

**Sarin Marchetti**

1. Let me begin with a quotation from the book under discussion, which shall guide my own understanding of the material covered and set up the very angle of the critical light I would like to cast on it. Analytic philosophy's unity and fringes, claim Conant and Elliott, are those of a *tradition* rather than of a single school or program – methodological, substantive, or stylistic alike:

The unity of a tradition cannot be found in a collection of features instantiated in each moment in its history. It is explicable only through a form of understanding that seeks to grasp how those moments are linked in philosophically significant ways. Reflection on each such moment can illuminate others – but only when they are collectively considered in the light of their mutual interconnections. When such acts of reflection bear fruit, they reveal not merely a series of historical episodes but rather the successive moments of the unfolding of a tradition<sup>1</sup>.

In his massive co-edited anthology, Conant and Elliott spell at painstaking detail many such forms of understanding and acts of reflections, guiding the reader through several fascinating sites and territories which all variously claim to be (called) analytic philosophy. This strategy is in line with the by-now classical account of what a tradition is, offered some forty years ago by Alasdair MacIntyre:

A tradition not only embodies the narrative of an argument, but is only recovered by an argumentative retelling of that narrative which will itself be in conflict with other argumentative retellings<sup>2</sup>.

The history of analytic philosophy, perhaps similarly to the history of other philosophical traditions – especially those closer to us and still unfolding –, would then be the history of

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<sup>1</sup> J. Conant and J. Elliott, *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy. After Kant: The Analytic Tradition*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2017, pp. A 17-18.

<sup>2</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science*, in «Monist», 60 (1977), no. 4, p. 461.

a conversation among philosophers whose belonging to such a tradition has been deeply shaped by the argumentative retellings of the narrative of the very tradition they trust to be sharing. In their several informative introductions to the various sections of the anthology, Conant and Elliott masterly showcase a number of such narratives and argumentative retellings not so much to endorse or reject them – although their preferences can be guessed thanks to their choices and treatments of such narratives –, but rather to show how this sprawling thing we call analytic philosophy is (and has always been) the result of an almost seamless web of figures and texts with a shifting core and peripheries bond together by a certain understanding of its unfolding as a tradition. Now, while some features and breaks bear more weight than others – the «linguistic turn» is perhaps the most widely acknowledged feature of analytic philosophy, as the passage from logical positivism to ordinary language philosophy counts perhaps as the loudest break –, yet, at a closer look we might realize how, on the one hand, such breaks have been sometimes overplayed in order to promote a trajectory within the tradition while downplaying others, and, on the other, some features simply are not central anymore – at least for the loudest crowd of the day<sup>3</sup>. Aaron Preston goes as far as to speak, provocatively, of analytic philosophy as an illusion and of its history as a one of misinterpretations<sup>4</sup>. For sure, analytic philosophy resists simplifications, and is rather better conveyed as the result of compromises and miscommunications, of alliances and, why not, the fashion of the day – which includes what goes on in the other philosophical neighborhoods. This is what makes analytic philosophy so hard to pin down and its history to keep track of, but also much richer and more interesting than often acknowledged – although I suspect, once again, that this is the case for the better part of our contemporary philosophical landscape<sup>5</sup>.

Being largely sympathetic with Conant and Elliott's multi-factorial approach and criterion, to be preferred to the ones available on the intellectual market – which variously depict analytic philosophy as a more or less unified school sharing a doctrine, method, style, or all of the above –, I would like to further complicate the picture, if at all possible,

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<sup>3</sup> It is well-known, in this respect, how the methodological emphasis on language is no longer a priority for a representative portion of analytic philosophy, with a somewhat surprising rehabilitation of metaphysics farthest away from the spirit which first breadth life into the tradition. For a counter-manifesto of analytic philosophy along these lines, see T. Williamson, *How Did We Get from There? The Transformation of Analytic Philosophy*, in «Belgrade Philosophical Annual», 26 (2014). The clash between later developments and earlier beginnings will be thematized in a later section.

<sup>4</sup> A. Preston, *Analytic Philosophy: The History of an Illusion*, New York, Continuum, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> For the most complete collective study of the history of analytic philosophy, see M. Beaney (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Beaney is series editor of Palgrave Macmillan's *History of Analytic Philosophy*, with forty-some titles to date. For another mammoth effort, see Scott Soames's ongoing multi-volume authored series on *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014.

moving from Conant and Elliott's telling inclusion of pragmatism within the analytic tradition (and volume!) as a key partner, interlocutor, or even component perhaps. What I would like to do, more in detail, is to tackle the issue of the place (and placement), in this framework, of that variegated conformation of pieces going under the collective name of pragmatism. If it is in fact reasonable to think that, as Conant and Elliott claim at various reprises, pragmatism had a very close relationship with analytic philosophy early and late, and if pragmatism itself is a tradition of thought rather than a school (as in unified program, method, or style), then in order to appreciate the consequences of their encounters for the history of analytic philosophy we need to survey the many ways in which several diverse moments of pragmatism influenced as many moments of analytic philosophy, both by engaging them directly (as, e.g., in the case of James and Pierce with Russell, Moore, Ramsey, and Wittgenstein) or retrospectively (as in the case of Dewey with Putnam and Rorty) – but a whole class of examples falling in between these two extremes could be arranged (think of such authors as C.I. Lewis, W. Sellars, and V.W.O. Quine, synchronically embodying the two traditions as well as carrying on the dialogues between them).

Pragmatism – a tradition of authors and texts which emergence, unfolding, and future indeed seem to be intimately intertwined with those of analytic philosophy<sup>6</sup> – has historically played the double role of friend and foe dependently on the theoretical interests of those vindicating their alliance or rather their opposition. If on the one side of the spectrum we have authors (historians *and* practitioners alike) who remarked the cultural proximity and intellectual affinity between the two traditions (e.g. Morton White, Nicholas Rescher, or Huw Price), on the opposite one we have authors (again, historians *and* practitioners alike) who pointed to their essential incompatibility if not utter hostility (e.g. A.J. Ayer, Cornel West, or Thomas Nagel). The truth, as often is the case, lies somewhere in between, or so we like to think. And this is not only because at certain times analytic philosophy and pragmatism have been much closer than at others – a rather uninformative claim, if one wants to guess the general shape or register of their interactions (if any) –, but rather because the two witnessed (and still do) a number of rather different understandings of their respective shapes and messages in which the reference to its alleged other is hardly peripheral and indeed extremely telling – a fact that says something important about how

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<sup>6</sup> The story of some such entwinements from the 1890s to the 1940s can be found in M. Baghramian and S. Marchetti (eds.), *Pragmatism and the European Traditions: Encounters with Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology Before the Great Divide*, London - New York, Routledge, 2017. For an overall balance, see R.M. Calcaterra (ed.), *New Perspectives on Pragmatism and Analytic Philosophy*, Amsterdam - New York, Rodopi, 2011.

they have been evolving *together*, along the years, *as traditions*.

Rather than attempting to strike an overall balance of their closeness and distances, or review each singular encounter, in what follows I shall briefly survey some representative historical and theoretical ways in which pragmatism and analytic philosophy have been brought together and their outcomes. In this context, I would like to question, as per my title, the place – and hence role, or, better, roles, in the plural – of pragmatism in the history of analytic philosophy<sup>7</sup>. In particular, I would like to reflect on the two main trends highlighted by Conant and Elliott (and others), according to which the relations between the two must be assessed by reference either to their respective conflictual roots or to their productive fruits, and gesture towards a third, perhaps more interesting one, according to which it is the intertwined branches themselves which are of interest.

2. Pragmatism is simply everywhere in and around analytic philosophy: it is in fact utterly impossible to tell the history of the latter without invoking the presence of the former in all the phases into which we might want to slice it. Even when not explicitly acknowledged, in fact, pragmatism can be said to be in the back of the mind of a representative number of analytic philosophers, and the other way around, if not part and parcel of the tradition itself. If we broadly divide, after Conant and Elliott, analytic philosophy into the four stages of «early analytic philosophy», «logical positivism», «analytic philosophy at high tide», and «diversification of analytic philosophy»<sup>8</sup>, we can similarly divide pragmatism into «classical», «mid-century», «neo-», and «neo-classical» pragmatism. While the two sets do not exactly match, still we can appreciate more than a connection between them, if only because of the tight conversations – productive and polite or rather conflicting and hostile

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<sup>7</sup> Please note, if only in passing, that the reverse could be equally asked – that is the place and role analytic philosophy played within pragmatism – without necessarily obtaining the same answers, mostly because of the rather different (philosophical and cultural) weight granted to the two traditions. However, given the context of the present symposium, I shall investigate things from the point of view of analytic philosophy rather than from that of pragmatism. Let me only notice the historical imbalance towards analytic philosophy, which opens up a number of questions: why is it that we often hear about pragmatist aspects of analytic philosophy rather than analytic aspects of pragmatism? In the very expression and concept of «analytic pragmatism», the lion's share is in fact given to analytic philosophy rather than to pragmatism: that is, analytic philosophy (depicted as the dominant tradition) took in some aspects of pragmatism (the weaker tradition). Conant and Elliott's volume there seems to be some encouraging countering of this imbalance, as for example with their treatments of Ramsey, C.I. Lewis, Quine, Sellars, Putnam and Rorty as thinkers truly divided between the two traditions. It might well be, then, that not only pragmatism played a greater role in shaping analytic philosophy, but also that analytic philosophy itself was pivotal in the unfolding and continuation of pragmatism.

<sup>8</sup> I will here leave it to the side «the renaissance of moral philosophy», to which Conant and Elliott grant, quite significantly, a category to itself. It is also noteworthy that the very first section, on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century background, lists authors who have been all either relevant to, or in conversation with, pragmatism: Kant and Mill of course, but also and perhaps especially so Mach, Bradley, and Clifford.

– between their respective spokespeople. Going through the details of such different moments of their complex relationship would tell the story of as many micro-histories of pragmatism and analytic philosophy as their respective (sometimes shared) representatives. For one thing, James and Russell, Peirce and Ramsey, Dewey and Stevenson, Lewis and Carnap, and then Goodman, Sellars, Quine, Putnam, and Rorty read each other and shaped their own philosophical positions accordingly.

This is surely in line with Conant and Elliott’s narrative of analytic philosophy as a tradition of texts and authors rather than as a single body of doctrines, methods, or styles, where the same can be said of pragmatism: what even a cursory look at the list of figures belonging to the two traditions, or rather sharing them, betrays is their multiple exchanges – not exchanges about the *right* perspective on a certain philosophical topic or methodology, but rather exchanges about the *proper* way of embodying a *shared* perspective. The difference between analytic philosophy’s exchanges with the interpretative tradition and with pragmatism is that while in the former case the disagreement is of opinion and approach, in the latter is of interpretation. While in the former case we have two traditions (that is, authors and texts) trying to prove the other wrong, in the latter they are proving the other to be a lesser coherent or profitable version of a common project. This does not mean that there are no distances, quite the opposite, but they are those of two perspectives battling for the superiority of their own variety of the same program over the most spurious one – quite often, the smaller the difference, the greater the animosity<sup>9</sup>. Those one is most interested and adamant in convincing are those closest to you, that is those most likely to unsettle you, *not* because they do or claim something radically other than yourself (and opposed to it) but rather because they claim to be doing what one is doing, *only better*. Analytic philosophers saw pragmatism as doing something they themselves want to perform, and felt threatened and perhaps betrayed by it. What this very something consisted in, to employ a very large category, is the rejection of idealism and the rehabilitation (almost the invention) of a distinctive form of empiricism, which both analytic philosophy and pragmatism struggled to bring about.

Even if a generalized answer to the question of the place of pragmatism in analytic philosophy is then impossible to offer, as there are as many answers as there are disagreements of how to implement this very project, still we can single out and assess a few representative trends which guided their dialogues. I suspect that this exercise, here

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<sup>9</sup> This might well be an instance of what Freud called the «narcissism of the small differences». I owe the reference to Federico Lijoi, who suggested Freud’s idea as a key to express what I was struggling to.

only sketched in its barest features, will have relevance not only retroactively – that is for the history and historians of the two traditions – but also for the current and future practitioners of both – helping us guessing their progressions and trajectories.

3. If, as Conant and Elliott remark, the history of analytic philosophy is also the history of its philosophical neighbors and their variegated relationships, one could wonder and ask whether pragmatism is better depicted as only a (perhaps special) *other from* analytic philosophy or rather a (more or less pivotal) *aspect of* it. If one opts for the former, then pragmatism is no different in line from, say, phenomenology or critical theory in its being one alien tradition with which analytic philosophy interacted, more or less closely and profitably. But if one opts for the latter, then pragmatism becomes something else entirely, as it would rather be a feature – at times latent while at other explicit – of the analytic way of practicing philosophy itself<sup>10</sup>. I think there are very good historical evidence and theoretical reasons to endorse each option, which I shall briefly spell out. The question is whether there is a tension between them, or whether the history of analytic philosophy (and, conversely, of pragmatism) can also be told from the point of view of this oscillation, which would in turn suggest a different role and place for pragmatism within analytic philosophy – namely: that of *significant others*, giving strength and evens status to their counterpart.

Now, both options – pragmatism as a philosophical other and pragmatism as an aspect of analytic philosophy – have historical and theoretical footing, and are sometimes presented as alternatives from which to choose. Although picking things from the side of pragmatism, Brandom for example writes that

Pragmatism can be thought of narrowly: as a philosophical school of thought centered on evaluating beliefs by their tendency to promote success at the satisfaction of wants. Its paradigmatic practitioners were the classical American triumvirate of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. But pragmatism can also be thought of more broadly: as a movement centered on the primacy of the practical, initiated already by Kant, whose twentieth-century avatars include not only Peirce, James, and Dewey, but also

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<sup>10</sup> Note that the same could be claimed for both phenomenology and critical theory, but their historical and theoretical exchanges only started to converge quite late down their respective roads, and this is the reason why, perhaps, they do not feature the anthology – but rather belong to the «interpretative tradition» altogether. Note, further, how pragmatism's unfolding and history can be said to be equally (and progressively) entwined with selected aspects of the interpretative tradition. In the co-edited volume mentioned in footnote 4, pragmatism is pictured as the very middle-figure between (selected moments of) the analytic and interpretative traditions.

the early Heidegger, the later Wittgenstein, and such figures as Quine, Sellars, Davidson, Rorty, and Putnam [and Brandom himself, of course]. I think that the broader version of pragmatism is much more important and interesting than the narrower one. But I also think that an understandable tendency to bring the pragmatist tradition into relief by emphasizing features distinctive of the narrower conception has made it difficult to bring the broader one into focus<sup>11</sup>.

Despite keeping pragmatism separated from analytic philosophy and presenting it as less interesting and momentous if seen as an historically situated philosophical tradition which, in his view, has ran out of steam, Brandom also claims that as a movement centered on the primacy of the practical pragmatism has an excellent pedigree and reaches very much into analytic philosophy. Brandom is interested in rusting off pragmatism's (here understood as a tradition) helpless appeal to experience as the tribunal for meaning and normativity, so to show how the best part of pragmatism (now understood as a movement) rather lies in its emphasis on practices, linguistically understood. For Brandom, pragmatism as a tradition and pragmatism as a movement can and should be kept separated at pains of conflating an historical movement with a metaphilosophical point – which the movement championing it (pragmatism) eventually misused.

This resonates with Richard Bernstein's own reconstruction of the two options as opposed readings of the role and place of pragmatism within analytic philosophy – even if the two disagree over their respective soundness, since Bernstein's work on pragmatism as a whole can be seen as a vindication of the teachings of the pragmatists as against the charges moved to them by analytic philosophers (and others), pointing to their shared and sometimes converging commitments. Bernstein writes:

For some, the triumph of analytic philosophy is a narrative of progress and technical sophistication. For others, it is a sad story of decline from the speculative spirit of the «golden age» of American philosophy to a thin concern with technical issues that do not really matter to anyone outside the professional circle of likeminded philosophers. [...] During the past few decades, the philosophical scene has begun to change dramatically. There is a resurgence of pragmatic themes in philosophy throughout the world, and a growing interest in the works of the classical

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<sup>11</sup> R. Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 56.

pragmatists. There are the beginnings of a more subtle, complex narrative of the development of philosophy in America that highlights the *continuity* and the *persistence* of the pragmatic legacy<sup>12</sup>.

Bernstein welcomes the overcoming of what is sometimes an only artificial gulf between the two traditions<sup>13</sup>, which more often than not stood in the way of a profitable dialogue and confrontation:

My fundamental point is that philosophers, starting from the most diverse orientations and without being directly influenced by the classical pragmatists, have been articulating insights and developing theses that are not only congenial with a pragmatic orientation but also *refine* its philosophical import. [...] The standard philosophical conventions that divide philosophy into such «schools» as pragmatism, analytic philosophy, and Continental philosophy obscure [common] pragmatic themes, once these ideological blinders are removed, the philosophical investigations of the Classical American pragmatists, Heidegger and Wittgenstein take on a fresh and more exciting character. If we bracket the standard and misleading philosophical classification and *look* at what these philosophers are actually saying and doing, then a very different panorama emerges<sup>14</sup>.

The more we look with finer-grained historiographical lenses at the varieties of unexpected encounters, puzzling half contacts, and unfortunate missed connections between these traditions, the more we would realize that many of our most entrenched views about the unfolding of the contemporary philosophical landscape into isolated and irreconcilable camps should be revised or at least complicated. Not only pragmatism has been quite an influential philosophical movement, but if we look carefully we can (and perhaps should) appreciate, within analytic philosophy and elsewhere, a turn or return to pragmatist themes.

4. Differently from Brandom and Bernstein, Conant and Elliot do not see the two reconstructive options as mutually excluding, but rather as both capturing as many important ways in which pragmatism featured in analytic philosophy. Conant and Elliott depict pragmatism – alongside with idealism, Marxism, phenomenology and existentialism,

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<sup>12</sup> R. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn*, London, Polity, 2010, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> Bernstein, like Brandom, includes selected representatives of the interpretative tradition as well.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.



but the list is open – as a «neighboring philosophical tradition», and «parallel development in the history of philosophy»<sup>15</sup>. Pragmatism, however, differently from these other traditions, engaged in a much closer dialogue with analytic philosophy, so much that their fates seem to be almost inseparable despite their earliest encounters were quite stormy. Also, it is somewhat problematic to list pragmatism as a representative of the «interpretative tradition» to which the analytic one represented in Conant and Elliott's volume represents in all respect an *alternative*. Is then pragmatism a *form* of the project of analysis? Or does pragmatism represent an alternative to the project of analysis which however does not make it a representative of the interpretative school? Conant seems to be committing to both readings. Here's a few quotes as evidence:

Pragmatism originated in the United States. At first it was mostly quite hostile to analytic philosophy; but it gradually entered into constructive dialogue with the analytic tradition, and eventually was almost entirely absorbed into it<sup>16</sup>.

[American pragmatism is] a philosophical movement whose concerns and fate are deeply connected with those of the analytic tradition but whose role in shaping that tradition has not always been properly acknowledged<sup>17</sup>.

Analytic philosophers who deplored pragmatism found that the «enemy» had an intellectual home within their own camp, while philosophers who celebrated it could claim to be part of a movement that was reshaping the analytic tradition from within<sup>18</sup>.

Over the course of the twentieth century, analytic philosophers of many different orientations found themselves either returning to pragmatism as a source of alternatives that could challenge and enrich the analytic tradition or wanting and needing to actively resist its call. In one way or the other, they were continually compelled to come to terms with the *pragmatist legacy* within analytic philosophy itself<sup>19</sup>.

In the volume Conant and Elliott then opt for a composite reading, telling us the story of

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<sup>15</sup> J. Conant and J. Elliott, *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy. After Kant: The Analytic Tradition*, pp. XVIII-XIX.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. XXI.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 529.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 538.

a passage from considering pragmatism as a tradition to include in (or rather exclude from) the analytic (perpetual) revolution to considering pragmatism as one distinctive dimension of it. According to this story, if we were to answer to the question of «what, then, *became of* pragmatism within analytic philosophy?», we would have to narrate the passage from the refutation of pragmatism by early analytic philosophy (Russell and Moore, though not Ramsey and Wittgenstein, and with some notable retractions also) and the emulation of pragmatism by the logical positivists (Neurath, Carnap, and Stevenson, though not Schlick or Ayer), to the enthusiastic endorsement of pragmatism by post-positivist analytic philosophy (Quine, Goodman and Sellars, though not Davidson and McDowell). While all these thinkers, despite their opposite evaluations of it, treated pragmatism as a philosophical other, authors such as C.I. Lewis, Morton White, Nicholas Rescher, Joe Margolis, or Susan Haack do not clearly set pragmatism apart from analytic philosophy and rather think of them as sparring partners in the same philosophical quest. To whom we might add such thinkers as Max Black, Gilbert Ryle, Normal Malcolm: key if outmoded figures of analytic philosophy with pronounced sympathies for pragmatist ideas and authors<sup>20</sup>.

According to this composite reconstruction, the work of Quine, Goodman and Sellars is a turning point of the shift from considering pragmatism as a philosophical other to considering it as part and parcel of analytic philosophy, with Ramsey and Lewis as their forefathers and the gradual eclipse of Dewey's influence as its wider background. The cases of Putnam and Rorty, who built from the work of the previous generations and extended it in novel, compelling directions are particularly hard to classify, as in very different ways they fall in between the two camps: both Putnam and Rorty acknowledged pragmatism as an independent and influential tradition of thought to which we shall go back in order to (among many other things) set analytic philosophy back on track, and yet both also read some (positive) developments internal to analytic philosophy as driven by something resembling a natural pragmatization or pragmatic redescription of its own project. However, while Putnam never questioned his analytic affiliation and repeatedly declined the pragmatist one – also because he was rather skeptical of -isms and professed to welcome good insights whatever their province –, Rorty grew progressively fond of pragmatism at the expenses of analytic philosophy – even if he never regretted his analytic

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<sup>20</sup> Alan Richardson convincingly argues for a Moorean lineage (as opposed to a Russellian one) within analytic philosophy more sympathetic to pragmatism. See his *From Scientific to Analytic. Remarks on How Logical Positivism Became a Chapter of Analytic Philosophy*, in A. Preston (ed.), *Analytic Philosophy. An Interpretative History*, London - New York, Routledge, pp. 146-159.

upbringing nor stopped reading and engaging analytic philosophers, as his reservations were for a particular metaphysical and foundational installation of the analytic tradition which, along with others, he sought to exorcize. While pragmatism, for Putnam, was in fact a corrective to the insulation of analytic philosophy from culture at large and from its own history, for Rorty it represents the very coming of age of analytic philosophy from its representationalist to its anti-representationalist phase, which will eventually transform and ultimately jeopardize it.

Moreover, the more each tradition grew and expanded, the more it became self-reflexive about its own mission and scope, with internal clashes and revisions becoming the rule. Despite their young legs, or maybe because of it, it is easier to find common grounds within each tradition in their earliest stages than in their later embodiments and common grounds also feature in the earliest dialogues across traditions. Once the two traditions entered their second generation, we find philosophers from each camp engaged in a conversation with figures holding very different understandings of how to continue the tradition they partook in, which generated a number of mutual unhelpful generalizations (think, e.g., Ayer's distrust for all things pragmatist, which ignores Ramsey's and Stevenson's sustained engagements with it; or Dewey's impressionistic references to analytic philosophy, despite his sustained exchanges with Russell and the logical empiricists). Pragmatism's insights have developed against a communal background of theoretical and metaphilosophical concerns but have been given different directions not just by analytic philosophy but also by later versions of pragmatism. As those communal enemies either faded or changed their skin, the league formed by their opponents either readjusted or broke up, jeopardizing their commonalities and hence complicating their very exchanges dramatically. The story of the dialogues between the two traditions is then also the story of their common and yet shifting campaigns against shared but mutable philosophical targets. And the history seems to be repeating, with such figures as Huw Price and Simon Blackburn, Cheryl Misak and David Macarthur effortlessly moving across the lines<sup>21</sup>.

5. Conant and Elliott's broadly continuist reconstruction resonates with the most recent scholarship on pragmatism, which is itself divided between the study and praise of the representative figures of the tradition – and how they contribute to settle or continue this

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<sup>21</sup> For a recent engagement, see e.g. C. Misak and H. Price (eds.), *The Pragmatic Turn. Pragmatism in Britain in the Long Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017.

distinctive tradition of thought – and the study of pragmatist *philosophizing* – that is on concrete act of thought which exemplify in one way or another the pragmatist sensibility. Since James, the great spokesman of the tradition, pragmatism has been in fact both presented as a new way of doing philosophy – and hence a new tradition wanting to break free from some entrenched contemporary alternatives –, and as a very old sensibility into which new life has been breathed – and hence it should not be seen as a tradition *apart from* what came before and after it – analytic philosophy included. Depending on how one reads the very nature and point of this new way of doing philosophy and its relationship with the old sensibility it allegedly embodies and carry on, one would get a different picture of how it contributed to analytic philosophy. In the remaining of this essay, I would like to flag one alternative way to frame the place of pragmatism in analytic philosophy by characterizing pragmatism’s sensibility differently from how we find it depicted in Conant and Elliott’s composite story.

Pragmatism meant several things to different people, and yet it is fairly safe to claim that pragmatist thinkers share a number of characteristic features, which they understand, embody, and advocate in different ways. Chief among them is the primacy of praxis over theory, of deeds over thoughts. And this call to end-things and practices often (if not entirely) fit with an anti-idealistic project – the idealist being those furthest away from all things ordinary and practical. Each generation of pragmatists cashed out this key pragmatist point in slightly different terms, making it a logical, epistemological, ethical, methodological, or metaphysical principle. Now, this is the feat which drew analytic philosophy’s interest to pragmatism, as it nicely resonated with their own scorn with idealism both in its German and British varieties. Pragmatism was seen as an arrow in analytic philosophy’s own quiver to put idealism down (or, at least, to make it harmless), although the initial attraction soon became troubled, and for a variety of reasons. Simplifying a very great deal, the privileged way in which the primacy of practice has been read by analytic philosophy has been twofold: rehearsing the composite story narrated by Conant and Elliott, pragmatism as a philosophical movement held an experience-based conception of the primacy of practice, according to which it is experience and experiencing – or, rather, the focus on how do we have and make an experience – which would guide us in the resolution or dissolution of philosophical and ordinary riddles, while pragmatism as polished by (and hence as a dimension of) analytic philosophy held a language-based conception of the primacy of practice, according to which it is language and speaking – or, rather, the focus on how we do acquire and use language – which would guide us in such

resolutions and dissolutions. What analytic philosophy did when it switched from seeing pragmatism as a philosophical other to treating it as part and parcel of its own theoretical arsenal was translating the primacy of experiential practices into the primacy of linguistic ones. Similarly, yet going the opposite way, the so-called purists of pragmatism as a tradition (or neoclassical pragmatists), vindicated the primacy of the experience-based understanding of pragmatism, reading its analytic linguistic vampirization as a historiographical and theoretical misstep. This story, which itself admitted a number of retellings, is surely accurate and informative, and yet it overlooks one deeper reading of the pragmatic maxim (and call to practice as against idealistic, theoretical speculation) which has among its consequences a rather different picture of the place of pragmatism in analytic philosophy. According to this reading, what the primacy of practice tells us is that meanings and normativity depend on our *doings*: I, with others<sup>22</sup>, shall call this the conduct-based understanding of the primacy of practice. I say that that this is a deeper and more fundamental reading than the other two as both the experience-based and the linguistic-based understandings rely on it: the conduct-based option, in fact, focuses both on experiential and linguistic practices *as practices*, that is as things we do of and with ourselves when we navigate the world and talk about it. The emphasis here is away from experience and language, and towards conducts: this would, among other things, equally avoid the temptations and pitfalls of givenism (and hence foundationalism) and lingualism (and hence losing the world or reducing it), two opposite forms of authoritarianism (external and internal) which can be ducked by giving conduct the chief role in adjudicating on philosophical and ordinary matters. It is than the care of one's individual and collective conduct that would matter the most in the quest for meaning and normativity: it is in fact by attending to and transforming our conducts (rather than merely our experiences or language) that we would find the resources to properly address the problematic situation we find ourselves into. In this way, pragmatism becomes a metaphilosophy of *practice* (with a deep ethical quality) rather than a (naturalistic) epistemology or an (anti-naturalistic) philosophy of language, even if it is also those things.

Now, this is the aspect of pragmatism with which selective moments of analytic philosophy resonated, and their implementation within and without analytic philosophy can be counted as the continuation of the legacy of pragmatism into the future. Properly speaking, then this third option is then not an alternative to the two highlighted by Conant

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<sup>22</sup> See e.g. C. Koopman, *Conduct Pragmatism: Pressing Beyond Experimentalism and Lingualism*, in «European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy», 6 (2014), no. 2, pp. 145-174.

and Elliott, but rather represent a dimension of both which is often overlooked when focusing on experience and language at the expenses of conduct – and hence picturing pragmatism as either a philosophical other or an aspect of analytic philosophy, or both. Pragmatism's distinctive and pluralistic way of understanding both language and experience as *practical devices*, rather than as metaphysical categories, through which we interrogate and navigate the world is a strategic common ground with analytic philosophy. The pragmatist's call for the return to the rough ground of our (bodily) perceptual and (imaginative) conceptual *practices* translated into a close engagement with analytic philosophy's focus on the way in which we experience and talk about the world, an approach that the pragmatists enriched by stressing the historicity and the experimental underpinning of the conceptual as well as its realization in our practices of world-making.

Seen this way, pragmatism is neither something entirely outside the analytic tradition, nor a sheer aspect of it, as it configures itself as a new name for an old dimension of philosophical thinking revolving around the project of taking care of our ordinary and intellectual conducts, and seeing philosophical problems as problems of embodied individuals trying to find their way out of a problematic situation, which proved to be more than congenial to analytic philosophy's ears. As James remarks, «there is absolutely nothing new in the pragmatic method [...] Socrates was an adept to it. Aristotle used it methodically. Locke, Berkeley and Hume made momentous contributions to truth by its means [...] But these forerunners of pragmatism used it in fragments: they were preluders only»<sup>23</sup>. Pragmatism, James claims, coagulated this «perfectly familiar attitude in philosophy», and gave it in a «more radical and less objectionable form»<sup>24</sup>. This is the understanding of pragmatism whose presence within analytic philosophy has yet to be properly acknowledged. Putnam and Rorty are two shining yet very diverse representatives of this reception. Now, this might not capture the whole spectrum of analytic philosophy (and it surely doesn't), it still offers us a key to reconstruct the pragmatist presence throughout some of the latter's most decisive moments and turns.

6. No doctrinal or methodological or stylistic unity in both analytic philosophy and pragmatism, then, but rather a common sensibility and concern for the way in which philosophical analysis impinges on our ways of navigating the world, rather than mirroring the very structure of thought or of reality, as idealism variously claimed. Compare in this

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<sup>23</sup> W. James, *Pragmatism*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31.

respect van Inwagen's own characterization of analytic philosophy, cited by Conant and Elliott, and William James's famous corridor picture of pragmatism:

Being an analytic philosopher does not involve commitment to any philosophical doctrine. An analytical philosopher may be a platonic realist or a nominalism, may affirm or deny the freedom of the will, may believe in or deny the existence of an immaterial soul, may make the most dogmatic claims to knowledge or may be embracing a thoroughgoing skepticism. An analytic philosopher may regard metaphysics as an illusion or be the most determined and ardent defender and practitioner of metaphysics imaginable. A philosopher may take any position on any philosophical question and still be an analytic philosopher in good standing<sup>25</sup>.

At the outset, at least, [pragmatism] stands for no particular results. It has no dogmas, and no doctrines save its method. As the young Italian pragmatist Papini has well said, it lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in the fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out they respective rooms<sup>26</sup>.

Despite the difference in emphasis and in choice of examples, both van Inwagen and James agree that a variety of positions can be hosted under the generous umbrella of analytic philosophy and of pragmatism. But James also adds that pragmatism, here understood as a particular method for conceptual clarification and criterion of meaningfulness, is also what makes the conversations among such diverse positions possible in the first place. This however does not mean that we would have a unity at a methodological or stylistic level, as differences in those cases are not less significant. Still, as with pragmatism, there seems to be something that facilitates the conversation among analytic philosophers. Now, what *that* might be, I have been suggesting, is the emphasis on the practical standing of the analysis of philosophical as well as of commonsensical conceptions lying at the heart of

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<sup>25</sup> J. Conant and J. Elliott, *The Norton Anthology of Western Philosophy. After Kant: The Analytic Tradition*, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> W. James, *Pragmatism*, p. 32.

these two traditions, which analytic philosophy eventually endorsed in many (though not all) of its installations thanks to pragmatism and its spur to draw the practical consequences of our experiential and linguistic investigations alike.

This would explain why the faiths of pragmatism and analytic philosophy are intertwined in a way those of analytic philosophy and other philosophical traditions clearly were (and perhaps are) not. Where the resurgence of idealism both within and without these traditions marks yet another chapter of the history of their conversations: a chapter likely contributing to shifting the terms of their exchanges, and yet, in so doing, bringing them even more closer.

### *Pragmatism's Place in the History of Analytic Philosophy*

In this text I claim for the centrality of pragmatism to the very definition and unfolding of the analytic tradition. Departing from Conant and Elliott's work on the history of analytic philosophy, and pointing to some selected programmatic similarities between the two traditions – such as the focus on practices (linguistic or experiential alike) as well as the distrust for idealist systematization –, I make the case for their shared faiths and prospects, so to invite to consider their many (and sometimes stark) differences within this broader communal framework.

*Keywords:* Analytic Philosophy, Pragmatism, Philosophical Traditions, Metaphilosophy, Practice.

*Sarin Marchetti, Dipartimento di Filosofia, Sapienza Università di Roma, via Carlo Fea 2, 00161 Roma, [sarin.marchetti@uniroma1.it](mailto:sarin.marchetti@uniroma1.it).*