INTRODUCTION

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Theory and inquiry

In the late twentieth century, many of us working in the social and historical sciences would orient our work with respect to the major alternatives offered by "grand theory." What was our position on various versions of Marxism? Were we, instead, mainly Weberian in our approach? How did we draw on Durkheim, or Freud? Core graduate courses and qualifying exams were very likely to test our knowledge of these "big names." Of course there were other theorists and myriad schools, but these tended to be either situated within a discipline, perhaps even associated with a particular department (interpretive anthropology at Chicago, ethnomethodology at UCLA, structuralism in Paris, Norbert Elias' process sociology at Amsterdam), or to be outside all social science disciplines, to provide intellectual excitement more than a research program (Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan).[1]

The "grand theory" names remain "big" in the twenty-first century, but now we are more likely to define our research in terms of particular problems, specific lines of inquiry, and suitable concepts. In doing so we may well draw from broad-based and far-reaching social theory, but we do so in order to analyze new, specific challenges, from grasping the everyday workings of markets, courtrooms, and clinics, to inscribing the transformations of practice within research disciplines themselves. The present volume seeks to examine some of the critical concepts that have been central to this shift toward what we call "pragmatic inquiry."

One striking feature of these concepts is their transdisciplinary reach. Only one chapter, that by Tim Bartley on "fields," treats a concept associated mainly with one discipline (sociology). Much more common are cases where social scientists have reorganized inquiry in order to better understand particular social practices, and where social scientists from various disciplines find that they are investigating similar themes and meet each other at unsuspected intersections. Such is the case with

efforts presented here to recenter diverse analyses around "caring" (Annemarie Mol and Anita Hardon), "making home" (Paolo Boccagni and Jan Willem Duyvendak), or "complexity" (Talia Dan-Cohen). These new deployments of ordinary words produce new, fresh approaches to studying science, economics, finance, and law, across diverse research communities.

We speak of "pragmatic inquiry" to point toward this shared commitment to using analytical concepts for empirical exploration, not because we share a particular philosophical or theoretical position. We use this phrase to argue that research proceeds by allowing initial explorations of objects and practices to lead to related ones, generating new questions in the process. This general orientation to research favors an attention to objects, techniques, and practices, from trade regulations and legal argumentation to laboratory procedures, and from cultural consumption to emotional care and homemaking practices. It is methodologically open-ended, although it often starts with social interactions as processes of co-creating social meaning in specific social, institutional, and symbolic environments. It also pays attention to the implications of research for public life.

We now need to take stock of this critical shift in theory and analysis. If each of the new tools has generated its own literature, there are as yet few broad-based explorations of how anthropologists and sociologists are deriving and applying these concepts in the pursuit of pragmatic inquiry. In this book we set out to do just that. In a series of chapters, each of us takes a key analytical concept and then explores its genealogies and its circulations across scholarly communities, as well as its proven payoffs for the social sciences, and we offer critical reflections on its present and future uses.

The "we" refers to a working group of scholars in sociology and anthropology, with training and current engagements mainly in France, the Netherlands, and the United States. For several years we have been crafting a collective project to significantly expand and improve the analytical repertoires or toolkits available to social scientists, including scholars in sociology or anthropology, and scholars working in science and technology studies, public health, or related fields. This crafting has involved successive cohorts of graduate students, who have studied across these three countries and who have brought the idea of pragmatic inquiry to their varied projects. From the beginning, the project has tried out ideas and approaches against their payoffs for students and senior scholars alike. We have tried to practice inquiry as well as study it.

It is this project of collaboratively attending to the articulations of concepts across specific and diverse theoretical orientations that best exemplifies our understanding of pragmatic inquiry. In what follows, we expand on this shared understanding before refracting it through specific concepts.

Pragmatist traditions

Despite our shared attention to pragmatic inquiry, we do not share a commitment to any one philosophical position, including the diverse projects called pragmatist.

Or rather, we find affinities in the several pragmatist currents in philosophy and social sciences.

Pragmatism as a philosophical tradition is most closely associated with the works of a small number of scholars writing in the United States around the turn of the twentieth century. Linking the diverse directions pursued by William James, Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead was an idea of meaning and truth emerging from the crucible of experience. Drawing on new enthusiasms for Hegel, Kant, and Dilthey but also on Darwin and experimental psychology, cross-disciplinary formulations of pragmatism flourished in what was then the academically understructured world of American graduate studies.[2]

The open-textured academic context of the time permitted experimentation in philosophy, as well as the flourishing of definitions and understandings of what might have been otherwise more closely-defined philosophical schools. Such a loosely-structured use of the term pragmatism continued, with later philosophers as diverse as Hilary Putnam and Jürgen Habermas finding strong affinities with the earlier American pragmatists on the role of justification in truth claims and in the centrality of communication to democracy.

American pragmatists share the idea that knowledge proceeds through experience. What does this deceptively simple declaration imply?

First, that we gain knowledge by reflecting on our experiences as they unfold in real time. John Dewey in particular argued that we learn when we find ourselves in a troubling situation, where we have to pull back from a routine mode of existence and find a solution to a problem. But we may not immediately know what the problem is, and thus we engage in a process of experimentation.[3] By *inquiry*, Dewey meant this back and forth movement between experience and concepts. His examples were usually of the everyday sort, or in the laboratory, but we can also see inquiry, in this sense, in the intellectual journeys of thinkers and writers. In reading the transcripts of his lectures, one finds Michel Foucault, for example, referring to how he approached a question in his previous lecture, his reflecting on the problem, and then his decision to reframe the matter in a new way. Inquiry in this sense characterizes the ways some of us have examined a particular concept in this volume. For example, both Olav Velthuis, writing on "market devices," and Tim Bartley, writing on "fields," work their way through the development of their respective concepts, trying out different uses of each against concrete examples, before arriving at a balanced critique of the uses made by each of several authors.

Second, knowledge through experience leads to claims that the validity, or truth of a concept lies in its real-world effects. This "instrumentalist" view of truth is most closely associated with William James, who famously claimed that theological ideas will be true if and only if they "prove to have a value for concrete life" (1907, 154). This claim was shocking at the time, and for many remains so. But as a common-sense claim it means something like: we draw on claims to truth when we think it will do some good: for us, or for another, or for society more generally.

Third, that meaning is to be found in the ways people understand or interpret the statements of others. In other words, meaning proceeds as real-world chains of

speaking and responding, rather than as ideas lying outside society. Charles Sanders Peirce, in particular, developed this approach to meaning using the phrase *semiotic mediation* (see the chapter by James V. Wertsch and Nutsa Batiashvili). Peirce saw meaning as a continual forward motion of actions (utterances, other kinds of signals) and interpretations. When, for example, someone directs attention toward an event, or toward an idea, other people interpret these actions, and they experience changes in their perceptions of the world. As they respond and still others interpret these new actions, new ideas are born, and the chain continues. Meaning is thereby mediated by social interactions, just as social interactions involve semiotic mediation.[4]

This social process of semiotic mediation has no inevitable resting point. We can compare it with how science works, when experiments yield results that may be interpreted by different observers in different ways, leading to (potentially) conflicting inferences and conclusions. Here we have inquiry. And we can draw on this idea to see social life as consisting of tests of reality within distinct spheres of moral or cultural value. This last idea has been developed in recent years in France as the "pragmatic sociology of critique" and is most closely identified with the sociologist Luc Boltanski and the economist Laurent Thévenot.[5]

The French approach develops two key ideas. First, that people formulate arguments and critical stances with respect to their experiences and situations. By attending to public debates and to the justifications that people give for their stances and actions, the social scientist bases her approach on practical life as people evaluate it, and not on a putatively objective position, a "view from nowhere."

Second, the evaluations and justifications that people formulate for specific actions (their own and those of others) sort into a number of specific moral worlds, or "orders of worth." These are not limited in number, might emerge in several different areas of everyday life, and include "the world of renown" based on honor, "the civic world" based on the common good, and "the domestic world" based on personal dependencies. The orders of worth are mutually incompatible and debate often erupts when people argue about what starting point is most appropriate to evaluate a particular event or idea.

The proponents of the sociology of critique developed their approach, and oriented their research activities, in explicit contrast to the approach taken by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.[6] Bourdieu organized his studies of social life in France and (earlier) in Algeria largely around two ideas. First, that when people engage in social life they usually draw on ways of seeing and acting that have become ingrained in them, that they inhabit. He called these ways of living the *habitus*, and he contrasted his approach with one that saw people as acting out social models or norms, or, for that matter, a decontextualized notion of self-interest. Second, that the structures of domination in a society operate in specific *fields*, through mechanisms of concealment and misrecognition. We often fail to see how those in power maintain their power, and indeed power relations depend on selective blindness. For Boltanski and Thévenot, by contrast, this way of looking at things itself fails to recognize the fullness of human action: that it is moral action, and not merely enactments of material and symbolic power.

Pragmatic inquiry, as we see it, draws on these related insights: about knowledge and experience, meaning-making as social processes, and about the moral stances that suffuse social life.[7]

Circulations and entanglements

How do these ideas shape or impinge upon our own work? We began, and continue, our collaborative work by identifying concepts that, in our view, have proven fruitful in exploring specific empirical challenges. In essence, and in each of our studies, we explore the back-and-forth between the developments of concepts and their capacity to help illuminate something about the social world. Here is another way to see how inquiry is pragmatic, by applying a test: what is the effect on our understanding of a particular analytical problem if we use this rather than that concept?

We have found that in answering this question, in seeing how uses of a key concept shape our understanding of a research problem, we find it fruitful to explore the *circulations* and the local *entanglements* of that concept. This shared finding speaks to a set of ideas about how we do social sciences. What do we mean here?

We study *circulations* of concepts by examining their genealogies, and how they cross boundaries of disciplines and networks, tracing the forward movement of semiosis. We do so because we locate the meaningfulness of a concept in interactions and interpretations, not as a transcendental signified. We also find problems of and opportunities in translations, even detachments of concepts from their genealogies, with mixed effects.

By *entanglements* we mean the configurations of political and intellectual associations, histories, and engagements around concepts. Often these entanglements are lost during circulations and translations, such that an idea becomes divested of its political implications in another time and place. A kind of naïve semantic conceptualism allows ignoring these entanglements – claiming that the meaningfulness of a concept is limited to its current explicit usages in a scholarly setting.

We explore problems that arise from the translation or circulation of a concept across linguistic-national contexts or disciplinary contexts (or both at once), or from the often unacknowledged reduction or alteration of a concept when it is used for an empirical project. For example, Hardon and Mol show how the concept of "care" grew out of debates in moral psychology in the US, signaling distinct ways of ranking stages in moral development. By the time it entered into social science analyses and policy discussions in Europe, it had changed as a function of new priorities, without the putative older genealogy – signaled by the use of the English word – being distinguished from new, local uses for examining welfare policy (Netherlands) and genre (particularly, and very recently, in France). Care and "caring" came to signal distinct sets of concerns in each of these particular contexts.

Or, when Bourdieu's work was presented to an American anthropological audience, it was translated as "practice theory," whereby a handful of examples from the early Kabyle work came to stand for the habitus-whole. Gone was the probabilistic

analysis of life chances, though these were brought over into American sociology. But even for the latter, the multiple kinds of capital and the two- or three-dimensional charts were often themselves squished down to a notion of social capital that would better fit individualistic theories of choice.

In attending to circulations and entanglements, we find ourselves in broad and deep company. We have already recounted the semiotic approaches to meaningfulness in Peirce and other pragmatists and could add extensions of these ideas in one direction by Derrida, and in others by Elias, and by linguistic anthropologists and philosophers of science. Several of us draw on the attention to genealogies in Foucault, the varied versions of examining entanglements in science studies, and debates about power, practice, and moral vision in Bourdieu, Boltanski, and others. These works introduced concepts that themselves circulate and develop new entanglements. For example, the very broad applicability of Foucault's *dispositif* gave rise to a multiplicity of research strategies under headings of devices, techniques, processes, and so forth (see the chapter by Nicolas Dodier and Janine Barbot). Science studies have proposed new approaches to older notions of constructivism and experiment. These recent developments foreground a real addition to how we conceptualize the pragmatist legacy in the form of material semiotics: the materiality of that which circulates, that which carries meaning forward in events of signification and becomes foregrounded in studies of science, art, narratives, legal evidence, and so forth (see the chapter by Anthony Stavrianakis).

We see these concepts as components both of our approaches and of the social scenes we are studying. This hybrid quality of our critical concepts (as "shifters": pointing to specific objects *and* to the context of their study) is central to how we think about our work. When we develop ideas about the circulations and entanglements of concepts, we also begin an elaboration of the very concepts that we use as research analytics. For example, looking at how the concept of "justification" circulates and changes is also an example of how social scientists themselves justify their positions when they use the concept. We explore how to study concepts, but forms of "howness" themselves provide objects of study: how experiments produce artifacts over time, how interactions around product demonstrations create facticity, how fields and hierarchies affirm value (see chapters by John R. Bowen and Claude Rosental).

By emphasizing the open-ended breadth of particularly useful analytical concepts, we can advocate for a refocus from "theory" to "inquiry." Neither the concepts nor the approaches advanced here point to anything like a shared quasi-discipline; we derive from these quite varied ideas a set of exciting and fruitful points of reference for exchanges and debates. We could add other concepts (and readers doubtless will). These points of reference subtend, potentially enrich, or sharply challenge the particular research approaches that each of us prefers. They create an arena for exchange that we find productive to our research projects, and that we believe will prove so for colleagues across disciplines and networks. These conceptual analyses have developed from the very attentions to circulations and entanglements with which we began. And we hope that they provide examples of shared social analytics rather than Theory, examples of ideas that, by illuminating one case can also do so

for a very different one, transversally rather than as a demonstration of a higher-order set of propositions.

Interactions, institutions, and justifications

In our own interactions, lasting over several years, we have found ourselves drawn back to, in distinct ways, three starting points to social analysis. These components of our own methodological "tool kit" are places to look rather than philosophies; they recur as important dimensions of social life.

One such starting point for social analysis is with *interactions* as processes of co-creating social meanings in formal or informal social settings. How do people interact in a courtroom, or on a playground? How do these interactions yield meanings? The meanings created in interactions are not necessarily expressed as accounts of what happens in a situation. Indeed, explicit accounts are re-accounts that themselves are part of the entire situation, as when a playground game leads to disputes about who was following the rules, or who was rude or generous. And then to what, in turn, do such moments of taking stock lead? This approach comes from the work of Mead and Dewey and their legacy in Chicago sociology (see the chapter by Daniel Cefaï). Its semiotic dimension came from Peirce, who situated meaning-making as acts of interpretation occurring in particular environments by particular persons, against a background of shared semiotic structures, but with the power to change those structures in the next iteration, an insight developed in American linguistic anthropology. Among later social scientists, Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel were particularly innovative, from the 1950s on, in the design of new models of social interaction.

Second, we may enter the study of a situation or a structure by analyzing *institutions*. We think of institutions as forms of social life that have the capacity to reproduce and transform themselves, as with languages, family forms, corporations, or religions. They may emerge from changes in interaction patterns (as detailed by Goffman and Elias). We also take stock of several forms of "institutionalism" as diverse reactions to the deficiencies of individualistic approaches in politics, economics, and sociology. There are many versions thereof, including: historical institutionalism, and an economic version that focuses on coordination and transaction costs. Of greater importance for our project have been cultural versions focusing on schemas and repertoires as developed by Michèle Lamont, Paul DiMaggio, Walter Powell, and others. These sociological approaches point to "practical schemas" and "repertoires," as common sense constraints and resources for meaning-making activities. We can see this work as consistent with the earlier attention by Dewey and Garfinkel to everyday features of social life and operations of valuation, inquiry, and deliberation – and one that is well developed in sociology but that merits greater attention in anthropology.[8]

Our third way-in to understanding social life is through the study of *justification* as a process of meaning-creation. In a dispute, how does someone give an account of her actions? It is at that moment that an actor re-presents a stream of actions as a

meaningful sequence of social life. These moments of giving accounts or justifying provide a way-in to meaning-in-action, the "moral worlds" mentioned previously. At a remove from the highly contextualized dispute, they may claim to be universalistic. We can then approach such claims – from human rights to democracy to ethical disinterestedness – as themselves objects of inquiry. Dewey argued that justification follows on judgment, rationalizing in skeletal fashion what was a much more multidimensional process of forming inferences, hunches, and feelings. And current legal thinking has returned to pragmatism for its experimental, scientific character, which also allows linking science studies to legal studies by emphasizing "devices." In anthropology, Franz Boas emphasized the risks of taking local accounts at face value; instead, we approach justification as itself an approach to human life, in terms of moral presuppositions and universalizing claims, and look to developments in moral philosophy (Walzer 1983) and political sociology (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006), which have recent echoes in anthropology (see Bowen, this volume).

Logic of exposition

Institutions

In what follows, we present the concepts in a way that moves (loosely) from those that have been particularly useful in understanding institutional contexts for action, to those that refer to complex objects, to those that are better seen as stances, or as practices. The first pair of chapters concern two distinctive approaches to studying social institutions that also have connections to pragmatism. They address ways in which relations of power are articulated through specific social forms.

Tim Bartley traces two distinct lineages of the concept of *fields* in sociology. One, connected to Bourdieu, emphasizes how forms of social capital and social networks structure action. A second, connected to organizational sociology, emphasizes how organizations structure arenas. The two lineages differ in scale, in underscoring either conflict or coordination, and in disciplinary affinities, but Bartley, while warning of the dangers of mediocrity in trying to combine these tendencies, suggests areas of fruitful convergence. His conclusion, that "the concept works best as the beginning of analysis rather than the end" befits its place at the beginning of this volume, as a concept that has underpinned a wide range of studies of power in specific domains.

A distinct line of inquiry regarding the ecology of institutions was stimulated by an approach from human ecology that is examined here by Daniel Cefaï. If studying institutions as fields leads analysts to highlight configurations of power, the ecological approach traces the emergence of institutions out of social movements and toward their dynamic relations to environments. Drawing on Chicago sociological tradition, as initiated by William I. Thomas and Robert E. Park, as well as on Dewey's and Mead's pragmatist philosophy, Cefaï stresses the fact that institutions are fields of experiences. In certain conditions, they are capable of self-organization, collective intelligence, and collective learning. The ecological and processual perspective

develops an alternative conception of power, different from field theory: the power of acting-together, solving problems collectively and responding collectively to challenges and crises. Institutions are central for a pragmatist theory of democracy. They are, on the one hand, "accumulators, condensers and generators of experience, know-how, and knowledge" which support individuals' capabilities and help them be more autonomous; and on the other hand, they take part in processes of public inquiry, experiment, and discussion, that Dewey called the "publics," through which reflective policies can be implemented.

Complex objects

Several of our concepts develop from work by Foucault, and particularly with his analysis of the *dispositif*, a word that we, following others, keep close to the French original, as "dispositif"; it also has been translated as "mechanisms," "apparatuses," and "devices." Drawing on their studies of juridical processes, Nicolas Dodier and Janine Barbot set out several directions of the concept's development and its relationship to alternative concepts. Foucault proposed dispositif as an open-ended and heterogeneous grouping of ideas, spatial forms, techniques, and so forth, that produced a tightly linked couple of power and knowledge, in a particular place and time. A second, "material-semiotic" version of dispositif highlights networks of actors and tools that align interests and produce new objects, particularly in science, as in work by Bruno Latour, John Law, and others (including Olav Velthuis on *market devices* in this volume). A third approach, associated with Michael Walzer and with Boltanski and Thévenot, starts from moral worlds, and traces how they shape judgment across distinct dispositifs, as explored by Bowen on *justification* in this volume. Dodier and Barbot treat how, across these diverse concepts, the prescription of sequences is particularly effective in organizing a dispositif and accounting for its force, in law, science, or other domains. They examine the processes of valuation internal to the dispositif and its articulations to moral domains (topics also explored by Kuipers and Franssen in their chapter on *qualifying*). They also underscore the plurality of normative conceptions even for any one actor engaged in the dispositif.

Two other chapters offer further advances along the lines developed by Dodier and Barbot. Anthony Stavrianakis points to the value of the open-ended concept of *assemblage* (French *agencement*), a concept developed by the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in opposition to an overly-determinant notion of structure in psychoanalysis and anthropology. Assemblage points to how individuals' desires articulate with speech acts, and it resembles what Dodier and Barbot call the material-semiotic kind of dispositif. Yet assemblage offers a greater potential to underscore the singularity of events and desires, and to avoid assuming a fixed normative dimension to the object. The concept permits a heterogeneity of approach. Anthropologists have drawn on this concept to study forms that circulate across specific environments, such as particular complexes of techniques and laws, as "immutable mobiles." But others show a different possibility, as when from a similar baseline of diagnostic elements, clinicians in a US and a French clinic arrive at

different diagnoses of a neurological disorder – showing diagnostic assemblages to be highly mutable. Assemblage affords well the combined focus on circulation and entanglements found to be generally characteristic of pragmatic inquiry.

Olav Velthuis traces a very specific trajectory of dispositif, whereby *market device* (remaining *dispositif* in French) "has become the most significant theoretical impulse for economic sociology in the new millennium." Further refined as devices for judgment, trust, or calculation, market devices enable market activities to exist by compensating for cognitive weaknesses. Velthuis argues that devices and related concepts like assemblage and performativity have been crucial in bridging continental European and American traditions in economic sociology, in particular by infusing the subdiscipline with approaches and concepts from French Actor Network Theory, and thereby linking studies of science and economy. And yet, as used today market devices lead less to studies of constraint than was the case with Foucault. Velthuis's analysis shows how as concepts circulate they transform in new environments – but his argument is also a call to regain the dimension of constraint, and the connection of knowledge and power, that brought such analytical value to dispositif.

Talia Dan-Cohen examines *complexity* as an analytic whose popularity in certain corners of the social sciences responds to legacies of simplification and reduction. She calls attention to the artifactual dimensions of complexity, noting that diagnoses of complexity sometimes tell us more about the contexts in which knowledge is produced than about the phenomena being studied. She therefore argues that, alongside of its use as an analytic, complexity should also be framed as an anthropological and historical object, tied to specific knowledge practices. She exemplifies this approach through an examination of the uses of complexity in cultural anthropology and archeology.

Framing stances

Our third section highlights another dimension of the social world, namely, ways in which people act within, and with respect to, constraints and objects. Because action always is mediated by signs, networks, fields, dispositifs, and so on – under the several understandings presented previously – the stances and practices examined here are not to be seen as "agency" versus "structure," but as themselves also implicating social and political relationships. They also highlight the role of language, as previous chapters highlighted the role of complex objects. But they are not immaterial: stances carry on the material quality of semiotics, in the forms of settings, objects of valuation, and privileged forms of speech and writing.

In his chapter on *justification*, John R. Bowen points to Dewey's bold claim that deductive logic grew out the social need to justify our actions. He draws on this claim to argue that justifying is a practice that generates much of our sense of a socio-moral order. Bowen draws on his own work in courts and other tribunals to argue that public justification involves drawing on socially-accepted normative resources and tailoring argument to the probable responses of the audience. This approach accords with Peirce's view of the forward movement of semiosis.

On this view, codified forms of law and morality result from myriad such situated practices. He then addresses the role of justifying in analyses of moral frameworks, with reference to the work of Walzer and of Boltanski and Thévenot but concludes that justifying is best studied as a complex set of practices, and not as an index to established moral or semantic worlds.

James V. Wertsch and Nutsa Batiashvili argue that *narrative*, in particular, "provides a natural point of integration in the human sciences." Drawing on the psychologists Lev Vygotsky and Daniel Kahneman as well as the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, they focus on the specific role of national narrative templates, generic forms of representation of events. The contrast of Russian and Georgian templates concerning war and invasion illustrates this national specificity and nationalist function. But actors may work from multiple, perhaps conflicting narratives, which then function as schemas at a more fine-grained level. This chapter can be read as a semiotic illustration of Cefaï's discussion of the emergence and adaptation of new institutions, and of institutions as sources of emplotment of experiences.

Giselinde Kuipers and Thomas Franssen introduce the notion of *qualification* to bridge cognitive cultural sociology (Durkheim, via DiMaggio, Bourdieu, and Mary Douglas) with the pragmatist/ STS tradition (Latour, Michel Callon, Annemarie Mol) and its recent offspring, valuation studies. Both approaches recognize that social life is a constant attempt to make sense of the surrounding social and material world. In cognitive sociology, the focus has been on classification: the social and cultural creation of categorizations and the (often hierarchical) relations between these categorizations. The pragmatist tradition has focused on valuation – attempts to assess worth, often in markets – and has stressed the processual, situated character of "valuing in practice." Taken together, these approaches lead to the insight that social life often revolves around qualifying: a simultaneous attempt to decide what something is, and whether it is a good instance of this category. This and other chapters (on caring, and on justification) emphasize a shared move away from an older idea of fixed values as constituting society, to the study of the social processes through which particular objects and relations are evaluated.

Practices

In Claude Rosental's analysis of *demonstrating*, he emphasizes, not the "objecthood" of demonstrations (which might be seen as an example of the sort of "material-semiotic" dispositif mentioned previously), but the ways in which certain ways of presenting materials convince, persuade, show – or not. They have performative qualities, not only illustrative ones. Through his analysis of the Orion computer program developed for the space industry, he shows how demonstrations are also trials, recruiting tools, and in themselves research projects, as well as (following Robert Merton) ways for science to maintain its authority (and funding levels). They also serve as points in establishing markets, and as cognitive devices, in the sense set out by Velthuis previously. Rosental extends this analysis to Paris street demonstrations, which create levels of credibility of a political stance or message.

Annemarie Mol and Anita Hardon make a case for using the term *caring* in talking and writing about situations in which people engage with themselves, others, other creatures, things, environments, all in ways that locally count as good. These engagements, then, seek to improve, restore, or sustain those being cared for. But the "good" envisioned is not necessarily a moral good, it may well have more do with health, wellbeing, ease, pleasure, durability, sustainability, thriving, and so on. The caring engagements never quite offer control. Instead, they are adaptive and explorative. They respond to surprises and expect these to occur. But that doesn't mean that caring is soft and forms a counterpoint to the hardness of technologies. Instead, quite differently, attentive inquiries into practices in which technologies are put to work has taught us that their working often depends on a lot of adaptive tinkering. Hence, caring may be an appropriate term for handling, for living with, technologies. That said, the authors do not seek to solidify caring as a concept: its precise meaning is bound to change with the sites and situations, the cases, problems, pleasure, or otherwise that as scholars we might care to articulate.

With *making home*, Paolo Boccagni and Jan Willem Duyvendak seek to turn attention to the myriad challenges to older public-private boundaries, from the bleeding of domestic conversations into public settings, to the "intrusion" of the state into family life. They note that social commentary on these processes is normative and negative; they call for pragmatic inquiry into how people recast boundaries, to what ends and with what effects. Taking security, familiarity, and control as some of home's components, they seek to study "the socio-material practices through which a sense of home is reproduced." In fast-evolving socio-demographic contexts, homing practices will be highly sensitive to inter-group interactions, and these can create feelings and slogans of not feeling at home, when one should feel so.

Disciplines

Our arguments have not been disciplinary; our compass is broadly across several social sciences. We conclude by inviting the sociologist Michèle Lamont, who has been engaged in this project since its start, to extend our reflections on interdisciplinary ways of seeing, and how this endeavor in pragmatic inquiry poses challenges to other ways of conceiving of explanation in social sciences.

Notes

1 Among the older orientations to grand theory one can mention the influential "classic" by Anthony Giddens (1971), in which the author develops his own critical stance on modern capitalism by way of an analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. To chart the shift mentioned here, we can also contrast two different editions of a major collection of essays on sociological theory, *Social Theory Today* (Giddens and Turner 1987; Benzecry, Krause, and Reed 2017). If the earlier version starts with a chapter on the "centrality of the classics" and features "big names" writing on their own approach (George C. Homans on behaviorism; Immanuel Wallerstein on World-Systems Analysis), the recent volume

includes many younger scholars critically reexamining some widely-followed approaches (rational choice, systems theory, field theory), and in that respect resembles this volume. Despite the titles, both volumes were in fact about *sociological* theory. Attesting to the somewhat more distanced relationship of anthropology to social theory is that the closest comparable volume in which anthropologists play a major role (Dirks, Eley, and Ortner 1994) is centered in cultural studies, not anthropology. On the "big thinkers" whose uptake in the United States, at least, was as French theorists, decontextualized from their French disciplinary contexts, see Cusset (2008 [2003]).

2 On the American pragmatists, see Bernstein (2010).
3 See Dewey's philosophical analysis of inquiry (Dewey 1938, 487–512).
4 On C.S. Peirce see Parmentier (1985).
5 See Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), and also Boltanski (2011) for his more recent position on critical sociology.
6 For Bourdieu's analysis of the habitus and of misrecognition in his Kabyle (Algeria) studies, see (Bourdieu 1977); his work on France is examined in a number of chapters in the present volume, in particular by Tim Bartley on fields and by Giselinde Kuipers and Thomas Franssen on qualification.
7 For an analysis of social action as practices in line with some of the perspectives mentioned here, see Gross (2009) and for a methodological approach inspired by pragmatism, see Tavory and Timmermans (2014).
8 For a comparative analysis of "repertoires of evaluation" see the essays in Lamont and Thévenot (2000).

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