee and her manager. This kind of evaluation focuses on the outcome of work in terms of productivity and performance, with little regard for the means used to achieve them. Paradoxically, this kind of evaluation basically ignores the actual activity of working, and often leaves workers in the situation of having to do more with less. Empirical evidence shows that in reality, goals are seldom discussed; rather, they are imposed unilaterally on employees, which makes the end and means nexus problematic for them, as they have no control over how the terms of either one are set (Zimmermann 2014).

Observed critically, objective-driven evaluation combines a norm-based principle of evaluation (valuing the achievement of goals, set as norms to be met, whatever the situation) with a creativity-based principle (valuing the workers' capability to act in a way that best suits the situation and to face unforeseen events in order to meet the goals). The competent and flexible worker (Zimmermann 2004) and the virtuoso or key performer (Dodier 1995) are reference points for this latter principle, which places the person and the situation—that is, situated work—at its heart.

The tensions that arise from the combination of these two principles of evaluation, combining the valuation of the respect of norms on the one hand and of the worker's capability to adjust their action to the specificity of the situation on the other, reveal the different values of work underpinning these principles. Norm-based evaluation arises from an economic understanding of work as oriented towards the production of market value, while creativity-based evaluation is rooted in an anthropological conception of work as oriented towards human accomplishment. Depending on which of these two points of view is emphasised, the understanding of what quality work might be differs greatly. From an economic perspective, the quality of work depends on the market value of its performance or product. From a human perspective, the quality of work depends on individual skill, know-how, and talent, but also, what companies often disregard, on the quality of employment and working conditions; that is on the quality of the work environment provided by the employer. Employment conditions (type of job contract, work hours and schedule, pay, benefits, etc.) affect the security of employees' life courses and how much control, if any, they have over their present and their future. Working conditions are just as important, affecting workers' physical and mental health, as well as their work experience in general. The quality of working conditions depends on the means actually available for performing the work in a satisfactory manner, without pressuring employees to achieve goals that are disproportionate to the technical, material, and human resources at their disposal. Quality work also extends to enjoyment of a job well done (Sennett 2008). When productivity and

performance imperatives, time pressures, contradictory instructions, or inadequate resources impede that enjoyment, the worker's own valuation of good work is at odds with the one imposed on him by his employer.

The plurality of values and ways of appraising the quality of work in the workplace is not problematic in itself, but it becomes problematic when different valuations of good work coexist mutely without any opportunity or space to debate them publicly. Competing valuations of work are representative of the multifaceted nature of people in the workplace: producers of economic value, creative and social beings at the same time. To return to Dewey, what lacks at the company level is a space for deliberation in which the different stakeholders—employers and employees together—can voice what quality work means to them, in terms of end and means. This internal space for deliberation should, furthermore, exist within a broader space that includes external stakeholders, such as consumers or local citizens, as a company's activity necessarily affects its geographic and social environment. Only by strengthening and improving situated democratic debate and worker participation in the workplace can we hope to progress in the process of reconciling work values rooted in economic as well as human development. Following Sen and his plea in favor of involving non-directly concerned actors (Smith's impartial spectator) or introducing Mead's idea of a generalized other in a pragmatist perspective, one might even consider including a third circle of deliberating actors, such as nongovernmental organizations like Human Rights Watch.

If deliberation is necessary, it is not sufficient, however. It makes it possible to share knowledge as well as dissenting views or evaluations; but deliberation has only minimal practical impact if judgments of practice are not translated into practical decisions and conclusions. Therefore the inquiry into valuations needs to be completed by an inquiry into institutional procedures that make work a subject of public and democratic debate, as well as into procedures governing decision-making on work issues at different levels (company, sector, territory).

This example shows the advantage of evaluation studies that implement Sen's principle of plurality, incompleteness, achievement, and deliberation alongside Dewey's account of evaluation as situated practical judgment engaging a means and ends nexus. Firstly, awareness of the plurality and incompleteness of (e)valuations helps to avoid a reductionist understanding of evaluation as a sole matter of adequacy between prescribed norms and outcomes. Instead, identifying the plurality of valuations competing to define what good work means becomes an object of inquiry on its own. Such an approach highlights the tensions between norms and values in which work and workers are embedded. The guiding principles of evaluation within a company partially result of the way these tensions are dealt with. Secondly, dealing with plurality is not merely a matter of procedure (deliberation): it is also a matter of agreeing on valuable achievements. Here, Sen's concern for justice takes center stage (2009): he invites us to consider how principles of justice can aim at different achievements and should be linked to other principles, such as economic efficiency at the company level. To use Dewey's words, one should investigate here the way the right and the good combine.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, Dewey's account

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<sup>4</sup> Dewey makes out of the search for such a combination, which doesn't work without tensions, a core dimension of the moral experience (1930).

of evaluation as judgment of practice offers a methodological guideline for the empirical study of how principles of justice unfold in concrete cases. Such analyses should deal with the formulation of judgments in concrete situations of action involving desired achievements and issues of adequacy between means and ends.

The inquiry grid that emerges from such an approach focuses on persons, their environment taken at large, and the situations of action that result from their interactions (Zimmermann 2006). Although practical judgment is often reduced to the question of situated action, devoting attention to the environment requires a multiscale analysis that looks not just at individual biographies and specific situations, but also beyond at the environmental features of organizational and institutional settings, at the kind of resources or constraints they display for situated action. Furthermore, such multiscale analysis must be symmetrical in the sense that David Bloor uses the term (Bloor 1991 [1976]), meaning that the analysis must develop an understanding of the points of view and judgments of all the people involved in the evaluation, whatever their role and position in the process. Symmetry accounts for plurality within the methodological framework, making it possible to compare and contrast competing valuations, and their possible contradictions and tensions and to use them as a critical lever for analysis. Finally, this multiscale analysis asks for the conditions of a cognitive informed deliberation, making it possible for all different stakeholders to voice their concerns and make them count. One of its aims is to test this deliberative principle, a key condition of evaluation as practical judgment, against reality.

## Conclusion

Our joint exploration of Sen and Dewey's approaches paves the way for a pragmatist and institutionalist account of evaluation. Considering evaluation as a practical judgment, and the latter as an inquiry requires that we avoid reducing it to the performance of a natural skill. Rather, practical judgment is a capability in the fully pragmatist sense of that term. In *Outlines of a Critical Theory of Ethics*, Dewey makes the following distinction between capacity and capability: a person's *capacity* refers to her abilities and aptitudes, while *capability* describes the interaction between this capacity and a given environment, which "means special station, situation, limitations, surroundings, opportunities, etc." (1957: 97). Capability is therefore virtual agency, the result of an individual's intersection with his environment.

The capability for practical judgment is partly dependent on nature, as neurology and psychology studies have explored. But it is partly constituted in a social world, too, shaped by cognitive and practical resources as well as factors allowing their conversion into assessments. The normative dimension of practical judgment tells us that it *should be* plural, incomplete, outcome-oriented, and deliberative. This is, of course, not always the case, and sociologists must take environmental conditions into account and consider differences among environments that do or do not enable "publics" to be constituted and capabilities for deliberative evaluation to be

developed. Addressed from the angle of resources and conversion factors, the capability for practical judgment unavoidably raises the issue of power in a given environment: in the sense of power to act, as well as in the political sense of power relations. The shaping of the capability for practical judgment is tied to the issue of power in multiple ways.

On the one hand, cultural repertoires, shared presuppositions, and inherited categories are all resources for or constraints to judgment, and these resources are not evenly distributed among actors. They may be more or less abundant, more or less relevant, or more or less critical. Differences in gender, class, or ethnic features may change the conditions of (e)valuation and for sharing these (e)valuations with other people engaged in the same course of action. Provided with the same information, different people with different cognitive and political capabilities may produce different judgments.

On the other hand, institutions (firms, schools, governments, etc.) produce a certain degree of formalization of power relations. Formalization has important effects on people's capability for practical judgment, in that it binds individuals one to another through instituted roles, positions, and legitimized systems of authority. In other words, institutions' political organization strongly affects individuals' capabilities for (e)valuation.

Taking into account power relations leads us to consider institutions both as constitutive of and resulting from collective processes of (e)valuation. Institutions may be distinguished according to the design and setting of (e)valuation they foster: some may be open to a plurality of spaces of (e)valuation and follow more or less democratic procedures, while others limit spaces of (e)valuation and occasions to deliberate. All institutions do not enable the development of people's capabilities of judgment: information disclosure, the organization of deliberative settings, and the distribution of knowledge are all important means to enhance the capability for practical judgment. These considerations lead towards a critical inquiry into institutions taking into account their multiple facets, at the same time constraining and enabling.

Focusing on the relationship among capabilities, institutions, and power relations offers the point of departure for a political account of the formation of practical judgment, for which Sen and Dewey provide coherent foundations. In order to enhance the pragmatist approach of normative action, their respective approaches must, however, be broadened into a more consistent institutionalist perspective. Both Sen and Dewey are looking to expand democracy, yet democracy depends on institutional designs. This is why the emerging "discipline" of (e)valuation must tackle political issues head-on. These issues, however, cannot be solved through conceptual reasoning alone; they demand fresh inquiry into capabilities for practical judgment in concrete situations. Starting with the examples from the workplace developed in this article, we may identify three transversal questions that call for a deeper investigation of how institutions affect evaluations. The first question is, "who is evaluating?". Publics are not spontaneously generated from a void: institutions can encourage or discourage their constitution, as well as influence their borders. The second question is, "what is the relationship between evaluative deliberation and the actual power to act on real things?". Finally, the last question

pertains to the authority and legitimacy of both evaluators and evaluations. In order to build a fully operational theory of evaluation as practical judgment, these questions need to be tackled. The resulting approach thus aims to investigate evaluation at the cross-road between a sociology of knowledge and a political sociology revisited through the lens of situated agency.

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