Creative Intelligence.

Pragmatism as a Theory of Thought and Action

Gunther Hellmann

> *"Situations in which the expertise of the social scientist is solicited frequently have the following structure: some new event or bundle of events (...) has happened or is happening before our eyes, and we would like to know what its consequences are (...). Faced with the seemingly reasonable demand for enlightenment on the part of the layman and the policy-maker, and propelled also by his own curiosity, the social scientist now opens his paradigm-box to see how best to handle the job at hand. To his dismay, he then finds, <u>provided he looks carefully</u>, that he is faced with an embarrassment of riches: various available paradigms will produce radically different answers. (...) (o)rdinarily social scientists are happy enough when they have gotten hold of <u>one</u> paradigm or line of causation. As a result, their guesses are often farther off the mark than those of the experienced politician whose intuition is more likely to take a variety of forces into account."*[1]

> *"Those who turn their back on worn-out disciplinary matrices sometimes furnish new philosophical research programmes. Descartes and Carnap are cases in point. At other times, however, this does not apply, as the examples of Montaigne and Heidegger show. Yet research programmes are not indispensable for philosophy. Of course, they have been a great blessing for the professionalization of Philosophy as an academic discipline. But comprehensive professionalization should not be mistaken for intellectual progress as a nation´s economic and military power should no be confused with its contribution to civilization".*[2]

1. Introduction: An "-ism" to end all "-isms"[3]

For most of the time of its existence as an academic discipline the history of IR has been written

in terms of "great debates" among adherents of particular paradigms or research programmes.

---

[1] Albert O. Hirschman, 'The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Understanding', *World Politics* 22, no. 3 (1970): 340-341, emphasis in original.

[2] Richard Rorty, 'Die moderne analytische Philosophie aus pragmatistischer Sicht', in *Die Renaissance des Pragmatismus. Aktuelle Verflechtungen zwischen analytischer und kontinentaler Philosophie*, ed. Mike Sandbothe (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2000), 78-95, here p. 94 (translation, GH) "Manchmal liefern diejenigen, die abgenutzten Fächermatrizes den Rücken kehren, neue philosophische Forschungsprogramme. Das gilt für Descartes und Carnap. Manchmal geschieht das aber nicht – Beispiele sind Montaigne und Heidegger. Forschungsprogramme sind aber nicht unerläßlich für die Philosophie. Freilich, für die Professionalisierung der Philosophie als akademisches Spezialfach sind sie ein großer Segen. Aber umfassendere Professionalisierung sollte man ebensowenig mit intellektuellem Fortschritt verwechseln wie die Wirtschafts- oder Militärmacht eines Volkes mit seinem Beitrag zur Zivilisation."

[3] I am grateful to Sebastian Enskat for his support in preparing this paper.

Although this type of historiography has recently gone out of fashion, another prominent trend in IR, the proliferation of "-isms", continues unabated.[4] For an outsider the most curious aspect of these debates may be that with all the "-isms" popping up all over the place, one is conspicuously absent: pragmatism.[5] To a layperson this may look particularly odd because of a presumed affinity between a colloquial understanding of pragmatism on the one hand and the core field of classical IR, foreign policy, on the other. After all the foreign policy practitioner appears to be the prototypical "pragmatic" actor. In this paper I will not speculate as to why pragmatism never made into the Top Ten of IR´s most popular "isms". I will, however, develop an argument why the pragmatist tradition may be the top candidate for getting rid of all types of "isms"-hitlists.[6] More specifically, I will advertise pragmatism as an attitude to be adopted in our daily academic labour of trying to understand and explain the world. This is the opposite of promoting pragmatism as another "theory" to be "tested" or, for that matter, another research programme to be "sophisticatedly falsified" (Lakatos). My argument can also be rephrased by replacing "philosophy" with "IR" in Rorty´s introductory quote and by substituting the names of

---

[4]For an overview see Brian C. Schmidt, 'On the History and Historiography of International Relations', in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 3-22; see especially Schmidt´s list of current "isms" on pp. 15-16; for other "isms"-lists see Peter J. Katzenstein, Robert O.Keohane, and Stephen D. Krasner, Eds., *"International Organization" at Fifty: Exploration and Contestation in the Study of World Politics*, Special Issue of "International Organization" 52, no. 4 (1998); Ole Wæver, 'The Rise and Fall of the Interparadigm Debate', in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 149-185; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Jeffrey W. Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, 'Is Anybody still a Realist', *International Security* 24, no. 2 (1999): 5-55.

[5]In some sense this is an overstatement because pragmatism has been mentioned here and there over the last decade or so. Among these exceptions see especially especially Donald J. Puchala, 'The Pragmatics of International History', *Mershon International Studies Review* 39, no. 1 (1995): 1-18; Steve Smith, 'Positivism and Beyond', in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Smith/Booth/Zalewski , 23-25; Ronald J. Deibert, 'Exorcismus Theoriae: Pragmatism, Metaphors and the Return of the Medieval in IR Theory', *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 2 (1997): 167-192; Emanuel Adler, 'Seizing the Middle Ground. Constructivism in World Politics', *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 319-363 and most recently Emanuel Adler, 'Constructivism and International Relations', in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Carlsnaes/Risse/Simmons, 98. These exceptions not withstanding, however, as a tradition pragmatism has not yet left a major imprint in the historiography of IR.

[6]Although he strongly disagrees with Rorty on some key issues, Hilary Putnam (named as "the leading contemporary prgamatist" some years ago by Rorty himself, see Richard Rorty, 'Relativism. Finding and Making', in *Debating the State of Philosophy. Habermas, Rorty, and Kolalowski*, eds. Jósef Niznik and John T. Sanders, (Westport, Conn. and London: Praeger Publishers, 1996),42) shares his view that we should stop the "ism"-naming game, cf. the reference to an oral contribution of his during a conference in Münster, Germany, honoring his work quoted in Marie-Luise Raters, Marcus Willaschek, 'Einleitung: Hilary Putnam und die Tradition des Pragmatismus', in *Hilary Putnam und die Tradition des Pragmatismus*, eds. Raters/Willascheck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002): 9-10.

his philosophers with the names of four IR scholars: If you replace, say, Waltz for Descartes, Wendt for Carnap, Aron for Montaigne, and Wæver for Heidegger the IR representatives may not be perfect matches for Rorty´s philosophers but they may nevertheless help to convey the core message of this essay: that although the sort of professionalization which Waltzian "realists" and Wendtian "constructivists" have helped to bring about in IR has rightly and widely been hailed as a blessing, it must not be mistaken for intellectual progress. Such progress is more likely if we practice an anti-"-istic" understanding of pragmatism, ie. if we look at pragmatism as a toolbox which many of us have been carrying around all along, neglecting, however, the multiple practical uses to which the tools could have been put. In their very different ways the anti-"istic" approaches chosen by Aron and Wæver provide for role models which have contributed at least as much to the intellectual progress of the discipline as their paradigm-building colleagues because they have chosen to transcend classical dichotomies by ignoring them and working on concrete problems instead.[7]

Whereas neither Aron nor Wæver can bei characterized as card-carrying "pragmatists", their respective approach certainly matches easily with the scholarly virtues preached by the pragmatists. In any case, even the attempt to locate them with regard to a "pragmat-*ism*" seems beside the point since there so few members carrying *a card*. For much of the last decade there have been two recurring themes in the literature on pragmatism. The first is that there is "no such thing as pragmatism, there only are pragmatists", ie. scholars from a wide range of disciplines and with different backgrounds held together merely by some sort of family

---

[7]For a succinct characterization of Aron´s work see Stanley Hoffmann´s obituary, Rayomnd Aron, in *The New York Review of Books*, 8 December 1983. For an overview of the different aspects of Wæver´s work see, among others, 'Resisting the Temptation of Post Foreign Policy Analysis', in *European Foreign Policy. The EC and Changing Perspectives in Europe*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Steve Smith (London: Sage Publications, 1994), 238-273; 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 46-86; 'The Rise and Fall of the Interparadigm Debate'; 'European Security Identities', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996) 103-32; 'The EU as a security actor. Reflections from a pessimistic constructivist on post-sovereign security orders', in *International Relations Theory and the Politics of European Integration. Power, security and community*, eds. Morton Kelstrup, Michael C. Williams (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 250-294.

resemblance.[8] The second theme is that pragmatism supposedly has experienced (and is continuing to experience) an impressive revival.[9] At first glance these claims do not match easily. If there is no "-ism" how can there be a revival? Yet reconciling what appears to be a contradiction at first is easy and itself indicative of what pragmatism (and many pragmatists) are all about: Pragmatism is a "tradition" rather than a "paradigm" à la Kuhn or a "research programme" à la Lakatos – just to name two of the more prominent points of reference for epistemological reassurance and guidance among IR-scholars. It is, in Richard Bernstein´s assimilation of a definition of tradition by Alasdair MacIntyre, "a narrative of an argument" which "is only recovered by an argumentative retelling of that narrative which will itself be in conflict with other argumentative retellings".[10] In this view the history of pragmatism has not only been a conflict of narratives "but *a forteriori*, a conflict of metanarratives". Yet at the same time many pragmatists would probably agree with Bernstein that inspite of the plurality of conflicting narratives and metanarratives future histories of the development of American philosophy in the 19th and 20th century will "highlight its thematic continuity" around "persistent pragmatic themes".[11]

The version of pragmatism which I am advertising here centers on the claim that pragmatism provides an original and powerful "theory" of thought *and* action. If we adopt this theory – rather than sticking with "positivist" or "post-positivist epistemologies" and their accompanying "ontologies" – it will help us to get rid of misleading dualisms, which in turn will enable us to

---

[8]Barry Allen, 'Ist das Pragmatismus? Rorty und die amerikanische Tradition', in *Die Renaissance des Pragmatismus*, ed. Sandbothe, 193.

[9]Hans Joas, *Pragmatismus und Gesellschaftstheorie* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992); Richard Bernstein, The Resurgence of Pragmatism, Social Research 59, no. 4 (1992): 813-840; Sandbothe, ed., *Die Renaissance des Pragmatismus*; see also the credit given to Putnam by Rorty (Richard Rorty, 'Relativism', 42) and vice versa (Hilary Putnam, 'A Half Century of Philosophy, Viewed From Within', *Deadalus* 126, no. 1 (1997): 175-208.

[10]Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science', *Monist* 60 (1977): 461, quoted according to Richard J. Bernstein, 'American Pragmatism: The Conflict of Narratives', in *Rorty and Pragmatism. The Philosopher Responds to His Critics*, ed. Saatkamp Herman J. Jr. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995), 54-67.

[11]Bernstein, 'American Pragmatism', 55.

better cope. Due to limitations of space I will only dogmatically present (rather than extensively

defend) the more abstract points of my version of pragmatism in order to allow for some

illustration (section 2). Since the literature on pragmatism is vast[12] there is no need here to engage

the underlying philosophical arguments. Secondly I will briefly discuss in what ways this

pragmatist tool-kit for scholarship differs from prominent alternatives in current IR scholarship

(section 3). Moreover, since it would be altogether missing the point of pragmatism if its

importation into IR would only dwell on an abstract discussion of first pragmatist principles and

their presumed advantages in comparison to alternative approaches I will also add a brief

illustration in order to show what difference pragmatism in action might make. While any issue

could be taken for these illustrative purposes I will, given my own expertise, focus on the case of

post-unification German foreign policy (section 4). In the last section (5) I will conclude with

some remarks why this rather arbitrary choice of a "case study" may be fitting after all.

2. Thinking <u>and</u> Acting: Dissolving Some False Problems with Pragmatism

The core of pragmatism which is shared by all scholars self-consciously placing their work in the

tradition is a short and simple yet powerful proposition with far-reaching implications: Beliefs

are rules for action. In the following I will briefly sketch in what sense this may be thought of as

an "epistemological" position as well as a "theory of action". This presentation will take the form

---

[12]Excellent brief overviews of the pragmatist tradition are provided by Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays 1972-1980)*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 191-210; Robert Almeder, 'A Definition of Pragmatism', in *Pragmatik. Handbuch pragmatischen Denkens, Band II: Der Aufstieg pragmatischen Denkens im 19. & 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Herbert Stachowiak (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1987), 99-107; Joas, *Pragmatismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, 7-15, 28-37; Nicholas Rescher, 'Pragmatism', in *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 710-713; Bernstein, 'American Pragmatism'; Bernstein, 'Demokratie als moralische Lebensweise. US-amerikanische Philosophen entdecken den Pragmatismus neu', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1997-04-01, 13; Ian Hacking, *Einführung in die Philosophie der Naturwissenschaften* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1996), 104-114; Louis Menand, 'An Introduction to Pragmatism', in *Pragmatism. A Reader*, ed. Louis Menand (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); more detailled discussions of the diverse versions of pragmatism are found in Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy. A Genealogy of Pragmatism* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989) and John P. Murphy, *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson* (with an Introduction by Richard Rorty) (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990).

of a set of three propositions which ought to be read as rules for action as to how to conduct inquiry in general and scholarship in particular.

To the extent that pragmatism can be said to represent an "epistemological position" it can be defined simply as

"an account of the way people think. This may not seem like a terribly useful thing to have. After all, if pragmatism´s account of the way people think is accurate, then we are already thinking the way pragmatists tell us we are. Why would we be in need of a description of something we do anyway without it? It is as though someone were to offer us an account of the way our hair grows with the promise that having it will give us nicer hair. But pragmatists don´t believe there is a problem with the way people think. They believe there is a problem with the way people think they think. They believe, in other words, that other accounts of the way people think are mistaken; they believe that these mistaken accounts are responsible for a large number of conceptual puzzles; and they believe that these puzzles when they are not simply wasting the energy of the people who spend their time trying to ´solve´ them, actually get in the way of our everyday efforts to cope with the world. Pragmatism is therefore an effort to unhitch human beings from what pragmatists regard as a useless structure of bad abstractions about thought."[13]

Menand´s short and simple answer to the question of what a pragmatist "epistemology" amounts to can certainly be rephrased in a more elaborate vocabulary. Richard Bernstein,[14] Jürgen Habermas,[15] Hilary Putnam,[16] and Richard Rorty[17] -- just to name a few contemporary

---

[13]Louis Menand, 'An Introduction to Pragmatism', xi.

[14]Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983); 'Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind', in *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, ed. Robert Hollinger (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 54-86; 'American Pragmatism'.

[15]Jürgen Habermas, 'Coping with Contingencies - The Return of Historicism', in *Debating the State of Philosophy*, eds., Niznik/Sanders, 1-24; 'Rortys pragmatische Wende', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 44, no. 5 (1996): 715-741; 'Einleitung: Realismus nach der sprachpragmatischen Wende', in *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung. Philosophische Aufsätze*, ed. Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 7-64.

[16]Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism. An Open Question* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); 'Pragmatismus und Verfikationismus', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 43, no. 2 (1995): 219-231; 'A Half Century of Philosophy'; *Für eine Erneuerung der Philosophie* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997); Raters/Willaschek, eds., *Hilary Putnam und die Tradition des Pragmatismus*.

[17]Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); *Consequences of Pragmatism*; 'Pragmatism Without Method', in *Sidney Hook. Philosopher of Democracy and Humanism*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books), 259-273; *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989); 'Putnam and the Relativist Menace', *Jorunal of Philosophy* 90, no. 9 (1993): 443-461; 'Habermas, Derrida, and the Functions of Philosophy', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4, no. 194 (1995): 437-459; 'Relativism', 31-48; 'Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism', in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* ed. Chantal Mouffe (with contributions by Simon Critchley, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, Richard Rorty) (London: Routledge, 1996), 13-18, 41-46, 69-76; *Truth and Progress. Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

philosophers who have drawn in diverse ways on the pragmatist tradition-- have provided such elaborations. I will not dwell here on the specifics of their strategies and arguments in positioning themselves within the philosophical discourse. Instead I will put forth the following propositions about the anti-dualist core of pragmatism as a theory of thought and action which, in my reading, most of them could subscribe to and which may provide a useful guide to practice IR-scholarship as well: (1) Beware of the primacy of practice and the creativity of action; (2) Think of language as a tool for problem-solving rather than an instrument for truth-production; and (3) Practices scholarship as a service to your fellow non-experts.

2.1. Beware of the primacy of practice and the creativity of action

The emphasis on the primacy of practice is "perhaps *the* central" principle of the pragmatist tradition.[18] It started with Peirce´s rejection of the Cartesian notion of universal doubt and its replacement with *specific* doubt: "We cannot begin with complete doubt. We must begin with all the prejudices which we actually have"[19]. "Real and living doubt" arises in specific problematic situations which result from our interaction with the natural and social environment. This pragmatist notion thus turns the Cartesian model ("cogito ergo sum") on its head: We think because we have to act, not vice versa. Much of this action is habitualized. As James puts it, our beliefs live "on a credit system". They "´pass´, so long as nothing challenges them"[20]. Yet since we cannot flee from interacting with our environment, the world keeps interfering with our beliefs. The individual "meets a new experience" which puts her old beliefs under strain and forces her to readjust them.

---

[18]Putnam, *Pragmatism*, 52.

[19] Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities' (1868), in *Pragmatism,* ed. Menand, 4-6.

[20] William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover Publications, (1995(1907)), 80.

"The irritation of doubt is the only immediate motive for the struggle to attain belief. It is certainly best for us that our beliefs should be such as may truly guide our actions so as to satisfy our desires; and this reflection will make us reject any belief which does not seem to have been so formed as to insure this result. But it will only do so by creating a doubt in the place of that belief. With the doubt, therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends. Hence, the sole object of inquiry is the settlement of opinion."[21]

It is important to note that it is *practice* in the form of interaction with our environment which leads both to "the irritation of doubt" *and* "the settlement of opinion". Beliefs are rules for *action*, and the measure of their value lies in an individual´s "willingness to act"[22]. (Whether these beliefs represent "not merely an opinion, but a true opinion" is irrelevant, "for as soon as a firm belief is reached, we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief is true or false"[23]. Due to the necessity to act today we cannot afford to wait until we "know" The Truth. "The ´absolutely´ true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge. (...) Meanwhile we have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood.". Since "we live forwards" while we "understand backwards"[24] the truth which a "spectator theory of knowledge"[25] cherishes is utterly useless. The truth of a belief lies in the acting like the pudding is in the eating. "The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri-*fication*.".[26]

---

[21]Charles Sanders Peirce, 'The Fixation of Belief' (1877), in *Pragmatism,* ed. Menand, 13-14.

[22]William James, 'The Will to Believe' (1886), in *Essays in Pragmatism*, ed. William James (New York: Hafner Press, 1948), 89, 108.

[23]Peirce, 'The Fixation of Belief', 14.

[24]James, *Pragmatism,* 86.

[25]John Dewey, *The Philosophy of John Dewey,* a collection of key texts by Dewey, edited by John J. McDermott (Chicago: Universtiy of Chicago Press, 1981), 370.

[26]James, *Pragmatism*, 78, emphases in original; Putnam (*Pragmatism*, 21) describes this conception as James´ effort "to ´humanize´ the notion of truth".

Thought and action are thus the two sides of one and the same coin. As a matter of fact, for pragmatists the classical dualism in Western philosophy between *thought* (or *theory*) on the one hand and *action* (or *practice*) on the other represents an odd and misleading distinction indeed.[27] Yet "there is no split between theory and practice, because on a pragmatist view all so-called ´theory´ which is not wordplay is always already practice."[28] Therefore, the emphasis on the primacy of practice must not be misrepresented as a move in which the hierarchy of the classical distinction is reversed. Rather it is an argument to get rid of the dualistic and hierarchical distinction in favour of a view of knowledge *and* action which emphasizes their mutual dependence or co-constitution. Beliefs (or knowledge) provide rules for action. The application of these rules in action provide for experience. And experience in turn reshapes our beliefs.

One of the key insights which caused the early pragmatists to emphasize practice relates to a particular conception of action which underlies this pragmatist model of inquiry. For Hans Joas it is "the genuine creativity of action" (whether individual or collective) which forms the core of pragmatism.[29] At bottom lies a model which distinguishes between what Dewey calls "routine" (or "determinate") situations and "problematic" (or "indeterminate") situations.[30] In the former the actor applies " a more or less fixed way of doing things". She acts routinely or even mechanically.[31] This situation is "determinate" in the sense that it forms "a unified whole", a "closed ´universe of experience´". Actors can resort to an internalized repertoire of rules which is based on a rich experience with similar situations in the past. An indeterminate or problematic

---

[27]Cf. John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch and Co., 1929), 3-25, where he traces this enduring distinction back to Greek philosophy and the distinction between activity (as contemplation) *versus* action (as doing and making).

[28]Rorty, 'Relativism', 40.

[29]Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

[30]In the (misleading) modern distinction between the theory of knowledge and the theory of action one might say that they represent action-theoretical synonyms for Peirce´s distinction between belief and doubt. Yet as Dewey has pointed out early on (Dewey, *The Philosophy,* 56-57), American pragmatism "has given to the subject, to the individual mind, a practical rather than an epistemological function. The individual mind is important because only the individual mind is the organ of modifications in traditions and institutions, the vehicle of experimental creation".

[31]Dewey, *The Philosophy,* 513.

situation in contrast is "open" in the sense "that its constituents do not hang together"[32]. The

situation is perceived as problematic because there are no given and apparent ways of dealing

with it.[33] The unreflected belief in "self-evident conditions and successful habits (...) and the

concomitant routines of actions break down; the normal and automatic process of action" is

interrupted.[34] Through inquiry the actor must search for a new belief that enables her to find an

appropriate new way of coping with the respective problem at hand. It is in this situation that the

potential of creativity comes into play. In contrast to other theories of action which do not

systematically take creativity into account pragmatists locate this potential of both individual and

collective actors at the center. In order to get beyond the phase of doubt actors must reconstruct

a "disrupted continuum of action". Their perception must "comprise new and different aspects

of reality; the action must refer to different points of the world, or it must restructure itself."

This is a creative achievement, a new way of acting which could be stabilized and, in turn, itself

become an unreflected routine. ">From a pragmatist perspective, all human action is

characterized by the tension between unreflected routines and creative achievements. This also

implies that pragmatists see creativity as an achievement within situations that call for a solution

rather than as the unconstrained creation of new things without any constitutive background of

unreflected routines."[35] This understanding of *situative* and *genuinely creative* action implies that it

would be inappropriate to dissolve any action as a singular action from its larger *context of action*

and to describe it in the sense of a relation of ends and means that precedes this singular action

and can at the same time be restrictively applied to it. As Dewey puts it, individuals "live in a

---

[32]Ibid., 227.

[33]It is important to note that the "new" situation is to be seen as a "precognitive" state that will be transformed into a "problematic" one "in the very process of being subjected to inquiry". Dewey writes: "The indeterminate situation comes into existence from *existential causes*, just as does, say, the organic imbalance of hunger. There is nothing intellectual or cognitive in the existence of such situations, although they are the necessary condition of cognitive operations or inquiry. In themselves they are precognitive. The first result of evocation of inquiry is that *the situation is taken, adjudged, to be problematic*" (John Dewey, 'Criteria of Exerience' (1938), in *The Philosophy,* ed. McDermott 229; emphases added). It is in this sense that a problematic situation is always composed of "objective" and "internal" factors, as Dewey stresses (John Dewey, 'The Pattern of Inquiry' (1938), in *The Philosophy,* ed. McDermott, 518), on this point, cf. also Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns,* 193-196 and 235-236.

[34]Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns,* 190; cf. also Dewey, 'The Pattern of Inquiry', 512-513.

series of situations"[36], an "experiential continuum"[37] in which the continuity of experience and the interaction with the environment of objects and other individuals form an inseparable whole. The formulation of ends does not take place *before* a particular action in a strictly temporal or causal sense. Even if the action rests on specific plans in the sense of preconceived schemes of action, the concrete course of action has to "constructively created in each and every situation" while remaining "open for continuous revision"[38]. "Creative intelligence" thus means that "the function of the mind is to project new and more complex ends"[39]. This in turn means that it is more appropriate to conceive of the formulation of ends and the choice of respective means as a complex interplay in a given problematic situation, rather than assuming that an actor's goals are fixed, while the choice of the means of action will only be oriented towards these ends.[40] Thus, the structure of any "problem" to be solved is complex in the sense that conglomerates of actors and bundles of motivations and beliefs come into play over a temporal continuum. In terms of the temporal context of our problem-solving action *experience* (i.e. past thoughts and actions of ourselves as well as others) is as important as *expectation* (i.e. intentions as to *desired* future states of the world as well as predictions as to *likely* future states[41]). Quite often, it will become apparent that a solution of a concrete problem is the more intelligent, the more the actor (in the light of changing conditions) succeeds in formulating "new and more complex ends". This is what Dewey calls "creative intelligence"[42]. Yet if creativity and intelligence are as significant as

---

[35]Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns,* 190.

[36]Dewey, *The Philosophy,* 519.

[37]Ibid., 512.

[38]Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns,* 237.

[39]Dewey, *The Philosophy,* 94.

[40]In this pragmatist theory of action, ends are usually "relatively indetermimate and will only be specified in the course of the decision on the means to be used. Reciprocity of ends and means thus implies an interplay between choice of means and specification of goals. The dimension of the means is not neutral vis-à-vis the dimensiton of the ends. By realizing that we possess certain means we detect ends we were not aware of before. Thus, means do not only specify ends, but they also broaden the scope of possible ends" (Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns,* 227).

[41]*Intentions* refer to a future that we *hope to shape* as a result of our current thoughts and actions; *predictions* refer to the *likelihood* that our intentions will indeed turn out to shape the future. Cognitively we often tend to equate both, but at least "theoretically" we know that outcomes may differ from outputs and that there may be unintended consequences resulting from our interaction with others.

[42]Dewey, *The Philosophy,* 94.

the pragmatists postulate this has far-reaching consequences for how we approach our objects of study, the practice of international relations.

The point of this pragmatist "*theory" of knowledge and action* thus turns on the never ending cycle of doubt and belief, of encountering problematic situations and of creatively solving the problems encountered. By levelling out the hierarchy between knowledge and action and by replacing the "search for security [i.e. "know-how", GH] by practical means for the quest of absolute certainty by cognitive means"[43] we get rid of the need for the "emotional substitute" to deal with uncertainty which religion provided in the Middle Ages and which abstract "theories" are supposed to supply today. "(F)ailure to make action central in the search for such security as is humanly possible is a survival of the impotency of men in those stages of civilization when we had few means of regulating and utilizing the conditions upon which the occurrence of consequences depend"[44]. There are no firm foundations of knowledge to build on and we don´t need any.[45] What we do need and what we are sufficiently equipped with are the tools of inquiry for the purpose of creative problem solving. Inquiry in science is as much a practical activity as it is in daily life. The key test of the value of any of its results is whether it makes a difference to practice: "Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant (...)? Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before"?[46]

---

[43]Ibid*.,* 371.

[44]Ibid*.,* 377.

[45]"Antifoundationalism" is the term Richard Bernstein uses to describe one of five "substantive themes" characterizing the pragmatist "ethos", see Richard Bernstein, 'Pragmatism, Pluralism, and the Healing of Wounds', in *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*, ed. Richard Bernstein (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 323-339.

[46]Dewey, *The Philosophy,* 256.

2.2. Think of language as a tool for problem-solving rather than an instrument for truth production

When it came in the 1960s, the "linguistic turn" was certainly not limited to what was then left of American pragmatism.[47] Yet it were philosophers in the pragmatist tradition like Davidson and Rorty who abandoned even this "last refuge of representationalism" by taking the most radical turn in terms of how we should think of language.[48] Willard van Orman Quine, Davidson´s teacher, had prepared the ground by disposing of two dogmas of empiricism: the "belief in a fundamental cleavage between truths which are *analytic*, or grounded in meanings independently of matters of fact, and truths which are *synthetic*, or grounded in fact"; and the "belief that each meaningful statement is equivalent to some logical construct upon terms which refer to immediate experience", which Quine called "reductionism".[49] Davidson went one step further. In a widely cited article "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" he pointed out that by dropping the analytical/synthetic distinction (and thereby disposing of *alternative* conceptual schemes) we are not necessarily giving up on the idea of a conceptual scheme *per se*, ie. the idea that certain sentences may correspond with reality and that, therefore, language may still somehow represent the world out there. In Davidson´s view this move merely replaced one dualism for another. He urged that the resulting new "dualism of scheme and content, of organizing system and something waiting to be organized, cannot be made intelligible and defensible."[50] The *detached reflection* on *alternative* schemes (as suggested by Quine) will not ease the possibility of reaching agreement as to the meaning of words nor will it provide for better

---

[47]Richard Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn. Essays in Philosopical Method* (With Two Retrospective Essays) (Chicago: The Univertsiyt of Chicago Press, 1992(1967)).

[48]On the "last refuge" see Richard Rorty, 'Pragmatism as Anti-Representatationalism', in: Murphy, *Pragmatism,* 5; see also ch. 6 of his Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature. On Davidson´s self-description as belonging to the pragmatist tradition see Donald Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge' (with Afterthoughts, 1987"), in *Rading Rorty. Critical Reponses to "Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature" (and Beyond)* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, 134-137, here 120-138., 134.

[49]Willard van Orman Quine, >*From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd. ed., rev. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 20, emphasis in original.

[50]Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme' (1974), in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, ed. Donald Davidson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 189.

evidence or justification in holding a particular view. It will merely shift the problem to another level without solving it.[51] Davidson´s (and Rorty´s) solution is that we ought to "recognize that belief is in its nature veridical", i.e. that "all that counts as evidence or justification for a belief must come from the same totality of belief to which it belongs."[52] As a consequence we ought to give up the view that language *represents* reality. "Beliefs are true or false, but they represent nothing. It is good to get rid of representations, and with them the correspondence theory of truth, for it is thinking that there are representations that engenders thoughts of relativism. Representations are relative to a scheme: a map represents Mexico, say - but only relative to a mercator, or some other, projection."[53] Language, then, is a tool for *coping* with the world rather than a tool for *representing* reality or for *finding* truth. Languages are "made rather than found" and so are truths: "Since truth is a property of sentences, since sentences are dependent for their existence upon vocabularies, and since vocabularies are made by humans, so are truths". To be sure, "the world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not." Whether we fare better or worse in our coping depends on our vocabularies. Yet "the fact that Newton´s vocabulary lets us predict the world more easily than Aristotle´s does not mean that the world speaks Newtonian. The world does not speak. Only we do. The world can, once we have programmed ourselves with a language, cause us to hold beliefs. But it cannot propose a language for us to speak."[54]

This view of language as a tool for coping with the world has far-reaching consequences. By erasing "the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around the world generally" and by skipping fundamental and misleading distinctions such as "objective" *versus*

---

[51]Cf. Mike Sandbothe, 'Die pragmatische Wende des linguistic turn', in *Die Renaissance des Pragmatismus*, ed. Sandbothe, 116-118.

[52]Donald Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge' (1983), in *Truth and Interpretation. Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, ed. Ernest LePore (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), 314, 319; see also Davidson´s subsequent reflections on his and Rorty´s views in his "Afterthoughts, 1987" which accompanied a reprint of the article in Malachowsky, *Rading Rorty*.

[53]Davidson, 'The Myth of the Subjective', in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University, 1989), 165-166, emphasis in original.

[54]Rorty, *Contingency*, 7, 21, 5, 6.

"subjective" or "realist" *versus* "relativist" Davidson and Rorty are suggesting a radical break with the tradition of philosophical thought – "a change so profound that we may not recognize that it is occurring".[55] There is a difference, however, between Davidson and Rorty as to what consequences they draw from this insight. Davidson is content with making an analytical contribution to an ongoing scholarly debate. His version of pragmatism may therefore be called "analytical antirepresentationalism". Rorty, in contrast, favours a decidedly "transformative pragmatism".[56] He extends the key insight – ie. the view that in forming beliefs we are also "programming" ourselves with a language – to a call for providing multiple new descriptions which help us to better cope as measured by a specific understanding of liberal democracy.

> *"The method is to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of nonlinguistic behavior, for example, the adoption of new scientific equipment or new social institutions. This sort of philosophy does not work piece by piece, analyzing concept after concept, or testing thesis after thesis. Rather, it works holistically and pragmatically. It says things like ´try thinking of it this way´ -- or more specifically, ´try to ignore the apparently futile traditional questions by substituting the following new and possibly interesting questions.´ It does not pretend to have a better candidate for doing the same old things which we did when we spoke the old way. Rather, it suggests that we might want to stop doing those things and do something else."[57]*

In Rorty´s view the history of humanity is the history of a succession of "Gestalt"-switches which occurred because someone suggested a new way of speaking. Given the established ways of speaking and thinking at their time, for instance, the way that the first Christians or the first Marxists, or even scientists such as Kopernikus, were framing their beliefs must have sounded strange indeed. Initially, their metaphors about "the law of love", "history as a history of class conflicts" or "the earth turning around the sun" must have sounded wrong to most. Yet after

---

[55]Davidson, 'The Myth of the Subjective', 159; for a discussion of why we should get rid of these an other dualism such as finding versus making, discovery versus invention, reality versus appearance see Rorty, 'Relativism', 31-47.
[56]For a more detailed discussion see Sandbothe, *Die pragmatische Wende,,* 122-126.

these redescriptions had been completed, ever more people were ready to at least grant them the status of hypotheses which might be true. And with time passing each of these new ways of speaking gained acceptance within a sufficiently large community which, in the end, even granted them the status of obvious truths.[58]

Metaphors thus play a key role in what Rorty calls the constant reweaving of our web of beliefs and desires. Indeed, and here Rorty is once again following Davidson, the history of language is nothing but the history of metaphor, ie. old metaphors "constantly dying off into literalness, and then serving as a platform and foil for new metaphors." The distinction between the literal and the metaphorical here boils down to "a distinction between familiar and unfamiliar noises and marks. (...) The literal uses of noises and marks we can handle by our old theories about what people will say under various conditions. Their metaphorical use is the sort which makes us get busy developing a new theory." Since the utterance of a metaphorical expression has no fixed place in established language games it cannot be measured against criteria of truth or falseness. "One can only savor it or spit it out. But this is not to say that it may not, in time, *become* a truth value candidate. If it *is* savored rather than spat out, the sentence may be repeated, caught up, bandied about. Then it will gradually require a habitual use, a familiar place in the language game. It will thereby have ceased to be a metaphor – or, if you like, it will have become what most sentences of our language are, a dead metaphor."[59] We are thus programming and reprogramming ourselves by constantly reinventing our vocabularies. This applies to every aspect of human life. Just to mention two examples from the field of "inter-national" relations: Sovereignty, ie. "that absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth"[60] which was seen

---

[57]Rorty, *Contingency*, 9.

[58]Cf. Rorty, 'Physikalismus ohne Reduktionismus' in *Eine Kultur ohne Zentrum. Vier philosophische Essays*, ed. Rorty, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993), 69.

[59]Rorty, *Contingency*, 16, 17, 18.

[60]Bodin´s definition quoted according to Torbjørn Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 60.

to be an answer to the Hobbesian war "of every man against every man" was conceived of as a tool to solve a particular problem in the 16th and 17th century. The same applies to the concept of integration (literally: an effort to "make a whole" or to "renew") which was invented in the 20th century as an answer to the destruction inflicted on the peoples of Europe in the name of the Westphalian institution of legitimate war between sovereign states. To sum up, language does not *represent* as things are out there in the world. Rather, it is a tool for coping with the problems of our times.

2.3. Practice scholarship as a service to your fellow non-experts

If practice reigns supreme, if individual and collective action is to be thought of as genuinely creative action, and if language is a central tool in creative problem-solving rather than in representing Reality, then the task of scholarship is to help in coping with an ever-changing world by "invent(ing) descriptions of the world which are useful for purposes of predicting and controlling what happens."[61] This is another way of putting what Wittgenstein (in discussing the task of philosophy) called the need for "perspicuous representation" ("übersichtliche Darstellung") instead of exclusively aiming for "explanation".[62] "A philosophical problem", Wittgenstein says, "has the form: ´I don´t know my way about´"[63]. Getting to know one´s way requires "perspicuity" ("Übersichtlichkeit"). In order to understand we need to see the big picture, how things hang together. And we can "see the connections" only by "finding and inventing *intermediate links*"[64]. Perspicuity or "survew"[65] is thus the opposite of analytical detail or

---

[61]Rorty, *Contingency*, 4.

[62]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§122, 109. For a detailed discussion of this concept see, among others, Judith Genova, *Wittgenstein. A Way of Seeing* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 25-38.

[63]Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* 123.

[64]Ibid., 122, emphasis in original.

[65]This is rather old-fashioned term is preferred by Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, two preeminent Wittgenstein scholars,. The translation of the German term "Übersicht" into English has been a matter of extended debate. For a

exactness. To be sure, in order to provide for surview it may help to know details. But for pragmatists the prime criterium for being an expert in a particular field is not that one practices research according to a specific method or that one knows to speek a specialized language. Rather it is that one is familiar with the status of debate within one´s discipline and how this may translate into descriptions which help to (re-)orient practice.

To become an expert in this sense a scholar (just like a good priest or a good baker) does not have to follow a particular method (as the critics of Kuhn, for instance, insisted). She only needs to know the conventions of her trade and observe some virtues which have elevated exemplary scholars in the past. As far as "method" is concerned, Rorty emphasizes that there is no "special *wissenschaftlich* way"[66] which scientists use: "they use the same banal and obvious methods all of us use in every human activity. They check off examples against criteria; they fudge the counter-examples enough to avoid the need for new models; they try out various guesses, formulated within the current jargon, in the hope of coming up with something which will cover the unfudgeable cases".[67] As far as particular moral virtues is concerned, Rorty picks out natural scientists as a role model and what he calls their ideal-type embodiment of "Baconian" virtues such as experimentalism, openness to refutation by experience and discursive exchange with fellow scholars, curiosity, and adaptability.[68] It is important to add that in this Rortyan understanding of *description without "scientific method"* the classical dualism between explanation and understanding has been dissolved into a mere "difference to be lived with."[69]

---

discussion see G.P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, 'Übersicht', in *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein Vol. 5, Method and Essence*, ed. John V. Canfield (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986), 159-173.

[66]Rorty, Pragmatism Without Method, in: Kurtz, Paul (Ed.): Sidney Hook. Philosopher of Democracy and Humanism, Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1983, pp. 259-273, here p. 272, emphasis in original.

[67]Rorty, 'Method, Social Science and Social Hope', 193.

[68]Richard Rorty, 'Ist Naturwissenschaft eine natürlich Art?' in *Eine Kultur ohne Zentrum*. ed., Rorty, 13-14, 16-18, 43-47 (German version); see also 'Method, Social Science and Social Hope', 194-195 and Putnam, *Pragmatism*, 68-73.

[69]Rorty, 'Method, Social Science and Social Hope', 197: "The idea that explanation and understanding are opposed ways of doing social science is as misguided as the notion that microscopic and macroscopic descriptions of organisms are opposed ways of doing biology. (...) ´Explanation´ is merely the sort of understanding one looks for when one wants to predict and control. It does not contrast with something else called ´understanding´ as the

To the extent that these descriptions live up to the pragmatist imperatives of the creativity of

action as well as the contingency of language they will be phrased in such a way that they

emphasize both the possibilities not actualized and the transitoriness of the vocabulary currently

used. In explaining the past, in describing the present, and in thinking about the future the

horizon of (un)realized (or (un)realizable) *possibilities* will loom larger and much more diffuse than

in standard "positivist" accounts. This is particularly relevant as far as the past and the future are

concerned. With regard to explanation, this has to do with the paradox that in explaining events

we have to draw on counterfactuals which necessarily expand the realm of plausible alternative

possibilities. Therefore, rather than "knowing" the causes which led to a particular outcome, we

can only hope to better "understand" by simultaneously increasing *and* reducing the possibilities

suggested in explanation.[70] As far as the future is concerned descriptions ought to take the form

of different scenarios which combine the extrapolations of our systematic insights based on

similar cases in our collective experience with the creativity of individual and collective actors

which cannot be anticipated in any concrete substantive detail. Once again following Rorty, these

---

abstract contrasts with the concrete, or the articifial with the natural, or the ´repressive´ with the ´liberating´. To say that something is better ´understood´ in one vocabulary than another is always an ellipsis for the claim that a description in the preferred vocabulary is more useful for certain purposes." See also Alexander Rosenberg, 'Superseding Explanation versus Understanding: The View from Rorty', *Social Research* 56, no. 2 (1989): 479-510.
[70]"An explanation (...) locates something in actuality, showing its actual conncetions with other actual things. Its success as an answer to the question ´why´ will turn on the plausibility of the reasoning (...) that we invoke to make the connection. The plausibility of this reasoning will turn on the counterfactual it suggests. (...) Yet causal possibilities, if they remain merely possible, are not actualised. Practical possibilities are before the event at most actualised in someone´s thoughts, as something that an agent or set of agents might have done or might yet do; after the event, in celebration or regret. Possibilities are not items at any world or in any head on which we can suppose that we or actual agents will cognitively converge, or about which, even if we do, they could be said to be certain, and thus to know"; Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds. Possibility and Understanding in History and the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 1995(1991)), 17; for a more detailed discussion of the affinity of pragmatism to this understanding of explanation see also pp. 174-187. Contrast this with the standard positivist interpretation of counterfactual analysis in order to produce reliable knowledge as suggested by Gary King/ Robert O. Keohane/Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 1994), 42-43, 55-63, 89. This account emphasizes (a) the difference between "systematic" and "non-systematic" factors (without, however, giving criteria which enable us to reliably locate such factors in either of these two boxes) and (b) the need "to *define* the counterfactual conditions making up each causal effect *very precisely*" – an impossibility given the difficulties of defining the outer limits of the possible and of distinguishing reliably between systematic and non-systematic factors.

scenarios ought to leave *some* room for "unjustifiable hope".[71] Yet this hope must not be allowed to escalate to idealizations (such as Habermas´ "ideal speech situation"). Rather than getting closer to an ideal, Rorty argues, we need to get "farther away from the parts of our past that we most regret. (...) In short, *we should be retrospective rather then prospective: inquiry should be driven by concrete fears of regression rather than by abstract hopes of universality*."[72] Thus, in order to be useful descriptions must be considered sufficiently *fitting* – ie. shedding light on the past and orienting future action in such a way as to enable us to better cope.

3. Pragmatism and IR Scholarship

Pragmatism has been presented as a set of beliefs that may guide scholarship in novel ways. In a lose sense this set of beliefs may be called a "theory" of knowledge *and* action. It emphasizes the primacy of practice, the creativity of action, the contingency of language, and the responsiveness of scholarship to the needs of fellow non-experts. Even a brief look at this set of beliefs shows how much it differs from alternative sets currently dominating in IR scholarship. One of the most prominent feature of standard debates among and between positivists and post-positivists in IR is how one is to answer questions of ontology and epistemology – ie. whether one assents to or dissents with the statement that "(t)he debate [on philosophy of science issues in IR, G.H.] should be what the international world is made of – ontology – not how we can know it."[73] Usually positivists come down on the side of epistemology, while post-positivists emphasize ontology. Given the thoroughly naturalist conception of language which pragmatism espouses,

---

[71]Rorty, 'Method, Social Science, and Social Hope', 208.

[72]Rorty, 'Response to Habermas', in *Rorty and His Critics*, ed. Robert B. Brandom (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2000), 60-61, emphasis in original.

[73]Wendt, *Social Theory*, 90; see also pp. 370-379. For a sample of additional responses on these issues see Martin Hollis, Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); King/Keohane/Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*; Smith/Booth/Zalewski, eds., *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*; Katzenstein/Keohane/Krasner*, "International Organization"*. Until more recently, ontology has seldom figured center

however, it is not worth arguing about statements such as "the realist claim that states and the state system are real (ontology) and knowable (epistemology), despite being unobservable".[74] Pragmatists want to *de-mystify* the drama of epistemology *and* ontology staged by both the positivists and post-positivists. Instead of wasting time by either "grounding" science (positivism) or "ungrounding" it (post-positivism) pragmatists advise to work on real problems which make a difference to practice.

All this is not to say that pragmatists would practice scholarship completely differently. Given the successes which different forms of positivist as well as post-positivist versions of science have achieved this would not be a pragmatic approach at all. Therefore, a pragmatist has no qualms appreciating different aspects of current practices in IR scholarship. Yet she would want to add cautionary notes on many of the more prominent practices. Just to name a few: Pragmatists certainly sympathize with and applaud the view of some positivists that "a first-rate social scientist (...) must have the flexibility of mind to overturn old ways of looking at the world" and that this scientist ought to be asking questions which are "´important´ in the real world". Yet in contrast to positivist thinking pragmatists would neither see the necessity nor the possibility to construct something like "verified scientific explanations".[75] Since experience "has ways of *boiling over*"[76], and since, therefore, it must not be pressed into the straightjacket of generalized "theoretical" statements, pragmatists are satisfied to replace the positivist *ceteris-paribus* conditioning in the search for generalizations with a more loosely circumscribed *ceteris-similibus* reasoning which leaves room for both generalization *and* creativity. Similarly, pragmatists do applaud the emphasis on beliefs (or "ideas") which contemporary "constructivists" have rediscovered for the analysis of international relations. Yet they hasten to add that there is little

---

stage in IR debates. However, as Ole Waever rightly points out, it is the only theme which has never been absent in philosophy of science debates in IR, see Waever, 'The Rise and Fall of the Interparadigm debate', 157.

[74] Wendt, *Social Theory*, 48.

[75] King/Keohane/Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry,* 12, 15.

room left for positivist notions of general knowledge if one seriously pursues "ideas all the way down" – ie. if one does indeed sympathize with the pragmatist view that we need to *systematically* include the creativity of individual and collective actors.[77] Pragmatists also sympathize with the emphasis in "rational choice" approaches on interaction as a genuine level of analysis generating effects which are not reducible to either "action" or "structure". Yet they quarrel with what Barry Hindess has called the underlying "portfolio" model of action, in which actors are conceptualized as carrying a stable and pre-existing "portfolio" of beliefs and desires from context to context. Following Dewey they question the tenability of the dualism between means and ends arguing instead that action ought to be conceptualized as "a connected series in time" with means and ends denoting "not a division in reality but a distinction in judgement".[78] Pragmatists similarly applaud the renewed emphasis which some constructivists have placed on "communicative action" ("verständigungsorientiertes Handeln"), ie. the effects which argumentative social interaction has on the identities of the actors involved.[79] Yet they hasten to add that the "logic of arguing" may only represent a partial and insufficient solution to the dualism of the "logic of consequentialism" and "the logic of appropriateness" and that the pragmatist theory of action with its emphasis on genuine creativity reaches farther than the Habermasian model of "argumentative rationality" with its restrictive and idealizing notion of universality. Pragmatism reaches farther because it dissolves the dualism between "consequentialism" and "appropriateness", because it conceives of actors being re-created through interaction (as the Habermasian model does), but, in addition, because it leaves room

---

[76] James, *Pragmatism,* 86, emphasis in original.

[77] For a discussion of "ideas all the way down" see Wendt, *Social Theory,* 92-138; on creativity ("the invention of new ideas from within a culture") see p. 188; on Wendt´s version of "positivism" see also pp. 47-91.

[78] Cf. Josh Whitford, 'Pragmatism and the untenable dualism of means and ends: Why rational choice theory does not deserved paradigmatic privilege', *Theory and Society* 31 (2002), 325-363; the last two quotes are from John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct,* quoted in Whitford, 'Pragmatism', 338; see also Joas, *Die Kreativität des Handelns* and the discussion above in 3.1.

[79] See Thomas Risse, 'Let´s Argue. Communicative Action in World Politics', *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2000): 1-39. It is noteworthy that Risse draws mainly on Habermas who, in turn, has drawn heavily on the pragmatist George Herbert Mead to in developing his theory of communicative action; cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995(1981)), 9-169.

for the possibility of solutions to problems which are *creative* yet lacking in "*communicativeness*" (such as the possibility of communities choosing forms of political rule equivalent in its moral consequences to nazism).[80] Finally, pragmatists share an emancipatory outlook with many post-positivists. Scholarship ought to contribute new descriptions which help to create "new patterns of linguistic behavior" . Yet instead of being dazzled by notions such as "undecidability", "hyperpoliticization" or "problematization" which supposedly results from well-done "deconstruction"[81] pragmatists urge to focus on "real politics", ie. "reaching accommodation between competing interests, (...) something to be deliberated about in banal, familiar terms".[82] To sum up: Inspite of the criticism pragmatists would deliver in all directions of current IR research, they also have lots of good things to say about established scholarly practices. Neither praise nor criticism, however, add up to an "-ism" of the positivist or post-positivist calibre. Still, pragmatists do offer a set of alternative tools to practice scholarship which may be advertised under the headline: "coping rather than knowing or problematizing". In the next section I will use as the example of post-unification German foreign policy to briefly illustrate how these tools may be applied. German foreign policy is a good example to illustrate the potential of pragmatism because it is well suited to show how a new description based on an understanding

---

[80]For a discussion along these lines see Rorty, 'Repsonse to Habermas', 59-63 and Rorty, 'Universality and Truth', in *Rorty and His Critics,* ed. Brandom, 1-30.

[81]Cf. Chantal Mouffe, 'Deconstruction, Pragmatism and the Politics of Democracy', in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism,* ed. Mouffe (with contributions from Simon Critchley, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau and Richard Rorty) (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-12

[82]Rorty, 'Deconstruction and Pragmatism', 17. Rather then succumbing to the "passion of the infinite" which Rorty perceives as a key weakness which post-modernists share with Christians and Marxists we should "look for redescriptions of current events that make a difference to our ideas of what is to be done here and now -- that help in a specific campaign -- as opposed to redescriptions that suggest that it is time to get off the bandwagon of one movement (eg. modernity, G.H.) and shift over to that of another (eg. postmodernism, G.H.)" (Richard Rorty, 'Movements and Campaigns', *Dissent* 42, no. 55 (1995): 55-60, here 56, 60. See also Rorty´s depiction of the difference between "Deweyans" and "Derrideans": "Our attitude is: if it isn´t broken, don´t fix it. Keep on using it until you can think of some other sort of tool which might do the job better. Derrideans tend to think that the more questioning, problematizing, and mettant-en-abîme you can squeeze into the day´s work, the better. Deweyans, on the other hand, think that you should only question when you find yourself in what Dewey called a ´problematic situation´ -- a situation in which you are no longer sure of what you are doing. You may not be sure what you want, or you may not be sure that your old tools are the best ways of getting what you want, or your perplexity may involve both kinds of uncertainty at once. But unless you suffer some such uncertainty, you should save problematizing for weekends" (Richard Rorty, 'Response to Simon Critchley', in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism,* ed. Mouffe, 44, emphasis in original).

of German foreign policy which emphasizes creative re-adjustment to a new situation contrasts with alternative descriptions.[83]

4. Pragmatism and German Foreign Policy since Unification: Imagining a Civilian Great Power

Ever since German unification the discourse on the future of German foreign policy has been framed against the backdrop of images drawn from the realist and idealist/liberal tradition.[84] As soon as unification appeared as a realistic scenario on the horizon realists were envisioning the rise of a Gulliver bound to becoming "more assertive".[85] As Margaret Thatcher put it, Germany was "by its very nature a destabilizing rather than a stabilizing force in Europe". Europe´s "Lilliputians", therefore, were forced to choose between "moving ahead faster towards a federal Europe in order to tie down the German giant" or return to an approach based on balancing rather than integrating German power.[86] The idea that Germany´s historical experience and the intelligence of its leadership might as well link up in novel ways to the situation in which the country found itself in 1990 seemed to be outside the realm of the possible. "For a powerful country to choose not to become a great power" simply was considered to be "a structural

---

[83]The choice of this example has to do with the expertise of the author and says nothing about the reach or the limits of pragmatism. In contemporary international relations one could easily think of other examples such as the institutional development of the EU and NATO, globalization or terrorism.

[84]As the subsequent discussion shows most of these contributions have been framed in rather dichotomous terms. However, there are a few exceptions of authors who tried to integrate realist and liberal aspects; cf. Helga Haftendorn, 'Gulliver in der Mitte Europas: Internationale Verflechtung und nationale Handlungsmöglichkeiten', in *Deutschlands neue Außenpolitik. Band 1: Grundlagen,* eds. Karl Kaiser / Hanns W. Maull (München: Oldenbourg, 1994), 129-154; Werner Link, , 'Kooperative Machtbalance und europäische Föderation als außenpolitische Orientierung', in *Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands: Neue Konstellationen, Risiken, Instrumente*, ed. Wolfgang Heydrich, et.al. (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992), 601-611.

[85]The earliest reference to the image of Gulliver as unification was approaching was made by the German correspondent of the Economist, see Jonathan Carr, 'When the Wall Comes Down. A Survey of West Germany', *The Economist*, 1989-10-28, 13; for similar arguments see also Charles Krauthammer, 'Return of the German Question', *Time Magazine*, 1989-09-25, 33. An early list of seven "cardinal sins" of Germany as a rising great power was provided by William Horsley, 'Eine neue Großmacht in Europa? Die sieben Kardinalsünden deutscher Außenpolitik', *Das Parlament*, no. 31-32, (1992): 14.

anomaly. For that reason, the choice is a difficult one to sustain."[87] Consequently Germany was expected to revert to the established practices of great power politics, ie. bullying around others and seeking to maximize its own ability to act unilaterally.

In contrast to the image of a rising Gulliver liberals referred to Ulysses and the image of a country which was keenly aware of the sirens of power and the need to add to the bonds that already bound it to the EU and NATO. From this point of view it appeared to be overdetermined that Germany would stick to the basic foreign policy orientation of the old Federal Republic emphasizing a "culture of restraint", integration and multilteralism.[88] Given Germany´s extremely high degree of enmeshment with the international economic system in general and its western European neighbours in particular, pursuing a strategy of autonomy maximization as predicted by realists was perceived to be self-defeating for a "trading state" such as Germany. Second and related to this point, the very process of formulating Germany´s "national interests" had to be seen against the background of the country´s membership in a multitude of international institutions. Given that all of Germany´s partners could be expected to express their continuing interest in an integrated Germany, the socialization effects of such

[86]Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 798.

[87]Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Emerging Structure of International Politics', *International Security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 66; see also pp. 50, 54, 62-67, and 69-70. See also the statement of Timothy Garton Ash that Germany "would be behaving differently from most large states in history" if it were not to seek an upgrading of its military power; see his 'Germany's Choice', *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 4 (1994), 68.

[88]For a sample see Klaus Dieter Wolf, 'Das neue Deutschland - eine 'Weltmacht'?', *Leviathan* 19, no. 2 (1991), 255-258; Beate Kohler-Koch, 'Deutsche Einigung im Spannungsfeld internationaler Umbrüche', *Politische Vierteljahres-schrift* 32, no. 4 (1991), 605-620; Volker Rittberger, 'Nach der Vereinigung - Deutschlands Stellung in der Welt', *Leviathan* 20, no. 2 (1992), 207-229; Hanns. W. Maull, 'Zivilmacht Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Vierzehn Thesen für eine neue deutsche Außenpolitik', *Europa Archiv* 47, no.10 (1992), 269-278. The image of Ulysses in the context of Germany´s European policy was first used by Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann ('Conclusion: Structure, Strategy, and Institutional Roles', in *After the Cold War. International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe*, eds. Robert O. Keohane, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and Stanley Hoffmann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 389). A close reading of foreign policy speeches by German foreign policy makers, especially those of chancellor Kohl´s generation, shows that this image is also widespread here. For one of the most authoritative statements along these lines from the German government see *Weißbuch zur Sicherheit der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und zur Lage und Zukunft der Bundeswehr* (Bonn: Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 1994), esp. # 107, 207, 217, 306, 307.

signals would strongly counteract any tendencies towards renationalization or unilateralism.[89]

Third, Germany´s bascially unaltered domestic structure of a co-operative federalism was seen to provide for an in-built tendency towards middle-of-the-road compromises which also would also affect foreign policy. Even if it were possible for a particular social group (or coalition of groups) to "capture" government institutions and employ them for their ends, it was difficult to imagine in what way this would fundamentally alter German foreign policy.[90] Finally, German political culture had undergone a dramatic and lasting transformation since World War II.[91] Among the central historical lessons learned, Germans have come to strongly reject any special way ("Sonderweg", a lesson which was reinforced during the forty-year history of West Germany by the many foreign policy successes (including, of course, unification itself) which were seen to be causally related to the reassurance provided by Germany´s diplomatic strategy of self-binding. Taken together, these liberal arguments envisioned a Germany sticking to the course of the old Bonn Republic.

A decade later, realist *versus* liberal descriptions continue to prevail in the analysis of German foreign policy. Although the horrors of a "Fourth Reich"[92] never materialized, realists, who continue to be in a minority, see the new Germany fully meeting their expectations. "Almost overnight Germany has been catapulted back into the role of a continental great power with

---

[89]Cf. Jeffrey J. Anderson and John B. Goodman, 'Mars or Minerva? A United Germany in a Post-Cold War Europe', in *After the Cold War,* eds. Keohane/Nye/Hoffmann, p. 60.

[90]Cf. Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Die Fesselung der deutschen Macht im internationalen System', in *Die alte Bundesrepublik. Kontinuität und Wandel,* eds. : Bernhard Blanke and Helmut Wollmann (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 68-80.

[91]Cf. Thomas Banchoff, 'Historical Memory and German Foreign Policy', *German Politics and Society* 14, no. 2 (1996), 36-53; Thomas Berger, 'Norms, Identity, and National Security in Germany and Japan', in *The Culture of National Security. Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 317-356.

[92]Leopold Bellak, 'Why I fear the Germans', *New York Times*, 1990-04-25, A29; Dominik Lawson, 'Saying the Unsayable about the Germans' Interview with Nicholas Ridley, *Spectator*, 1990-07-14, 8-10; 'What the PM learnt about the Germans' publication of a memorandum summarizing the discussions of a meeting between Prime Minister Thatcher and British historians with expertise on Germany from 24 March 1990, *The Independent on Sunday*, 1990-07-15, 19.

global reach"[93] While the country continues to operate through the EU and NATO it has increasingly taken over leadership functions. Moreover, by getting involved on an ever larger scale in the military operations of the UN, NATO and the EU throughout the 1990s[94] Germany is seen to have "normalized" its behaviour commensurate with the expectations of the allies. Even under the most left-leaning government which Germany has seen since the early days of the Weimar Republic the new "central power of Europe" is seen to fully living up to its new "responsibilities" (or, as the critics saw it, finally falling back into the bad old habits of its militaristic past[95]) in providing for "order" and "stability" in Eastern Europe by sending troops. Kosovo marked the ultimate test which the government, formed by the SPD and the Greens, gloriously passed, as the realists see it,[96] or abysmally failed, as the peace researchers see it peering through the same realist looking glass.[97] After Kosovo Germany finally was in a position to act militarily "in as normal a fashion as any other member of NATO". Given the moralistic tone in justifying the Kosovo intervention German foreign policy was even seen to have become "more American".[98] The attacks on the World Trade Center and Chancellor Schröder´s "unconditional solidarity" with the US merely sealed the process of fully breaking with the remaining taboos on the use of military force.[99]

---

[93]Gregor Schöllgen, 'Zehn Jahre als europäische Großmacht. Eine Bilanz deutscher Außenpolitik seit der Vereinigung', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, no. B24 (2000), 6.

[94]Cf. Rainer Baumann and Gunther Hellmann, 'Germany and the Use of Military Force: 'Total War', the 'Culture of Restraint', and the Quest for Normality', *German Politics* 10, no. 1 (2001), 61-82.

[95]For a critique of definitions of "normality" and "responsibility" in military terms see Reinhard Mutz, 'Militärmacht Deutschland? Die Bundeswehr auf der Suche nach ihrer Zukunft', in *Friedensgutachten 1994*, eds. Reinhard Mutz, Friedhelm Solms, Gert Krell (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1994), 220-228. According to Mutz, "responsibility" had degenerated to "nothing but an appeal to get rid of scruples vis-à-vis the use of military power", p.225.

[96]Hans-Peter Schwarz, 'Die Zentralmacht Europas auf Kontinuitätskurs. Deutschland stabilisiert den Kontinent', *Internationale Politik* 54, no.11 (1999), 1-10; see also Schwarz, *Die Zentralmacht Europas, Deutschlands Rückkehr auf die Weltbühne,* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag,1994).

[97]Reinhard Mutz, 'Auf schiefer Bahn: Deutsche Außenpolitik - Militarisierung ist mehr als ein Schlagwort geworden', *Freitag - Die Ost-West-Zeitung*, 2000-08-04 (also available at www.rrz.uni-hamburg.de/ifsh/schiefe.htm) see also Mutz, 'Militärmacht Deutschland?', 213-228.

[98]Schwarz, 'Die Zentralmacht Europas auf Kontinuitätskurs', 6.

[99]Reinhard Mutz, 'Ein Tabu fällt - Die deutsche Außenpolitik entdeckt ihren militärischen Arm', in *Friedensgutachten 2002*, eds. Bruno Schoch, Corinna Hauswedell, Christoph Weller, Ulrich Ratsch, and Reinhard Mutz (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002), 126-134.

Where realist-inspired accounts either praise or condemn Germany´s foreign policy elites for completing a process of "normalization" (or "abnormalization"), liberal accounts see a clear case to be made for "continuity". While the "culture of anti-militarism"[100] may be said to have taken a slight dent in Kosovo, liberals see an overwhelming amount of evidence supporting continuity – or "modified continuity"[101] at best. Against the background of realist expectations, for instance, Volker Rittberger and his associates have examined a series of cases in order to find out whether German foreign policy would change in line with realist expectations. Their primary objective was to check the explanatory power of a set of "reconstructed" theories of foreign policy, called "neorealism", "modified neorealism", "utilitarian liberalism" and "constructivism". In most of the cases examined researchers found strong evidence for continuity. Moreover, as the concluding chapter (entitled "theories meet reality") summarizes, even cases in which change was observed, this had more to do with the influence of the foreign policy tradition of the Bonn Republic than with realist expectations. Overall constructvism fared best while neorealism performed worst. Germany "almost always adhered to the value-based expectations of appropriate behaviour shared within the international and domestic society. At the same time, however, post-unification Germany has intensified its influence-seeking policy."[102] These findings are echoed in a slightly different vocabulary in the research done by Hanns Maull and his associates. Inspite of some irritating instances where Germany has not lived up to the expectations of norm-based behaviour associated with the role-model of a "civilian power", German foreign policy is said to be best explained by it. The underlying argument is that it is

---

[100]Thomas U. Berger, *Cultures of Antimilitarism. National Security in Germany and Japan* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press 1998); John S. Duffield, *World Power Forsaken. Political Culture, International Institutions, and German Security Policy after Unification* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1998); John S. Duffield, 'Political Culture and State Behavior. Why Germany Confounds Neorealism', *International Organization* 53, no. 4 (1999): 765-803.

[101]Sebastian Harnisch, Hanns W. Maull, eds., *Germany as a Civilian Power? The foreign policy of the Berlin Republic* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 2, 130; see also Helga Haftendorn, *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung. 1945-2000* (Stuttgart and München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 386-390.

[102]Volker Rittberger and Wolfgang Wagner, 'German foreign policy since unification: theories meet reality', in *German foreign policy since unifiucation. Theories and case studies*, ed. Volker Rittberger (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 299-325, quote on p. 323.

indeed a set of "civilian power" beliefs "which caused German foreign policy elites to hold on to certain principles and instruments in the face of change".[103] Yet similar to culturalist explanations this set of beliefs is conceived of as a rather stable "role concept" which "drove (Germany´s) external behaviour after 1989".[104] In other words: German *abstention* from the UN-mandated liberation of Kuweit is explained with this role conception as is German *participation* in the liberation of Kosovo for which a clear-cut UN-mandate could not be furnished.

This list of works reviewing German foreign policy since 1990 against the backdrop of realist expectations could easily be extended. Mostly, however, the main points of the preceding analysis would only be rephrased: German foreign policy is usually seen as *either* meeting *or* confounding realist expectations of a more assertive and *Realpolitik*-like behaviour. In other words, in the disciplinary discourse the traditional IR-dualism of realism vs. some version of "idealism" or "liberalism" figures as the single relevant frame to describe and judge how German foreign policy has developed since unification (and is likely to develop in the future). To be sure, from a pragmatist point of view realist instincts are certainly to be taken seriously. Since we cannot be certain that realist intuitions are false and since our historical experience with rising powers in general and with Germany´s role in Europe in particular shows that such power shifts have often been connected with disintegrative rather then integrative developments realist warnings ought to be taken seriously. Similarly, it would be foolish to ignore, say, the promise of continued peace and stability which liberal theories emphasizing the taming effects of EU

---

[103]Sebastian Harnisch and Hanns W. Maull, 'Introduction', in *Germany as a Civilian Power?,* eds. Harnisch/Maull, 2. The "ideal type" of a civilian power which is said to "cause" this behaviour includes "states which are actively promoting the ´civilising´ of international relations"; such states "try to replace the military enforcement of military enforcement of rules (politics based on power) with the internationalisation of socially accepted rules". This includes "efforts to constrain the use of force in settling political conflicts", "efforts to strengthen the rule of law" and efforts to promote "participatory forms of decision-making" and "non-violent forms of conflict management", pp. 3-4.
[104]Sebastian Harnisch and Hanns W. Maull, 'Conclusion: "Learned ist lesson well?" Germany as a Civilian Power ten years after unification', in *Germany as a Civilian Power,* eds. Harnisch/Maull, 129.

membership contain.[105] Therefore, rather than measuring German foreign policy almost exclusively against the yardsticks of a "theoretical" dualism between realism and liberalism a pragmatist perspective would counsel to lay aside the theoretical blinders and carefully look at the situation in which Germany finds itself. This involves both how foreign policy decision-makers define the situation *and* how the situation may alternatively be described from the perspective of an expert not facing the daily pressures of the political business. Most importantly, however, it requires a mind-set on the part of the scholar-expert which is open to the breadth of knowledge preserved in the multiple traditions of the discipline. This is another way of warning against falling into the trap of premature theoretical closure which results from established practices in disciplinary discourse and which Albert O. Hirschman rightly castigates.

What might a pragmatist see that others, presumably, do not see? The most important difference results from the liberty to move beyond firmly established and mutually exclusive theoretical concepts. In order to worship at the altar of a disciplinary "theoretical" discourse framed by the disciples of realism and the heirs of "idealism" the academic discourse on German foreign policy has focussed in on terms such as "great power" or "civilian power" which, in turn, have degenerated to code words demarcating theoretical border lines which may not be crossed. In the process, the combined wealth of experience contained in both is threatened to get lost. Yet from a purely theoretical perspective there is no reason, why we should not envision *hybrids* such as a "civilian great power", ie. a powerful country skilled in using and willing to use its power to promote its interests, one of which includes the interest to build a world with an ever more "civilized" way of handling conflicts between its actors. What is more, I would even argue that this concept is much more fitting as far as the current conduct of German foreign policy is concerned than any of the dualist alternatives since there is irritating evidence for either of these

---

[105]Cf. Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *Tamed Power. Germany in Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

pure forms which are much more easily reconcilable if we think of Germany as a civilian great power hybrid.[106] Whereas I cannot develop the argument in empirical detail here, I will briefly point to some instances from the last few years which underline the point just made.[107] The threat to unilaterally recognize Croatia and Slovenia in the early 1990s; the increasing reliance on military means to pursue Germany´s interests (while accepting, as in the case of Kosovo, that some of these interventions are not fully measuring up to international norms); the newly discovered yearning for status and prestige and the readiness to rely on established arms-twisting practices in international diplomacy (as in the case of the Schröder government trying to push through their candidate at the head of the IMF against the expressed will of Germany´s great power allies); chancellor Schröder suppressing a letter of warning from the European Commission to Germany which openly violated a norm which Germany had initially pushed through (in the letter the Commission merely wanted to officially warn the German government not to surpass a certain threshold in its budget deficit) – all these instances are hard to reconcile with the role-model of a civilian power and confirm realist intuitions that powerful countries will rely on carrot-and-stick tactics as well as on bullying around others (rather than on "communicative action") if push comes to shove. Yet an equally long (or even longer) list of irritations can also be furnished for realism, as the Rittberger and Maull volumes show. Just to

---

[106]While sticking with the code words and the vocabulary of their respective camps, both realist and liberal scholars in the contemporary discourse on German foreign policy grant that there are such irritations measured against their preferred theoretical perspective; see, for example, Schwarz, Schwarz, 'Die Zentralmacht Europas auf Kontinuitätskurs', and Rittberger/Wagner, 'German foreign policy since unification', 319-321.

[107]For detailed empirical illustrations see Baumann/Hellmann , 'Germany and the Use of Military Force', Gunther Hellmann, 'Weltpolitik, Self-Containment and Civilian Power: United Germany´s Normalizing Ambitions', in: *Visions of the Future in Germany and America,* ed. Norbert Finzsch, Hermann Wellenreuther (New York: Berg Publishers, 2001), 143-223; Hellmann, 'Precarious Power: Germany at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century', in *Germany's New Foreign Policy. Decision-Making in an Interdependent World*, ed. Wolf-Dieter Eberwein, Karl Kaiser (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 463-495; Hellmann, 'Deutschlands Kraft und Europas Vertrauen oder: Die Selbstbewussten, die Befangenen und die Betroffenen der neuen deutschen Außenpolitik', in *Neue deutsche Außen_ und Sicherheitspolitik? Eine friedenswissenschaftliche Bilanz zwei Jahre nach dem Regierungswechsel*, ed. Christiane Lammers, Lutz Schrader (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000), 42-77; Hellmann, 'Rekonstruktion der »Hegemonie des Machtstaates Deutschland unter modernen Bedingungen«? Zwischenbilanzen nach zehn Jahren neuer deutscher Außenpolitik', Paper presented at the 21st Congress of the German Association of Political Science in Halle/Saale, 1.-5. October 2000, available www.uni-frankfurt.de/fb03/prof/hellmann/down.htm.

name a few: Germany, despite its increase in power, has mostly continued to accept further binding arrangements in the key institutions to which the country belongs (this applies, in particular, to the ability to unilaterally deploy Germany´s military forces); more generally (and notwithstanding the case of recognition of Croatia and Slovenia) it continues to rely mostly on multilateral coordination with its allies; moreover, the Schröder government (and foreign minister Fischer in particular) has played crucial (and often low-key) mediating roles in protracted international conflicts (such as the Balkans, the Middle East and Afghanistan) where the cold-blooded calculation of "national" interests would have advised against getting involved.

In sum, even a cursory look at the practice of German foreign policy shows that it is difficult to come up with a list which neatly fits within the theoretical borderlines of *either* realist *or* idealist-inspired theories without leaving irritations. Does that amount to a proposal to replace the narratives of "great power" and "civilian power" with a new "civilian great power" meta-narrative? Not necessarily so since it would be useless to dwell on concept formation without anticipating any practical consequences (besides, the three words making up the concept do not really please aesthetic needs!). Advertising the "civilian great power" concept is merely to suggest a shorthand formula to transcend disciplinary strictures, a concept which allows for integrating seemingly irreconcilable practices. Yet assuming that an alternative pragmatist description built on a new vocabulary which reconciles realist and liberal descriptions is indeed more fitting than its alternatives, what difference does it make? Two stand out: first, and generally speaking, by ignoring "theoretical" or "paradigmatic" borderlines pragmatists liberate themselves from stale ways of seeing things thereby enabling them to take a fresh look and, perhaps, rephrase a particular problem in novel (and perhaps more easily resolvable) ways. Second, am more specifically targeted to the German example, the countervailing trends observable in German foreign policy may signal a heightened sense of possibility and choice. In this view Germany is in

the midst of fundamental transformation process. In part this is due to the fact that a new generation of "uninhibited" foreign policy decision-makers freely deploys a vocabulary which hitherto was considered to be out-dated and highly problematic (such as "national" interests, "normal" behaviour, "pride" at being German, advocating a more "self-confident and assertive style" in foreign policy, or celebrating the "break with the taboo on using military instruments" and other "secondary). Style and generational preferences aside, however, this transformation is also propelled by a changing environment. Stretching far beyond the obvious change in Germany´s attitude towards military instruments this transformation affects the very pillars upon which the foreign policy of the Bonn Republic was based: the two defining relationships with the US (NATO) and with France (EU) . As to the first, it had seen relatively little change during first phase of the 1990s. Washington recognized Germany as a "partner in leadership" and German gratitude for wholehearted American support in the process of German unification translated, among others, into close coordination for the twin process of NATO reform and enlargement. Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 at the latest, however, and inspite of the initial declaration of "unconditional solidarity" the two sides are drifting apart. This drift is due in part to the fact that NATO, the foremost pillar in providing for the security of the Bonn Republic, has been radically devalued. Still more important, however, is the fact that the US and Germany increasingly provide the paradigmatic cases for two opposing models in great power politics: the unilateralist versus the multilateralist model. Irrespective of whether or not Germany and the US find a new modus vivendi which reflects the transformation of each, German foreign policy will have been fundamentally transformed. This is also true for the second pillar, Germany´s relations with France which have been under some strain almost ever since unification. Under the chancellorship of Helmut Kohl, however, the increasing power asymmetry which is particularly keenly felt in France has been covered up by a well established ritual of friendship. In contrast, chancellor Schröder not only did not developed as emotional a

relationship with France as his predecessor but openly challenged Paris by repeatedly demanding an open (and mostly symbolic) manifestation of the asymmetry in power by raising the number of votes which Germany can cast in the Council of Ministers. Although Schröder did not push this issue to the very end, much damage had been done. Yet in contrast to German-American relations both countries still acknowledge that the EU more broadly and each of them individually continues to depend on a sound, if not emotionally close relationship. Yet ongoing institutional reform, the enlargement of the Union, and financing issues (which finds Germany in the role of the key contributor whereas France belongs to those recipients which benefit most) are all but guaranteeing a bumping ride. Moreover, since the demands by Germany´s many neighbours are not only increasing but also increasingly conflicting and since, in addition, the long list of domestic problems within Germany (including the constraints placed upon its budget by EU rules) are likely to decrease the room for manoeuvring all of this may add up to what Hans-Peter Schwarz predicted almost a decade ago: a form of German foreign policy which is "more selfish, more calculated and cost-conscious, less flexible and primarily fixed on a rather narrowly defined national interest".[108] If that were to happen it would, at a minimum, fundamentally change Germany´s role in the EU and, at worst, undermine key bilateral relations or even the very foundation of the EU project.

Thus, the world in which Germany finds itself today looks very differently from the old days. Parts of the foundations upon which German foreign policy was built have to be reconstructed – not only (and often not even primarily) because Germany wants it so but because of changes in its environment which it cannot control. None of this must inevitably lead down the road of old-fashioned great power Realpolitik. Indeed, there is no reason why the pattern of hybrid "civilian-great-power" politics sketched above could not be continued. Yet if this analysis is correct the

---

[108]Schwarz, 'Die Zentralmacht Europas', 92.

effects of these changes will be felt either way throughout Europe and the rest of the world. In any case, this would be a different type of Germany compared to the one envisioned in the alternative descriptions of realists, liberals or constructivists.

5. In Lieu of a Conclusion: Rehabilitating the "American" component in IR

Illustrating the alleged potential of pragmatism with a brief discussion of the academic discourse on as well as the practice of German foreign policy may seem an to be quite arbitrary, even odd. Yet aesthetically it may as well be considered as fitting as any other if it conceived of as part of a project to rehabilitate IR as an *American* social science. For in contrast to the misleading title of the dominant narrative of the discipline´s roots – Stanley Hoffmann´s classical article "An American Social Science: International Relations" – , these roots are to be found primarily in Europe in general and Germany in particular rather than in America itself.[109] A persistent theme and a consistent argument in the diverse narratives of the history of American philosophy is that pragmatism is the only tradition which rightly deserves to be called American. Yet in comparison to Kant or Nietzsche, Carnap or Feigl, Weber or Morgenthau, Peirce, James, Dewey and Mead have left almost no mark in IR.[110] Whereas Hoffmann is usually cited for his emphasis on the *Americanness* of IR the article itself never once mentions pragmatism. Hoffman instead emphasizes the *European* roots of IR. He refers only indirectly (and mostly pejoratively) to non-European American traditions, for instance when he praises European immigrants ("a galaxy of foreign-born scholars", "wise and learned", and "all *concerned with transcending empiricisim*") for their "sense of history" as well as their "awareness of the diversity of social experiences, that could

---

[109]Stanley Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science: International Relations', *Deadalus* 106, no. 3 (1977): 41-60.
[110]To some extent this is quite astounding given the physical proximity of some of the key figures of IR as well as pragmatism in the Chicago environment during the 1930s and 1940s in particular; for a history of the so-called Chicago School of pragmatism as well as some lose links to political science see Darnell Recker, *The Chicago*

only stir comparative research and make something more universal of the *frequently parochial American social science*".[111] Moreover, in stark contrast to the persistent pragmatist theme of *undermining* the quest for certainty – a theme which runs from James through Dewey[112] to Hoffmann´s Harvard colleague, the philosopher Willard van Orman Quine – Hoffmann misidentifies "the quest for certainty" as "the most striking" characteristic in a longer list of "traits which are essentially American".[113]

Given the long history of (partly even "anti-American") misreadings of pragmatism – most of which were committed by European scholars[114] – it may not be worth the effort to dwell on this particular misreading from a couple of decades ago. Yet the age-old charge of American domination in IR is obviously at odds with the philosophy of science foundations of the disciplinary discourse. These foundations were clearly laid by Europeans and IR scholars in the positivist as well as the post-positivist camp continue to rely mainly on Europeans to reconstruct them – whether one refers to Popper or Lakatos, Habermas or Giddens, Foucault or Derrida. Indeed in some cases it is curious to observe that "scientifically purified" versions of pragmatist thinking and themes are being re-introduced undercover in key IR journals.[115] Thus, even though this message may currently not be politically correct: it is high time to rehabilitate the liberating and anti-foundationalist impulse of the only truly "American" philosophical tradition there is.

Pragmatists (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota,Press, 1969). For a discussion of the anti-pragmatist reactions among German intellectuals which fled the Nazis in the 1930s see Joas, *Pragmatismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, 96-145.

[111]Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science', 47 (emphases added).

[112]Dewey even published a whole book with precisely this title in 1929.

[113]Hoffmann, 'An American Social Science', 57.

[114]Cf. Joas, *Pragmatismus und Gesellschaftstheorie*, 66-145.

[115]Just to name two more prominent recent examples: Habermas who serves as the key reference point for positivist "constructivist" approaches to "communicative action" (cf. Risse, 'Let´s Argue') has been drawing heavily on Mead. Yet as Rorty has rightly pointed out, he has never been willing to give up on the project of epistemology and notions such as "truth" and "universality". Moreover, as a recent paper by Benjamin Herborth shows, Mead also played a key role in Wendt´s initial thinking. In Wendt´s book, however, little of it is left, see Herborth, *Zur Entwicklung des Agent-Struktur-Problems in der Theorie Alexander Wendts. Eine pragmatistische Kritik*, (Frankfurt 2002, unpublished manuscript).

IR-scholarship may benefit as much as might the practice of international politics, American included.

The core of pragmatism as Peirce originally conceived it was the Pragmatic Maxim, a rule for clarifying the meaning of hypotheses by tracing their 'practical consequences' – their implications for experience in specific situations. For Peirce and James, a key application of the Maxim was clarifying the concept of truth. Pragmatism means action, from which the words practical and practice have come. The idealist constructs a transcendental ideal, which cannot be realised by man. The pragmatist lays down standards which are attainable. This process gives him a discipline which is acquired in every kind of real and creative work, as a very natural consequence of the activity itself. Thus the discipline in pragmatic system of education is to be self-discipline, the discipline of the pupil's own work and purposeful and creative activity. Introduction: pragmatism and education in the international discussion. At the Third International Congress of Philosophy in Heidelberg in September 1908, pragmatism in general and William James' theory of truth in particular came under extremely sharp criticism by the philosophers and philosophizing educationalists attending the congress (Elsenhans, 1909, pp. 711-740). It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed. But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience.