

INTRODUCTION:

PRAGMATISTS AND COGNITIVE SCIENTISTS IN PARIS

Roman Madzia & Matteo Santarelli

The problem of social cognition, its underlying structures as well as its genesis in the process of interaction of human beings has always occupied philosophers as well as psychologists and cognitive scientists. In the philosophical realm, the pragmatists take up one of the most significant positions with regard to social cognition because many of them (especially William James and George H. Mead) actually were psychologists to the same extent as they were philosophers. Pragmatism has, therefore, always been at the forefront of interdisciplinary investigations of the structure of inter-human behavior. Starting about 20 years ago, the sciences of the mind have undergone what might be called a *pragmatic turn* in which research has gradually shifted from understanding the mind as a sort of computer towards looking at our cognitive abilities as a result of strategies which our bodies have developed in the process of dealing with the material world around them. In other words, contemporary cognitive sciences have started to view the mind as embodied, embedded, enactive, and even extended (4E).

Given the growing number of researchers interested in social psychology and pragmatism, the well-known pragmatist scholars Pierre Steiner and Roberto Frega decided to hold a conference *Pragmatism, 4E Cognitive Science, and the Sociality of Human Conduct* dedicated to pragmatism and social cognition.¹ This conference took place at the end of the last year (more precisely between 7th and 9th of December) at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. The conference was supported by the project CONNEX (call S2C3 2016) under the auspices of CNRS. The organizers had the liberty to choose the content of the conference not only

from a considerable number of interesting abstracts they received after the call for papers, but also from the speakers who were invited thanks to their previous work in the field. In the end, the participants of the conference enjoyed entire three days of interesting presentations and discussions concerning the pragmatist outlook on various aspects of embodied social cognition. The present volume contains a peer-reviewed collection of original papers presented at the event and is divided into three thematic parts.

The first part entitled *The pragmatist view of embodiment* contains three papers which directly tackle the issue of the pragmatist take on social cognition from two different perspectives. In the first paper, Pierre Steiner tries to answer the following question: which among the several uses of the concept 'pragmatism' in contemporary cognitive science could be understood as legitimate? This analytical task hinges around the distinction between a *pragmatic* turn in cognitive science and *pragmatist* understanding of cognition. The confusion between these two approaches is analyzed by Steiner by means of focusing on the different conceptions of action they involve.

Kelvin J. Booth's paper offers some preliminary steps towards putting logic on an embodied basis, drawing on the work of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. First, Booth shows how Dewey's idea of stimulus and response in 'The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology', and what amounts to a logic of the body described in the second chapter of *Logic, the Theory of Inquiry*, are enactive and embodied. Subsequently, he turns to Mead's theory of symbolic communication to show how it is fundamentally embodied and enactive, and how it bridges a logic of the body and a logic of symbolic thought. In the last part of the paper, Booth looks at several logical relations discussed in Dewey's *Logic* to show how they are grounded in embodiment.

After Steiner's and Booth's conceptual investigations, Roman Madzia's paper on the role of the human hand in the cognitive construction of objects and material culture examines how deeply the fact of the human handed-nature transforms our experience of physical

¹ The guest editors want to thank the organizers of the conference Pierre Steiner and Roberto Frega for giving the possibility of publishing a collection of papers originally presented and discussed in Paris

and social objects. One of the goals of Madzia's paper is to present and critically examine the cognitive importance of the human hand in the process of perception as well as in the process of development of characteristically human forms of intelligence. This examination is carried out mainly (but not exclusively) from the point of view of George H. Mead's 'haptic philosophy'. The author endeavors to root this pragmatist viewpoint, first in contemporary theories of human bipedalism, subsequently, in current enactive views of the role of the hand in the development of human cognitive capacities and also of the phenomenon of material culture.

The second part of the volume (*The pragmatist cognitive science and the problem of social cognition*) contains pieces which focus exclusively on various aspects of social cognition as seen from the pragmatist viewpoint. Here, Charles Lenay aims at answering the question whether social interactions should be explained by individual cognitive capacities, or conversely, whether these capacities can be explained by social interactions? Lenay deals with this issue by adopting a social and pragmatic standpoint. By means of a minimalist experimental paradigm, Lenay shows the importance of the role of the so-called 'body-object' in the collective organization of interactions, and in the reconfiguration of individual structures.

Fausto Caruana discusses the well-established dichotomy between 'basic emotion theory' conceiving emotions as discrete mental entities localized in the brain, and psychological constructionism, which understands emotions as cognitive-based and culturally constructed phenomena, not natural kinds. Relying on empirical studies on electrical brain-stimulation and on the conceptual heritage of Dewey and Mead's criticisms of James's theory of emotion, Caruana expresses the need for a third theoretical way, overcoming both basic emotion theory and psychological constructionism with regard to emotions.

In her piece, Sabine Collardey discusses the issue of collective intentionality. Specifically, Collardey shows how the main theories of joint intentionality – e.g. Tomasello – rely on a causal theory of action and on a mentalist conception of intentionality which prove to be unsatisfactory. Conceptual resources from classical pragmatism are employed by the author in order to overcome the difficulties involved by mentalistic accounts of collective intentionality.

Mentalism and the problem of mental imagery lie in the center of Italo Testa's paper as well. Testa acknowledges the constitutive role that imagery plays for social action and cognition. He argues that such role can be fully grasped by endorsing a Deweyan understanding of habit. From this perspective, especially the motor and embodied character of imagery should be appreciated. Testa reconstructs Dewey's own notion of imaginative rehearsal, and shows how this model could reconcile competing standpoints such as embodied simulation theory and the narrative practice hypothesis.

Matteo Santarelli and Alessandro Talia's paper focuses on self-state knowledge. By analyzing communication of internal psychological states in psychotherapeutic sessions, the authors aim at showing the weaknesses of introspectionism. Elaborating strongly on Mead's and Peirce's communicative theories of the self, Santarelli and Talia single out three specific features of self-state knowledge: authority; non-inferentiality; incompleteness and investigate their reliability and overall psychological scope.

Martin Weichold tackles an intriguing question: is our self-conception as autonomous and moral agents compatible with the theoretical and experimental results of contemporary social and natural sciences? Or are we compelled to consider this self-conception as totally illusory in light of cognitive sciences? Weichold tries to provide an answer to this issue by developing a social account of the self, inspired by Mead, which takes into account contemporary enactivist social theories.

The papers of third part of the volume, called *Pragmatism, cognitive science, and culture*, deal with more general questions situated on the frontiers between pragmatism, cognitive sciences and culture. Tibor Solymosi discusses Richard Rorty's view of philosophy as cultural politics. His primary source for this challenge is Patricia Churchland's neurophilosophy, which is itself in part a product of cultural politics. In drawing on resources in neurophilosophy, he is critical of Rorty's core distinction between causal relations and the space of reasons. This criticism, moreover, affords further reflection on the Sellarsian game that both Rorty and Churchland play in their physicalisms. He concludes with considerations about a naturalism more Deweyan than Sellarsian and the Deweyan neurophilosophy of neuropragmatism.

In the final paper of the volume, Matthew Crippen's contribution focuses on the similarities between what he calls sensorimotor bodily organization and coordinations occurring in group contexts. Specifically, the author deals with group action, where he endeavors to creatively advance Colwyn Trevarthen's developmental research (especially the notion of 'social affordances') from the Deweyan perspective.