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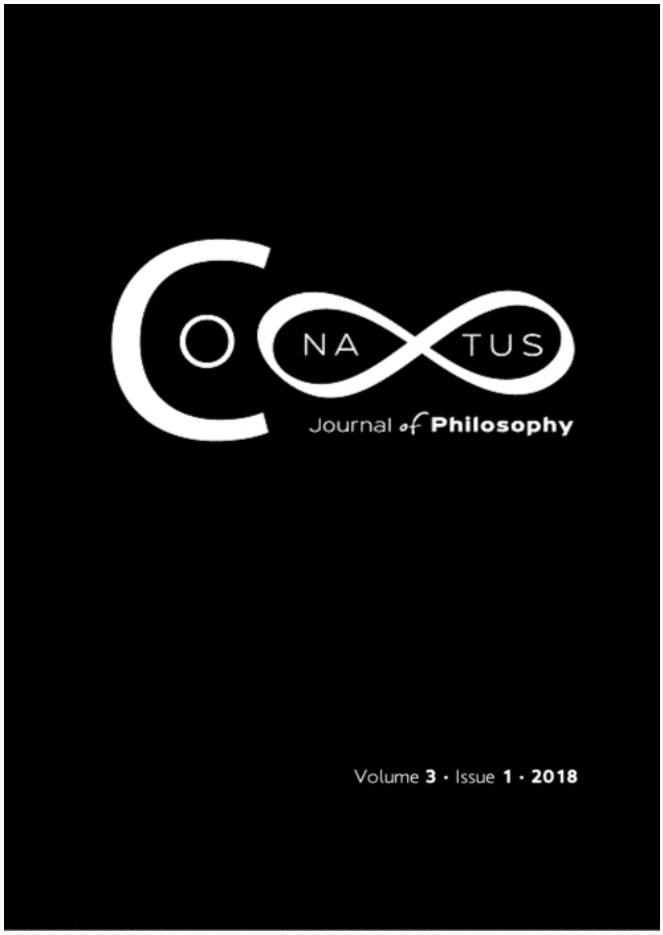

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Practice and Human Form

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Abstract

All variants of pragmatism share the flaw that their concepts of practice rely on the idea of the local value of actions with respect only to locally defined aims and not on the criterion of a universal goodness. This paper claims that such a criterion can be found with the aid of an ontologically founded theory of the Good, which regards forms not as solely noematic universals, but as real, though abstract, entities. The idea of goodness is derived from the thesis of the immediate knowledge of the Good. Further consequences of this form of theoretical foundation of goodness are the abandonment of the dogma of the immediate reference of language to the world as well as of the dogma of the primacy of acting over thinking.

Key-words: *action; forms; goodness; knowledge; language; Methodical Constructivism; Methodical Culturalism; Practice; Pragmatism; Realism; thinking; truth; value*

I. Form Knowledge and the Pragmatist Challenge

In his critical commentary to John McDowell's Book *Mind and World*, Robert Brandom declares McDowell's attempt to derive the knowledge of universals (including the knowledge of forms) from an already conceptualized perception as failed.[1] As reason for this failure, Brandom identifies McDowell's understanding of knowledge as an individual think-act of an individual mind, a circumstance that leads to the problem of the intersubjective adjustment of the contents of each individual thinker's thoughts. Nevertheless, both McDowell and Brandom agree that forms – as well as all other universals – are purely noematic objects, i.e. objects created by the activity of thinking, which have no real existence whatsoever. The only entities

[1] Robert Brandom, "Perception and Rational Constraint – McDowell's Mind and World", *Philosophical Issues* 7 (1995): 241-259.

having a real existence are singular material things. McDowell and Brandom share this nominalist stance with the traditional Empiricists. Brandom also agrees with McDowell as to the diagnosis according to which the solely noematically constituted form-concepts lack any normative power, i.e. neither their content nor the method of their constitution can claim any universal validity either as criteria of goodness or as categorical imperatives.

There are two traditional proposals for resolving this problem: either by means of the voluntarist claim according to which the extension of the normative power of a noematically constituted universal beyond the confines of an individual mind has to be enforced by stipulation, or through the relativist claim that universal validity has to be given up completely, while accepting a mere local and hypothetical validity of such "general" concepts instead. Both proposals lead, however, to the same impasse, namely to the apparent insight that normativity is nothing else than a kind of more or less gentle coercion.

Brandom regards McDowell's theory of conceptualized perception as an attempt to avoid this impasse, in which every traditional empiricist account is caught, without betraying the Nominalist Credo that prevails since Ockham's times. Brandom realizes, however, that McDowell's theory is not only incapable of resolving the problem of the normativity of form-concepts, but also that it rather removes it from the vicinity of any intellectual solution, because it declares the knowledge of universals as a non-analyzable fundamental fact of the world. Nevertheless, Brandom thinks that McDowell's conclusions can be avoided without the need to give up fundamental empiricist and nominalist principles, providing the knowledge of universals is conceived as a sort of collective noematic achievement that is rendered possible by the collective acquaintance with material things within the scope of a social practice. Brandom thus joins *Pragmatism*, that great philosophical tradition, which has endeavored to repair the flaws of classical Empiricism since the end of the 19th century, along with its 20th century heir and successor, Logical Empiricism, without falling back to the long ago vanquished ideas of Aristotelian form-realism or, still worse, of Platonism.

Contemporary Pragmatism is split in two "Grand Families". Their common denominator is the thesis of the *primacy of knowledge obtained through participation in practice before propositional knowledge* of both the *quiddity* (the what-it-is of an object) and the *haecceity* (the so-it-is-here-and-now of an object) of the objects. Pragmatism perceives as practice every joint action that is sufficiently stable and successful over a prolonged period of time and across a certain spatial area so that its performance can encompass several generations. A practice is therefore part of the reality that every human has been confronted with and has had to cope with since the moment of his or her birth. This definition entails, on the other hand, the claim that every potential participant in a practice has to possess the faculty of adapting her individual actions to the actions of the other practice participants, without recurring to any higher noematic objects like form-concepts or abstract knowledge. The primary acquaintance with a given practice takes place by blindly imitating and following

the actions of the "fully grown" and already competent participants. It should be stressed at this point that linguistic communication is also regarded as part of this inescapable life-worldly common denominators. A further common belief of both "Grand Families" of Pragmatism is that the structuring moments of practices – their rules and forms – are constituted by the subsequent reflective activity of the mind and the analysis of the primarily unquestioningly accepted practices.

The differences between both "Grand Families" become manifest at the level of the methods that lead from the life-worldly basis of practices to the noematic "superstructure" of the general and normative concepts as well as of the exact theories of the sciences that are constituted by them and that are thought to sustain theoretically the corresponding life-wordly practices. One "Family" claims – with reference to the "founding elders" of Pragmatism, W. James and J. Dewey – that the particular reasons for the choice of a particular scientific method are to be found in the limbo of the traditions of a life-worldly reflective practice[2], and asserts – inspired by the late Wittgenstein and by Quine – that it is the practice of linguistic communication that enables both the basic co-operation in the life-worldly social and poietic practices as well as the elaborated, knowledge-oriented and strictly rule-guided communication of scientific practices. According to this doctrine – that we would here call "Ordinary Language Pragmatism", – a person is introduced simultaneously to both language games, and the reflective activity of the mind consists basically in clearly distinguishing between these language games and in setting up systematic correlations between them. This is so – according to the main argument of Ordinary Language Pragmatism – because scientific language has been always part of human everyday language, notwithstanding the fact that the scientific contents, i.e. what counts as a scientific fact, can change with the passage of time.

The other "Grand Family", better known as "Methodical Philosophy"[3], criticizes its linguistically oriented relatives for being caught in Relativism, reinforced by a holistic attitude towards meaning. Methodical Philosophy tries to avoid this problem by establishing a historico-hierarchical relationship between both the practice and the language levels: According to it, the scientific practices and their specific languages have evolved from the life-worldly practices in a historical process of overcoming concrete problems that impeded the normal flow of everyday life. The various sciences have come and can still come into existence out of this kind of necessity – as "Sciences of Need" and not as "Sciences of Luxury"[4] – by the "idealization" and

[2] To this "Family" belong in the late 20th century among others: F. Kambartel, P. Stekeler-Weithofer, H.-J. Schneider, H. Putnam, R. Rorty und R. Brandom.

[3] To this purely German speaking "Family", which includes the so called "Methodical Constructivism" and its heir "Methodical Culturalism", belong among others: P. Lorenzen, W. Kamlah, K. Lorenz, P. Janich, J. Mittelstraß, C.F. Gethmann, D. Hartmann, M. Weingarten und M. Gutmann.

[4] Paul Lorenzen, "Konstruktivismus", *Journal for General Philosophy of Science* 25, no. 1 (1994): 125-133.

the "refinement" of the methods, the ends and the objects of the life-worldly practices to the corresponding scientific ones. This is achieved mainly by the so-called "material abstraction", which is used for the primary "operational" constitution of the scientific objects. The term "operational" means that in order to establish the equivalence relation underlying the constitution of each scientific object, a universally applicable technical process (under terrestrial conditions) is used that enables the prototype-free[5] determination of the equivalence relation and subsequently the prototype-free definition of the given scientific object. The reproducibility of the operational definition procedures is safeguarded by the so-called "Principle of Methodical Order", which demands that the order of the linguistic description follows strictly the order of the actions that are necessary and sufficient for the operational definition. Its validity relies on the assumption that a univocally defined aim can be achieved in principle by a univocally determined action or a chain of actions and that in case more than one chains of actions lead to a given aim, one of them is the "shortest" ("Principle of Pragmatic Order").

The above outlined procedure makes clear that the methodical variant of Pragmatism can in fact avoid, on the one hand, the obstacles of Holism and Relativism, by constructing the abstract language of the scientific objects and methods on the fundament of an object language that does not contain any general concepts (in the terminology of this variant of Pragmatism: abstractors and abstract terms), but only individual and sortal terms, indexicals as well as quantifiers and junctors. On the other hand, however, this procedure has to face the problem of not being able to justify the choice of the logical method that is used for the constitution, thus becoming prone to Voluntarism. In order to resolve also this issue, some Methodical Pragmatists tried to derive the language of logic from an underlying life-worldly language of argumentation. Such efforts are, however, in vain since they cannot explain why the idealization of a life-worldly language of argumentation leads straightforwardly to classical predicate logic. Even the introduction of a "Relevance Logic"[6] does not provide any relief because it replaces the classical concept of truth by a quite opaque idea of "relevance", that either leads to the same old logical paradoxes, or obscures completely the logical coherence of scientific statements.

Despite their differences regarding the implementation of practice and agency in

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[5] The term "prototype free" means that the constitution of the equivalence relation does not depend on any real thing that acts as a measure or as standard for the object defined by equivalence relation in question. An object constitution that would depend on a prototype would be confronted with the intractable problem to prove the existence of the equivalence between the prototype and the examples of the object that were created according to it. The prototype bound definition of an object is thus in a similar way flawed as the concept of ideas that states that ideas exist separately from the things that realize them. This concept is refuted in the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*.

[6] Dirk Hartmann, *On Inferring. An Enquiry into Relevance and Validity* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2003).

the determination of the universality and normativity of general concepts, because both "Grand Families" of Pragmatism begin with the reflexive analysis of local action contexts, they face also a common problem, namely the fact that their common concept of practice relies on the local and culturally bound *value* of a given context of actions and not on its universal *goodness*. However, the very fact of a locally established action context that is of a certain value for its participants cannot justify its universal goodness. This justification cannot be achieved even if one succeeds in enlarging the group of participants by voluntary joining, in such a manner that it may factually encompass the totality of the existing human population, since even a worldwide participation in a context of actions is not immune against the possibility of an action that is essentially lacking universal goodness despite the fact that it has a worldwide value: Many critics of the "current circumstances", from the ancient opponents of slavery to anti-monarchist and anti-mercantilists of the European Enlightenment to the contemporary ecological, humanist and anti-capitalist movements, stress in their argumentations that humanity has arranged itself with a merely apparent comfort that misses the real end of a universally good life.

Both "families" of Pragmatism are aware of the problem of the normative universalization of merely noematically constituted general concepts. They have made attempts to overcome it by introducing a variety of principles – of which the Principles of the Methodical and the Pragmatic Order are two examples – that are supposed to ensure that voluntarist and/or relativist impasses are avoided. The introduction of principles, however, just shifts the problem without resolving it: principles are namely notoriously taunted with the flaw that their problem-solving ability can neither be justified nor evaluated in advance. In their best, case principles can prove their value only through the success of their application. Again, one has to decide if this success is a proof of the universal goodness or merely of the local value of the principle. With respect to this, principles are even of a poorer status than axioms because the latter raise the (admittedly not easily redeemable) claim that they are true and their truth is knowable.

Methodical Culturalism tries to circumnavigate this problem by declaring *transculturality* as a necessary criterion for the universal goodness of scientific objects. Transculturality is, however, not sufficient since the factual overcoming of cultural borders is no indication for the transformation of something locally valuable into something universally good, even if one demands that the acceptance of new norms and procedures has to be strictly voluntary. There is namely no argument that *obliges* any life-worldly practice to accept the advice of scientific knowledge, except for Lorenzen's hint, that existential privation will see to it so that it happens. This may be a striking argument; it has, however, the disadvantage that its addressee will turn the tables at the first opportunity. The skeptical attitude towards science that has been manifest since Husserl's *Krisisschrift*[7] is the best indication for the failure of a merely

[7] Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaft und die transzendentale Phänome-*

concrete problems- resolving science to conquer also the hearts of people as the method for achieving universal goodness.

In my opinion, there are two reasons for the inability of Pragmatism to overcome these aporias:

Firstly, pragmatism as well as the totality of the 20th century Philosophy of Science unconditionally accepts the dogma of the *immediate reference of language to the world* as it has explicitly been proposed in Wittgenstein's work. The main difference between Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Language that has evolved under the influence of Logical Empiricism is that Philosophers of Language regard the world as the sum of "elementary existences"[8] that exist independently of the subjects of knowledge, while pragmatists regard it as a network of practice contexts that define what an "elementary existence" is.

Secondly, pragmatism cannot provide a criterion that is independent from the concept of action for the distinction between such action contexts that constitute a practice and such ones that do not. The "criterion of the success of action" cannot fulfill this purpose because it depends on the internal coherence between an action and its aim. The desired criterion of demarcation, however, has to qualify something as a practice (or as a non-practice) independently of the factual success of actions.

In the following considerations, I will aim at showing that this criterion can be obtained only by a form-theoretically founded theory of Goodness, which treats forms as *real* and not as merely noematically constituted universals. A further consequence of such a realist form-theoretical foundation of Goodness is the abandoning of the dogma of the immediate reference of language to the world.

II. The Foundation of Practice in Goodness

The problem of determining the very nature of practice and its differentiation from a mere opportunistic coincidence of actions can be found in philosophical thinking since its beginnings in Greek antiquity. It is implicitly present in the dispute between Parmenides and Heraclitus about the nature of being and the truth, and also in the controversy between Cratylus and Hermogenes in the homonymous Platonic dialogue. There, Cratylus takes up the Parmenidean position that declares truth as the uppermost good and identifies it with the being itself, also claiming that in order for a true sentence to mean the being, a its parts too – every single word it is composed of – have to be directly related to being, down to the phonetic structure. His friend Hermogenes, on the other hand, is an adherent of Heraclitus' opinion and asserts (in contrast to Cratylus) that both the semantic relationship between word and object

nologie (Hamburg: Meiner, 1977).

[8] The exact nature of these elementary existences is defined differently in each particular theory: Carnap, for example, determines them as "elementary experiences", Wittgenstein (in the *Tractatus*) as "states of affairs", Quine as "stimuli", and Russell as "facts".

as well as its phonetic structure are purely human constructions. Meaning and structure of a word are – in modern terms – conventional. Socrates, appointed by both parties as an arbiter, initially supports Cratylus' position, but finally comes to the conclusion that the correspondence relationship between word and object cannot be iso-structural, since even in the Greek language there are too many deviations and variants in the phonetic structure of a given word, and it cannot be that each single variant depicts the nature of the referred object, or even an aspect of it. With this conclusion, however, Socrates manoeuvres himself in an aporetic impasse because already at the beginning of the dialogue, he rebutted Hermogenes'/Heraclitus' claim that both, word meaning and phonetics, were purely conventional with the argument that if this were the case then a science of word semantics and of linguistics would be impossible; however, both sciences do exist.

As in many other cases of such "Platonic aporias", the resolution of which is only foreshadowed in the Platonic oeuvre, the merit of giving an explicit solution of the Cratylus problem goes to Aristotle: The aporetic situation between word and object comes up because both Cratylos and Hermogenes think that there is a direct iconic relationship between word and real object, the nature of which they seek to describe. This relationship, as Aristotle adheres, is, however, an indirect one. Word and real object are separated by the νοῦς, the faculty of the human soul that aims at the knowledge of the essence of real objects. Words depict solely the contents of noetic states, of thoughts. Their only connection to real objects is that they enable the phonetic representation of the noetic contents, which are the instances that depict the essence of real objects. Thus, the threat of an insurmountable relativism is banned: The relationship between thought and corresponding real object is universal, while the relationship between thought and word is, on the other hand, conventional and relative. This relativity is, however, neutralized because all linguistic systems refer to the same universal correspondence relationship between thoughts and real objects.

The Aristotelian solution relies on the fundamental belief that the human soul is not only able to synthesize a more or less accurate picture of reality from the data provided by the senses (Aristotle calls this faculty of the soul φαντασία – imagination), but that it is furthermore able by means of the faculty of the νοῦς – this term will be translated here with "intellect" – to distinguish in this picture the essential from the non-essential (i.e. accidental) aspects of the depicted real objects. The intellect is able to extract from the picture synthesized by imagination those "elements" that are responsible for the quiddity of a given real object and to combine them with the particular picture of this object in the judgment "This here is an X" – this faculty of the intellect being called "cognizing". In contrast to humans, creatures endowed only with the gift of imagination can only relate themselves to their particular imagination-generated pictures of the real world in the particular way that is given to them by virtue of their kind, without being able to distinguish between the essential and the accidental aspects of these pictures (unless the nature of their kinds has already anticipated such distinctions, something which manifests itself as

instinctive behavior).[9]

The main difference between human language and the voices of creatures equipped only with imagination is that the latter use their voices in order to represent phonetically their kind-specific imagination generated pictures of reality, while human language has the capacity to represent the content of the mental states that refer or correspond to the essence of the perceived real objects, i.e. the judgmental thoughts: The words obtain their object references by means of their connection to the thoughts. This model leaves enough leeway also for word meanings that refer to thoughts generated by the νοῦς for its own "internal" purposes, e.g. for the classification of being, or the construction of quantitative ratios, or in order to combine judgments.

Veraciousness and sociality (both essential traits of human beings) are the direct result of the cognitive and linguistic capabilities of the intellect. This is so because on the one hand the knowledge of the essential aspects of the objects is associated with the need for truth, that is with the need to know an object as it really and essentially is: Those who understand what true knowledge (σοφία) is, also understand that they also seek and desire true knowledge – so Aristotle's claim (in unison with Parmenides, Plato and Socrates). And those who know what σοφία is, are 'σοφίας φίλοι' – philosophers. The faculty of speech, on the other hand, liberates knowledge from the fetters of the individual confinement of each single mind and enables its mutual communication. Thus individual knowledge can be acquired by other cognizers and its truth can be reassessed and if necessary corrected – philosophizing is a genuinely social activity. It is, however, not necessary that in order to philosophize there has to be an actual assembly or a synchronous repetition of a given activity. In order to philosophize jointly, it is sufficient that the fellow philosophers just recognize and respect what one does. It is not necessary to respond immediately. They can live in another place or at another time and their access to the knowledge of a fellow philosopher can be mediated solely by scripture or by hearsay. They can communicate their own results much later, perhaps after an extended time of reflection. As long, however, as each single philosopher pursues the universal common good of true knowledge and aligns his own activity with it, he will participate in this world- and humanity-embracing project, that gives the paradigm for the genuinely human activity that since Plato is called a *practice* (πρᾶξις).

According to this understanding, a practice is not a collective activity aiming merely at an end that cannot be achieved by a single person, but a common effort for the sake of an end that is good for human nature itself (and thus for every past, present and future human being at every place of the universe). The universality of the *goodness* of an end does not entail, however, that this end is also absolutely

[9] This model can also explain phenomena as the learning and dressing capability of higher animals, as well as the capacity of some higher mammals to "sense the voice of reason", i.e. to react appropriately to human speech.

valuable. The value of an end is assessed according to its local utility in relation to the respective local circumstances that determine the actualization of human life at a particular place at a given time. Its *goodness* on the other hand is based on the fact that it is in a certain relationship to the human nature itself and the degree of this goodness is assessed according to its proximity to this nature.[10]

III. The Practice of Knowing the Truth and its Objects

The participation in a practice is motivated solely by the knowledge of the goodness of its ends with philosophical knowledge being the end in the highest degree of goodness.[11] All other particular and object specific practices contain this aiming at true knowledge, although the knowledge aimed at it is not universal, but confined to the nature of a particular object. All particular practices have nevertheless in common that their specific ends are good, so that they have to be respected by every man, despite the fact that their specific values might be different for different cultures or needs.

Philosophy as the practice of knowing the truth is aimed at every bit of real existence as well as in every noematic object that results from the activity of intellect – concepts, oncepttions, judgments, and syllogisms. Unlike any other particular science, philosophy has thus no specific – real or noematic – object. Philosophy cannot be identified with any particular science or any particular practice. Nevertheless, philosophy has its own specific methods of inquiry, which consist in determining the existence of an object, either by proving its reality or by proving its conceptual truth, both activities being traditionally labelled respectively as Ontology and Logic. Conceptual truth relies, however, on ontological truth because real existence manifests itself as occurrence in a spontaneous and irreducible manner. Without contact to real objects, the intellect wouldn't be able to synthesize an imagination-picture of the world, nor would it be able to recognize in it those aspects that are responsible for the quiddities of the real objects. It should be remarked at this point, however, that knowledge of real objects is not only sense mediated, but can be achieved also by an immediate mode, which will be discussed in a later section of this essay.

Thus, the objects of the practice of knowing the truth are the real and noematic, i.e. mere conceptual, truths with the latter being dependent on the former. Real truths are determined by their correspondence to real objects and mere conceptual truths are determined by their oncepttual reference to real and to other conceptual truths.

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[10] Instead of "goodness" and "value" one could use the terms "intrinsic" and "extrinsic value" or "eigenvalue" and "relative value".

[11] See for example Aristotle, *De Anima*.

IV. Ontological Excurse: Real Objects

The ontological primacy of reality over conceptuality requires that, in order to understand the nature of the practice of knowledge of the truth, the kinds and the nature of real objects first have to be determined. Ontology thus belongs to the objects of this practice. Real objects befall the human soul as irreducible primary experiences. This means that it is not in the absolute discretion of the soul to determine the constitution of their imaginative and of their noematic representations. Real objects present themselves to the intellect as primary phenomena. The influence of the capabilities of the intellect is confined to achieving a higher or lower "richness" of their noetic representations according to the extent of the contribution of each particular sense to their constitution and according to the ability of the intellect to distinguish clearly in the imagination-synthesized picture the aspects that are constitutive for their quiddities.

The classical ontological tradition distinguishes primarily following classes of real objects[12]:

- Formed single things.
- Forms of formed single things.
- Formless thing-resembling[13] singular phenomena ("formless single things").
- Real properties of formed and formless single things.
- Real relations between formed and formless single things and between properties of single things.

There are some good reasons to amend this catalogue by the class of formed processes, the class of the so-called tropes, the class of the formed and formless[14] phases, and the class of the spatiotemporal constellations. For the purposes of this essay we will, however, refrain from doing so and confine our reflections to the traditional ontological classes. We will also not touch the issue of the so-called "prime matter".

The fundamental ontological class is that of formed single things. Formed single

[12] The classes described here do not match exactly the Aristotelian categories. The class of the formed single things, for example, corresponds to the Aristotelian category of substance, but the classes of real properties and real relations encompass several particular Aristotelian categories.

[13] The term "thing-resembling" means that the objects in question are spatiotemporally distinct. Examples for such entities are stones, drops, and clouds.

[14] We do not use here the term "amorphous" because it is used in Chemistry in order to designate the absence of a certain material property (crystal structure). With "formless phases" we mean those chemical substances that did not observe the "law of constant proportions". It holds in general that every formless phase is also amorphous, but not that every amorphous phase is formless.

things are characterized by their existential discreetness and self-sufficiency, i.e. they are spatiotemporally separate existences and they do not rely on any other factor in order to exist discreetly. Formed single things are *formed*, because their constitution shows that they owe their existence to an also real general concept of plan that renders possible judgments regarding the degree of compliance of a given formed single thing to the specifications of its corresponding plan, as well as the degree of deviation from those specifications. This underlying real general plan, the *form*, determines thus the quiddity of a formed single thing. Formed single things are also characterized by their existential *integrity*: their parts do not belong to same object class. Parts of plants and animals are not plants and animals, parts of machines, are not machines (at least not machines of the same functionality: parts of clocks are not clocks etc.). The parts of formed single things can be also formed, as it is the case for example with the organs of animals or with the gears making up a mechanic clock, or they can be formless.

On the other hand, the quiddity of formless thing-resembling phenomena is determined solely by their external look – by their *shape*. This shape can be definite, resembling e.g. a geometric figure, as is the case with mountains, piles of sand or floating droplets of a liquid, or nondescript, as is the case with stones or volumes of liquids that are flowing on a plane surface. The absence of a form has the consequence that formless things lack a criterion for being "well realized" as well as an existential integrity. Their parts thus fall into the same class as the still intact formless things: parts of piles are piles, parts of stones are stones, parts of mountains are mountains, and parts of drops are drops and so on.[15]

Formed single things can be classified into *natural* and *artificial* ones. The form of a natural formed single thing is real cause and integral part of its quiddity (another formulation of this circumstance is that a natural formed thing carries its form in itself). Artificial formed things, on the other hand, receive their form from an external source – in the case of terrestrial artificial things, this source is the planning of human activity. The form of artificially formed things is, in contrast to natural things, not a real object, but rather the content of a thought – the forms of artificial things are noematic, i.e. solely conceptual objects. On the contrary, natural formed things are able to realize their corresponding forms by means of a process that is inherent to them (this process is called *life*) and are also called *substances in the narrow sense*.

Regarding the existence of artificial formless things, it appears that already the term "formless artificial thing" is inconsistent und cannot therefore refer to any truth, be it a real or a conceptual one. This is so because an artificial thing is by its very nature the result of a planning activity that realizes a concept, i.e. a noematic form. An earth pile that has been erected in order to serve as a tumulus has thus not only a shape, but also fulfills a purpose, which is part of its concept. There are formless

[15] There are also some conventional deviations from this classification, e.g. in some languages there are distinctions according to the size between mountains and hills, stones and rocks etc.

phenomena that can result from planning human activity, for example garbage dumps and heaps of rubble and debris, but they are not nevertheless the products of such an activity in the narrow sense of the term "product".

Real objects, formed as well as formless ones, and natural as well as artificial ones, are determined with regard to their actual existence by their real properties and their real relations to other real existences. The real properties of a thing determine its haecceity. Insofar, these properties depend on its form, therefore are its *essential properties*. Any other property that does not fulfill this criterion is *accidental*. The properties of formless things are thus in their entirety accidental.

When it comes to real relations, the most important ones are *identity* and *causality*. Identity is the univocal relation between the haecceity and the quiddity of a formed real thing. In order for identity to exist, both haecceity and quiddity have to have real existence. This means that real identity is proper only to natural formed things. Artificial things and formless things only have a conceptual identity, the former because their forms are conceptual objects and the latter because their quiddity is defined solely conventionally, therefore solely conceptually.

Causality is the relation of the absolute (i.e. necessary and sufficient) conditional dependence of a real object on another real object. The real object, the existence of which is the absolute condition for the existence of another real object is called its *cause*. The real object, the existence of which depends on the cause is the *effect* of that cause. The causal connection between real things is an *effective* one, while forms of real formed things and the formed things themselves are connected by a *form-causal* relationship. Forms of artificial real things are not real themselves and cannot thus be connected directly causally with them. They exert their causal faculty, however, mediated by human activity, being its ends. The causal relationship between forms of artificial things and their realizations is in effect a relationship of *finality* or *final causality*.

V. The Immediate Knowledge of the Human Form as the Foundation of the Knowledge of Forms in General

The practice of knowing the truth relies on the capability of the intellect to distinguish in the imagination-picture of reality between formed and formless things, to "extract" the forms of the former from the manifold of their perceived properties and to establish the relation of formal causality between the "extracted" forms and the perceived things. However, how does intellect know in the first place that there are forms that can be sought for? How does it know that forms exist and that they are real causes of the formed things? McDowell's assumption that perception itself is "conceptualized"[16] does not provide any clarification, since in this case, one also has to assume that forms have not only the capacity of formal, but also of effective

[16] John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge & London: OUP, 1994).

causality[17] – otherwise they could not reach intellect via the perception organs. Furthermore, even if one accepts that forms are effective-causal entities, the effective capability cannot explain how their forming capability can be filtered out from the stream of perception. A further argument against the effecttive-causal capability of forms can be derived from Plato's so-called "third man argument", which is put forward in the platonic dialogue *Parmenides* in order to disprove the claim that ideas are separate real entities like the things that are their manifestations: if forms were effective-causal, like the Socratic ideas, then they should manifest themselves as spatio-temporal entities. If this were the case, then they should also have a real identity, i.e. their haecceity should be in a univocal relation to their quiddity. But if forms had quiddity and haecceity, then they would have their own formal causes, which would in turn also be effective-causal entities, since otherwise, they could not exert their forming capacities. This assumption leads to an infinite regress of formal causes, rendering the very idea of formal causality an absurdity.

Furthermore, if perceptions were conceptualized, then there would be no error possible with respect to determining the essential properties of a perceived thing – it could only be possible that we are not able to perceive them because of a failure of our perceptive capabilities. In other words, if perceptions were conceptualized, then we should have a sort of "concept perceptions" in the same sense that we have color, sound, tactile or other kinds of categorized perceptions. The only possible error would be that of correspondence, i.e. it could be possible that we could have the perception of an essential property of the perceived thing, for example the perception of quiddity of a thing that does not correspond to the real quiddity of this particular thing. Nevertheless, we could not err regarding the fact that we had a perception of a certain "quiddical" quality (e.g. a perception of "felineness" or "bovineness") in the same manner as we may have a certain color perception that does not match the actual color of the perceived thing. The only thing that we can say about formed things perceived for the first time, however, is at most that they are just formed and not what their form is. Knowing the form of a perceived thing, i.e. learning to distinguish its essential from its accidental properties, is something that we achieve after a detailed examination of the thing in question and even then this knowledge is still fallible and subject to revision.

Traditional Empiricism takes this fundamental fallibility of form knowledge as the reason to deny completely the real existence of forms. To the empiricist understanding forms are purely noematic truths that are "fabricated" by means of the noetic processing of a real, continuous input of "experiences". Whether real things are the effective cause of this input or whether it is the irreducible and absolute fundament

[17] Hartmann, *On Inferring. An Enquiry into Relevance and Validity*, 42: "The world itself must exert a rational constraint on our thinking. If we suppose that rational answerability lapses at some outermost point of the space of reasons, short of the world itself, our picture ceases to depict anything recognizable as empirical judgment".

of our knowledge[18] is a controversial issue among empiricists that at this point is of no concern to us. The problem of empiricism is that if the knowledge of forms is a pure product of our individual intellect then it is a mystery that we have a common knowledge of forms even if this knowledge is confined to the knowledge of the human form. There are indeed empiricist positions that deny the existence of a common knowledge of forms, including the knowledge of the human form, and declare the fact of the intersubjective coincidence of such a knowledge as a contingent historical phenomenon. According to this stance, the normative force that emanates from form knowledge is nothing else than the enforcement of a particular belief, even if this belief proves in retrospect to be beneficial to everyone having adopted it. However, in this case, it is not possible to prove that the benefit resulting from the enforced acceptance of a particular merely noematically constituted form knowledge is real and not merely an apparent one. A purely empiricist theory of knowledge that totally denies the real existence of forms has great difficulties to justify even the intersubjective validity of a merely noematic form knowledge – an empiricist justification of the universality of such a knowledge cannot be given at all.

There has to be thus at least one kind of form knowledge that is based on the real existence of at least one form, since without such a knowledge we cannot even realize that humans belong to the same natural kind. The empiricist claim is correct, however, that it seems to be the case that this knowledge is not accessible via perceptive experience. It is only the empiricist solution of this problem, namely that this knowledge is the result of the constructive activity of intellect that leads to the impasse. The correct answer is rather that the knowledge of the human form is the background, on the basis of which the intellect of an individual human being can interpret the data provided by perception so that it can recognize in its own individual imagination-picture of reality other human beings. Therefore, the human form has to be known in a way that is completely independent from the content of any perception or from any other kind of mediated experience. The knowledge of the human form as well as of its real existence has to be a *direct* and *immediate* result of the activity of intellect, a result of that what is called *pure thinking*. Only so is it possible for us a) to know that we are formed single things and b) to distinguish between those perceptions referring to the fact of the reality of our existence as a formed single thing (proprioception) and those ones that are sensory perceptions of the external world, including the perception of the "exterior" of our bodies.

The knowledge of the human form arises together with the emergence of conscious thinking. The exact point of its emergence during the ontological development of a human being is of no relevance for our considerations. The important issue is that every human being has an immediate and direct knowledge of the human form from the very first moment when conscious thinking commences. The first thoughts of a human being regard the human form and the fact that it is its actualization, i.e.

[18] The first claim was made e.g. by Locke and Quine, the latter e.g. by Hume and Carnap.

that it has a quiddity and a haecceity and that both modes of being are connected by the relation of identity. Quoting a traditional characterization, this knowledge is at the beginning of human life obscure and confused. Every human being has, however, the ability to gain by means of thinking and by active interaction with other humans a clearer and more distinct idea of its form. And, despite the fact that the knowledge of the human form is at the beginning of life obscure and confused, this knowledge is strong enough to enable even an infant to recognize in his/her imagination-picture of reality other actualizations of the human form and to address them as fellow humans.

The knowledge of the human form enables also every human being already at a very early age to search for the forms of the surrounding things and to use speech for articulating the noematic content of the thoughts that represent these forms: a toddler who can master language can already call the things that surround her by the names of their quiddities and in doing so he/she also learns to perform deictic actions as well as to adjust his/her own form knowledge to the form knowledge of other humans. By means of this triangulation, everyone is in position to talk with everyone else about the same real thing as the actualization of its particular form.

The most important evidence for the fact that every human is in possession of an immediate knowledge of the human form is the circumstance that already toddlers learn that personal pronouns must not be used as proper nouns and that they are not mere spatio-temporal indicators, but that they are used in order to demonstrate the identity relation of every human: "I", "you", "he/she" do not indicate merely the three spatio-temporal modes of a certain singular event, they rather indicate that I, you and he/she are respectively actualizations of the human form and that my knowledge of myself as actualization of this form is applicable also to You and to Him/Her. It is thus possible to infer from the statement "I beat You" the truth of the statement "You are hurt (by Me)". On the contrary, animals that have no knowledge of their form can grasp (if they are capable of grasping anything) only this kind of connection between two spatio-temporally separate entities: "A is affected in a certain way by B (e.g. A senses that B attacks him)" has as result that "B is directly reciprocally affected by A (e.g. B senses that A flees)".

Despite the fact that the knowledge of the human form is at the beginning of human life obscure and confused, it is nevertheless sufficient to enable the child to recognize that the adults who are taking care of it are more perfect actualizations of the human form. This is so because the knowledge of the human form informs the child about the degree of perfection of its own existence compared to the existence of adults. The knowledge of the human form also contains the knowledge of its own imperfection, being thus the reason that children orientate themselves to adults.

The knowledge of the human form is also the source of the normativity in human life. To know something entails namely that I treat everything, of which I have a certain degree of knowledge, according to this degree of knowledge, and my appropriate treatment of a thing shows that I have knowledge about it. If I know that

the object in front of me is a spoon, then I use it in order to eat my soup, and not in order to hammer a nail in the wall. My knowledge of the quiddity of a thing instructs me also about what I should not try to do with it because I won't succeed. This holds also for natural things: if I have knowledge about the quiddity of an animal or of a natural substance, then I behave towards it and handle it in accordance with its form. To harness a tiger to a cart and to try to use it as a draught animal reflects a fundamental ignorance of the tiger form. This ignorance can have many sources; it may lie in the deficient cognitive faculties of the persons involved, or it may be owed to the fact that they are not yet familiar with or haven't yet grasped the form of this animal.

Thus, from the knowledge of the human form, there also naturally arises the knowledge of what is ought towards other humans. This kind of obligation needs no further motivation, no "respect for the law"[19], but does motivate directly our actions – it is a "need of the human soul".[20] The "respect" (Kant) resp. the "obligation" (Weil) that we feel towards the human form and a fortiori also towards its single actualizations is the direct result of its knowledge.

Beyond this, the knowledge of the human form reveals to us that the forms of the formed things are real and not mere conceptual entities because the things and the processes that surround us are not entirely moldable by us. They display a certain degree of resistiveness that can be explained only by assuming that it is (at least partly) caused by the forms of the things. We recognize that many of the real things that surround us are formed because of our knowledge that we are also formed things even if we cannot have a direct knowledge of their forms. The forms of the things are revealed to us only by our empirical and practical interaction with the things themselves. The knowledge of these forms is thus always fallible, revisable and perfectible, since it can be acquired only indirectly by means of analyzing the contents of imagination, but it is nevertheless this empirical and practical interaction that renders a clearer form knowledge possible.

VI. Actio cogitationem sequitur

The above considerations shed some light on the nature of the difficulties encountered by Pragmatism in all its variations: Pragmatism – as well as his vice Empiricism – cannot explain nor can it justify why the results of reflection have this peculiar universally normative validity. This is so because Pragmatism subordinates thinking to acting and regards knowledge as the result of the subsequent reflection upon the perception of the results of actions. The attempt to circumnavigate this obstacle by declaring language as part of every practice (establishing thus a relationship of

[19] Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Werkausgabe* Bd. VII (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1982), BA 14.

[20] Simone Weil, *L'enracinement – Prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

immediateness between language and world and deriving thinking from speaking[21]) only shifts the problem to the explanation of the universal validity of linguistic expressions.

Using the terms of the platonic model of the soul, Pragmatism's error consists in the circumstance that it regards the "second part of the human soul"[22, 23] the θυμοειδές, as being prior to the "first part", the λογιστικόν (we will translate here λογιστικόν as "intellect" and θυμοειδές as "spontaneity"). However, both Plato and Aristotle, as well as the entire philosophical tradition in their succession, emphasize that spontaneity cannot act without guidance from the intellect and that both instances of the soul form a partial unit. In the platonic model, this partial unit builds a pole that opposes the other pole of the soul, its "desiring part" (ἐπιθυμητικόν), with spontaneity, acting also as a sort of mediator or "interface" between the intellect and the desiring part. According to Plato, the soul is a hierarchically structured, but consistent entity with its three parts being its constitutive and inseparable aspects. At the top of this hierarchy is the intellect that on the one hand is subject to the demands of the desiring part via the mediation of spontaneity, but is, on the other hand, in position to resist these demands by its reasoning power that is based on true knowledge, and also (if its reasoning power is strong enough) to prevail against them with the aid of spontaneity. Acting itself, the real and actual manifestation of spontaneity, is thus always guided by thinking – the activity of the intellect – even if this thinking is sometimes not strong enough to achieve the necessary degree of true knowledge or to defy the force exerted by the desires.

Aristotle's criticism of this model is that it related spontaneity only indirectly to the human form, namely via the cognitive activity of the intellect, rendering thus the ontic relationship between soul and form diffuse – this holds also for the souls of every animate being. His soul model regards the soul not only as the motor of the individual activity of every living being, but also as the factor, which allows the form to unfold its form causal capacity: soul and form of a living thing make up a unit. This means for the human soul that both the activity of intellect and the manifestation of spontaneity realize jointly the human form. Since, however, the contribution of the intellect to the realization of the human form is not only passive (by providing knowledge gained from the analysis of the imagination-picture), but also active, by utilizing its immediate knowledge of the human form, spontaneity is always informed and guided by this knowledge.

Despite their particular differences both models of the soul agree on the claim

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[21] Paul Lorenzen, *Lehrbuch der Konstruktiven Wissenschaftstheorie* (Mannheim a.o.: Bibliographisches Institut, 1987), 9. Here Lorenzen defines thinking as "imagined speaking".

[22] Plato, *Politeia*, 441b.

[23] The soul of the animals has according to Plato only two "parts": a desiring and a conative (Plato, *Politeia*, 441b). Plants on the other hand, manifest the fundamental vital force that directly transforms inanimate to animate matter (Plato, *Timaios*, 77b).

that without the guidance by the knowledge of the human form, every merely empirically sustained reflexive analysis of a world dominated by spontaneous activity cannot overcome contingency and is at the mercy of an insurmountable fundamental skepticism. The acceptance of the primate of conscious and cognitive thinking over acting does not imply, however, that knowledge is infallible. It provides nevertheless the standard for the recognition and the correction of errors so that not only every single human in the course of his or her life, but also humanity in its historical totality is able to gain a progressively clearer and more distinct idea of itself.

Paraphrasing a legendary allegory, we can say that the immediate knowledge of the human form by means of the thinking activity of the intellect is the Light of Truth, at which only few of us can directly gaze, but that enables the shadow in front of us, in which everyone can recognize the contours of Man.

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