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Philosophy for Professionals: Towards Critical Pragmatism
(Reflections on Critical Pragmatism, Part 7)

Abstract: **Pragmatism and professionalism**   Pragmatism must be one of the most underestimated and misunderstood philosophical traditions of our epoch. It certainly merits more attention than it has thus far received in the applied disciplines. This discussion paper suggests that well-understood pragmatism could indeed furnish a key element of a future philosophy for professionals, but that to this end a few methodological shortcomings need to be overcome. The aim is to develop pragmatist thought into a framework of *critical pragmatism.* An earlier version of these reflections (Ulrich, 2007d) addressed specifically the field of operations research (OR), as they were formulated in response to a review of the history and ideas of pragmatism as seen from an OR professional's perspective (Ormerod, 2006a). The present, revised version now addresses a wider range of professionals and considers a broader range of literature. It also includes some responses to Ormerod's (2007) much appreciated reply to my original comments.

Note concerning references: For readers who would like to refer to the original version of this discussion paper, whether for direct comparison or citation, the following text includes hints at the corresponding original pagination as follows**:** [| pp.]. For example, [|1110] means that p. 1110 begins here. (Obviously, since the present text is longer than the earlier one, there are comparatively few such references, and the pages may look long.) Additionally or alternatively, it is also possible to give accurate page references to the present version, by referring to the pagination of the PDF file (see the link in the upper right-hand column).

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Introduction: A Brief Glance Back

Finding out what pragmatism means – to practitioners [| 1109] Reading Ormerod's (2006a) review of the history and ideas of pragmatism felt a bit like reading the kind of paper I had always wanted to write but never dared

Note: This is a revised postpublication version of a "Viewpoint" discussion paper first published in the *Journal of the Operational Society 58*(8), 2007, pp. 1109-1113. The revision extends the scope from operational research to other fields of professional practice. It continues the open-ended series of "Reflections on Critical Pragmatism" initiated with "A plea for critical pragmatism" in the *Bimonthly* of September-October 2006 (six essays thus far).

to. Skilfully he has woven together standard accounts of pragmatism and pragmatist thinkers offered by philosophical reference books, historical accounts such as those by Kuklick (2003) and Menand (2001), and his own reading of some of the original writings, notably James (1907) and Dewey (1938). This is a demanding task because the reference books are often rather unhelpful, being too cursory, whereas the historical accounts, due to their biographical rather than systematic orientation and their detailed character (often causing *an embarras de richesse*), tend to be rather difficult to overview. The result took me on a journey back to some of my academic roots in the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism, which had influenced me particularly through some of the writings of Charles S. Peirce (1878) and William James (1907) and indirectly also through the influence of Peirce on Apel (1972, 1980, 1981) and Habermas (1971, 1990, 1993) and that of James and Dewey on Churchman (1948, 1979; Churchman's teacher Edgar A. Singer was a student of William James).

Although I have always remained aware of the influence of the American pragmatists, I have never found it easy to sum up their ideas in short form. Whenever I tried (as for instance in Ulrich, 2001, pp. 8-15 and in Ulrich, 2006a, pp. 57-73), I found myself writing about my own ideas on reflective research and practice rather than about theirs! Something similar happened to me when I was reading Ormerod's account of the history and ideas of pragmatism; I could not help reading it in the light of my past and current efforts, ever since *Critical Heuristics* (Ulrich, 1983), to help develop what I tentatively call a *philosophy for professionals,* that is, a framework for reflective practice of applied research and professional intervention that would bring together pragmatic and critical ideas in systematically practicable ways.

With a view to this overarching aim of a pragmatist framework with a critical intent, it will help to be clear about what is meant by "pragmatism." As the British pragmatist philosopher F.C.S. Schiller (1907, cited in Haack, 1996, p. 644) once observed, there are probably as many pragmatisms as pragmatists. Indeed**:** *what pragmatism means* depends – in the true spirit of pragmatism – on *what we make of it,* that is, on the way we allow it to change us and to make a difference to our practice as researchers and professionals.

To me, the promise of pragmatist thinking consists in what I see as its potential for a philosophical and methodological grounding of reflective research and practice (a grounding that is largely missing today), whereby "reflective" means as much as "(self-) critical," "emancipatory," and "ethically alert." Thus seen, Ormerod's or anyone's account of what pragmatism "is" or has been cannot dispense us from finding out for ourselves what pragmatism means. Ormerod does an admirable job of providing a starting-point though, from which we can begin to delve into some of the literature he surveys and engage in conversation with the founding fathers of pragmatism, with a view not so much to finding out what pragmatism "is" but rather, how it might change us as practicing researchers and professionals.

The Present State of Pragmatism

The affinity of pragmatism to current practice Beyond summarizing the idea history of pragmatism, Ormerod's review offers a short but useful characterization of the ways in which *pragmatist philosophy mirrors many essential aspects of contemporary professional practice,* as exemplified by OR practice. Among other aspects he mentions, pragmatism "fits what we do" and "how practitioners behave in practice"; it supports an empirical and experiential approach; it emphasizes the uncertainty and instability of even the most scientific findings; it recognizes the individual and socio-psychological nature of meaning; and it sees inquiry as a fundamentally social and discursive process (p. 905f).

Such affinities between what professionals do and what philosophical pragmatism expects them to do are the more remarkable as a majority of professionals today – particularly in fields of professional practice that rely heavily on the applied sciences – still prefer to understand their efforts in terms of conventional science-theory and particularly of Popper's (1959) "critical rationalism" (cf. Ulrich, 2006c for critical discussion) rather than in terms of pragmatist philosophy. The latter remains comparatively unknown and is often held in low esteem. The case of OR is not untypical of the situation in many professional fields, in that a majority of theoreticians of OR practice (Ormerod, p. 905, mentions Jackson, 1999, and Mingers, 2000) still

tend to emphasize the primacy of theory (e.g., theories of modeling or of methodology choice) as a basis for sound practice, while rather ignoring or downplaying the role of pragmatic thought and related skills. Apart from not doing justice to what pragmatist philosophy has to offer, this wide-spread focus on scientific theory and methods also contrasts conspicuously with the recognition, widely shared at latest since the demystifying writings of Polanyi (1958, 1966), Mintzberg (1973, 2004), and Schön (1983, 1987), of the importance of "soft," intuitive and artistic skills in professional practice, regardless of how important scientific and technical skills may be in a specific field of practice considered.

The prevalent, *low esteem for pragmatist philosophy* may be due in part to a trivial misunderstanding, if not a mere prejudgment, in that pragmatist philosophy is still widely (but inadequately) equated with a kind of theory-free, common-sense pragmatism in an everyday, instrumental or utilitarian (if not opportunist) sense of the word *pragmatic* as "what serves the purpose." However, anyone who bothers to read the pragmatist philosophers will quickly discover that pragmatism, far from exhausting itself in a stance of unreflecting commonsensism and utilitarism, is in fact a rich source for reflection on practice, which is exactly what well-understood theory (or philosophy) of practice should achieve. Ormerod's review certainly avoids this kind of common misunderstanding; but I fear that the way in which he emphasizes the merits of pragmatism as an approach that "fits what we do and how practitioners behave in practice" will do little to overcome this misconception. And of course, the question remains: "So what?" [|1110]

The difference that pragmatism might make for practice I would suggest that the merits of pragmatist philosophy, beyond its being close to professional practice in a descriptive sense of "fitting" or mirroring what those engaged in it actually do, also lie in its potential for *changing* the way professionals understand their role ("what we do") and how they use their expertise ("behave in practice"). Why bother and read the pragmatist philosophers, one might wonder, if we do not expect them to make a significant difference towards *better* professionalism? In so far, it is not sufficient to note the affinity of standard professional practice with

pragmatist thinking, useful as it may be for purposes of explaining, teaching, and evaluating practice (and I share the latter point with Ormerod, 2007, p. 1113); we also need to ask what kind of *methodological difference* pragmatism might make so as to help professionals meet the challenges of their practice. I suggest that these challenges amount to a challenge to pragmatism itself.

Challenges to Pragmatism: Methodological Deficits to Overcome

Recognizing a basic lack of rigor With the above question in mind, I fear that a more serious reason than the mentioned, trivial misunderstanding is responsible for the low status of pragmatist philosophy in the applied disciplines. I fear its deeper reason lies in what I would diagnose as a certain methodological weakness of pragmatism when it comes to translating its ideas into rigorous practices of research and professional intervention. Despite many fundamentally correct ideas that were ahead of their time and continue to be surprisingly modern – in particular, American pragmatism was the first philosophy of science that cut across the empiricist/rationalist divide and uncovered the discursive and societal character of knowledge – the pragmatist tradition has not been particularly successful in advancing methodological principles and corresponding conceptual frameworks for the applied disciplines.

In the old struggle between relevance and rigor, pragmatist philosophy is *potentially* strong in making a difference that matters, but *actually* weak in securing methodological rigor (which in my understanding includes the task of securing reflective practice). This observation begins with Peirce's (1878) rather obscure introduction of the pragmatic maxim as a rule of meaning clarification which, if taken seriously, has difficult *holistic* implications and thus does not lend itself to rigorous practice; it continues with James' (1907) extension of the pragmatic maxim to a theory of truth which, because it ultimately appeals to subjective acts of belief, has strong *relativistic* implications; and it ends, in the recent history of OR and systems methodologies, with Churchman's (1979) *dialectical* turn of pragmatism, which despite its insightful nature offers little methodological guidance to professionals and decision-makers and accordingly has had limited appeal for

them.

Two counterexamples, but ... As always, to be sure, partial exceptions confirm the rule. I certainly agree with Ormerod (2007, p. 1114f) that we owe the originators of pragmatism some useful contributions to professional practice. This is indeed why over time I have come to increasingly appreciate the pragmatic roots of my work, and the potential they offer for developing it. Ormerod mentions the application of pragmatic thought to legal practice by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1881, as reported in Menand, 2001) and its application to the theory of inquiry by John Dewey (1938). Two famous examples of specific guidelines they developed must suffice to make the point here.

Holmes, as an example of his *legal pragmatism,* stated the rule that

> *General principles do not decide concrete cases.* (Supreme Court Case Lochner vs. New York, 1905, cited in Menand, 2001, p. 342, my italics).

Due to their abstract nature, general principles (think, e.g., of the basic legal principle of liability) lend themselves to different and even contradictory interpretation as to what they mean in concrete cases. It is the *specific* contextual circumstances or "facts" which therefore must make the crucial difference and tell us what *general* ideas and principles mean, although the latter can carry us a far way towards assessing these circumstances carefully.

As to Dewey, his *epistemological pragmatism* comes to the fore in his proposition that

> All logical forms (with their characteristic properties) are concerned with the *control of inquiry so that it may yield warranted assertions.* (1938, p. 3f, my italics).

That is, the well-understood subject-matter of logic is *warranted assertibility* of substantial propositions or inferences, whereby "warranted assertibility" characterizes a claim to truth or knowledge that results from a discursive, open-ended and (over time) self-correcting process of inquiry rather than from spontaneous insight or merely analytical reasoning; from a process, that is, which involves both observation and inference and is buttressed by argumentation. "In all our knowledge, there is an inferential element.… The inferred material has to be checked and tested." (Dewey, 1941, p. 173) As

Dewey further explains**:**

> The means of testing … are the data provided by observation – and *only* by observation. Moreover, as is stated frequently in my *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry,* it is necessary that data (provided by observation) be *new,* or different from those which first suggested the inferential element, if they are to have any value with respect to attaining knowledge. It is important that they be had under as many different conditions as possible so that data due to *differential* origins may supplement one another. The necessity of both the distinction and the cooperation of inferential and observational subject-matters is, on my theory, the product of an analysis of scientific inquiry; this necessity is … the heart of my whole theory that knowledge is warranted assertion. (Dewey, 1941, p. 173, all italics original)

I see in these two examples beginnings of what I mean by *critical* pragmatism. There are two basic methodological elements that I associate with critical pragmatism and which I find realized in these examples; first, the idea that sound applied inquiry and reasoning require us to appreciate the tension between contextual and general aspects of the situation or issue at hand; and second, the idea that sound inquiry and judgment both depend on discursive processes that give a chance to multiple perspectives and allow their substantial unfolding. Such an account of the logic of inquiry has lost nothing of its relevance, although the reader will note that there is no stopping-rule that would make the process of "warranting" an assertion operational.

... the difficulty remains Still, I would maintain that the tradition of pragmatism as a whole, despite such occasional highlights of concise application, has hardly managed to work out and operationalize its essential methodological ideas so that they would be sufficiently accessible to practitioners and to students. Counter to what pragmatist thought is often accused of, its allegedly being too simple and superficial, the core difficulty in its reception history until today in fact appears to be that the way its originators described it is rather *too sophisticated* and perhaps too philosophical or too differentiated, but hardly too plain or even commonsensical. Whatever the diagnosis – in the end, pragmatically speaking, the issue remains the same**:** there is a lack of operational concepts and guidelines, checklists, and similar tools that could systematically orient and monitor reflective practice and also would help to teach it to students and practitioners.

Overcoming ethical relativism On top of the issue of methodological rigor – and in view of pragmatism's recognition of the primacy of practice over theory perhaps even more significant – I would diagnose a second major weakness: without a careful *ethical grounding,* pragmatic practice risks boiling down to an unreflecting ethical relativism or at least will find it difficult to avoid the suspicion of mere opportunism and utilitarianism. Yet I observe that the pragmatist tradition of philosophy has not been very successful in working out a conception of ethics that would lend itself to systematic use in professional intervention. I do not mean to say that pragmatist philosophy pays little attention to ethics – read James, Dewey, and Churchman! – but only that it has not been able to explain how exactly we can methodologically secure ethical practice, in the sense of dealing systematically with the normative implications and conflicts of "pragmatic" research and practice. To be sure, the pragmatic tradition is not alone in this respect; classical (e.g., Kant, Bentham) as well as contemporary approaches to ethics, notably the neo-contractarian approach of Rawls (1971) and the discourse ethics of Apel (1972, 1980) and Habermas (1990, 1993), experience similar difficulties.

In this situation, we probably need to mobilize all available sources of reflection on "good" practice, including the philosophical tradition of pragmatism. It seems to me pragmatism does indeed lend itself to such reflection, if only we care to articulate and develop its core ideas in accurate methodological terms. I am thinking, for example, of the following ideas and aspects of pragmatism that I am going to highlight briefly: its potential for critical use or what I consider to be the "critical kernel of pragmatism"; the untapped methodological potential that I see in the pragmatic maxim for cultivating boundary critique and context awareness; largely unexplored opportunities for bringing together the divergent but in many respects complementary strands of pragmatic thinking in contemporary thought, particularly as embodied in systems thinking on the one hand and in critical social theory on the other; and finally, connected to the last point, the chances I see for bridging the methodological gap between pragmatism and contemporary conceptions of ethics. I can only hint at some of my respective ideas here; however, my regular readers know that they are constant concerns and subjects of discussion throughout my writings.

Tapping the methodological potential of the pragmatic maxim

Uncovering the critical kernel of pragmatism Pragmatism as I understand it contains a much-neglected critical kernel. I would argue that the pragmatic maxim (or pragmatic principle) of Peirce (1878, par. 402), according to which our conception of an object or situation is the sum-total of the practical bearings we conceive it to have, embodies more than a rule for clarifying the *empirical* content of concepts and hypotheses along the lines of (never-ending, comprehensive) inductive reasoning, as Peirce understood it, or of "sweeping in" ever more facts about the real world as Churchman (1982, cf. Ulrich, 2004a) would put it. If we take the pragmatic maxim seriously, it just as well requires us to trace the *normative* content of all our claims to knowledge and understanding, that is, their unavoidable selectivity regarding the "practical bearings" that we consider relevant for judging the object or situation in question.

For all practical purposes, the meaning and scope of valid application of a concept or proposition depend on our boundary judgments as to what "facts" (observations and forecasts) *and* "values" (worldviews, ideals, ends, and norms) are to count as relevant, and these judgments (as the word is meant to suggest) are not given to us by nature or dogma but are a matter of pragmatic selection in the concrete situation. Practice almost by definition – but counter to what pragmatist philosophy appears to presuppose – needs at some point to pass from deliberation to action and thus cannot endlessly consider ever more potentially relevant facts and concerns. Nor is there in a world of complex interdependencies any natural end to the process of unfolding all effective and potential, actual and future, local and universal "practical bearings" of a proposal. *Selectivity, not comprehensiveness,* is the fate of all practice. [|| 1111]

Cultivating boundary critique The conclusion can only be that the usual holistic understanding of the pragmatic maxim is not really helpful. Because comprehensiveness is unachievable, such an understanding does not lend itself to methodological operationalization. A better idea is to understand the pragmatic maxim as a mainly *critical principle,* if not as a critical principle only*;* it can then help us in dealing systematically with the core issue of

selectivity, and in addition it becomes relevant not only as a criterion of *meaning* in empirical science (as Peirce had it) but as well as a principle of critically-normative reflection and argumentation about *validity* claims, whether of an *empirical* (scientific) or a *normative* (ethical) nature. Methodologically speaking, it follows that both in applied science and in applied ethics, we may operationalize the pragmatic maxim as a systematic effort of *boundary critique,* that is, of dealing critically with the boundary judgments that underpin all validity claims, whether people are aware of them or not.

Consequently, boundary critique furnishes the methodological core principle of my work on critical systems heuristics (see Ulrich, e.g., 1983, 1996, 2001, 2004a, and 2006a; the first source for the underlying theory and the others for brief introductions). Without boundary critique, pragmatism remains methodologically arbitrary! No wonder, then, that pragmatist philosophy has not succeeded thus far in securing rigorous practice – rigorous, that is, with respect to both the empirical and normative implications of "what we do and how practitioners behave in practice." This is the *critical turn* of the notion of competent professional practice and research that I propose to associate with the pragmatic maxim (Ulrich, 2001, pp. 11, 14f, 23f; 2006a, pp. 57, 69-71; and 2012, pp. 1313-1318).

The importance of context Thus far, the pragmatic maxim has hardly been used for the benefit of grounding professional practice in a realistic notion of applied science and expertise, no more than in a realistic conception of applied ethics. From what we have said thus far it follows that systematic contextual reflection, and careful restriction of validity claims to the contexts recognized as relevant, is of key importance to this end. That is, boundary critique is essential for applied science no less than for applied ethics. A key aspect of real-world professional intervention is that it always takes place in a specific context of action, so that whatever findings and conclusions we arrive at are basically limited in their meaning and validity to that context. Yet the basic methodological grounds on which we can in principle justify our findings and conclusions are the methods of science and ethics, both of which assume the possibility and desirability of generalization – of empirical observations and hypotheses to theoretical explanations in the case of

empirical science and of normative assumptions and norms of actions to universal moral principles in the case of ethics. Not surprisingly, the concepts of "applied science" and of "applied ethics" both face professional practice with so many difficult methodological issues!

It seems to me that a relevant philosophy for professionals should take this *in-built tension* between the contextualist and the universalist poles of sound practice seriously. It should thus search for ways to mediate between the contextual nature of professional practice and the generalization principle underpinning our contemporary models of applied science (as exemplified by mainstream science-theory and critical rationalism) and ethics (as exemplified by discourse ethics). The good news is, the pragmatic maxim can help us achieve this. As I have argued elsewhere, it embodies both poles of thinking and therefore lends itself to a reformulation that allows its critical use against any one-sided reliance on either contextual or general argumentation (Ulrich, 2006a, p. 70f).

Bringing together the traditions of systems thinking and critique
Another difficulty for the development of pragmatism into a well-defined philosophical framework for professionals may be this. Pragmatist philosophy has unfolded its historic role by influencing many different strands of thinking rather than by becoming a self-contained "school" of reflection on science and ethics. From hermeneutics to critical theory to post-modernism, there is hardly a major contemporary strand of philosophy that it has not influenced. In the history of OR and other applied disciplines, two pragmatic strands of thinking have been particularly relevant in this context, I mean the two traditions of *systems thinking* (James – Singer – Churchman – Ackoff) and of *critical social theory* (Peirce – Apel – Habermas). Both have become influential in many applied disciplines. Both have important roots in American pragmatism but have thus far developed separately, with opposite strengths and weaknesses. While the tradition of systems thinking has long been rather uncritical with respect to the normative implications of systems practice, the tradition of critical social theory has been rather helpless in rendering its critical ideas practicable. It makes sense, therefore, to marry the two traditions. The implication is a critical understanding of the pragmatic maxim as I have suggested it above.

Bridging the methodological gap between pragmatism and ethics If the applied disciplines are to live up to their ambition of promoting "the science of the better" (INFORMS, 2004), it is essential that they integrate their notions of applied science and expertise into a *practicable* ethical framework. This is especially true for "pragmatically" oriented approaches, lest they become prisoners of a merely instrumental and utilitarian concept of rationality and fall victim to a bottomless ethical relativism. My specific suggestion in this regard is that we try to connect pragmatism with discourse ethics, in a way that would embed pragmatic practice in discursive ethical practice and, at the same time, would overcome the impractical nature of discourse ethics that is due to its underpinning ideal model of rational discourse. I have elsewhere (Ulrich, 2006a) given a detailed account of the basic methodological conjectures that might guide such a "pragmatization" (sic!) of discourse ethics and which simultaneously promise an ethical grounding of pragmatic practice – two efforts that I suggest to subsume under the title of *"critical pragmatism."* [| 1112]

Critical pragmatism as I understand it (cf. Ulrich, 2006a-d, 2007a-e) combines classical pragmatist conceptions of inquiry, meaning, and truth with the *critical turn* of our notions of rational discourse and professional competence that is at the heart of my work on critical systems heuristics and boundary critique. I should point out – and I am obliged to Ormerod (2006b) for drawing my attention to the fact – that the term "critical pragmatism" has been used by a few other writers before; in particular, a number of commentators (notably Deegan, 1988) have associated it with the work of the American sociologist and social reformer Jane Addams; Maxcy (1991) has used it to describe his work on educational leadership; Harris (1999) has used it to characterize the work done by the American philosopher Alain Leroy Locke on African culture and on the contribution of blacks to American culture; and Kadlec (2007) – perhaps somewhat unfortunately from the perspective of someone who associates with critical pragmatism the hope of developing American pragmatism beyond its past and present state – has used it to characterize John Dewey's pragmatism, although she concedes that Dewey himself never used the phrase (2007, pp. 4 and 9n). In addition, I find the term in the subtitle of a reader on public policy and planning practice edited by Forester (1993). It thus appears that the term is not entirely

unknown (although rarely used) in the fields of cultural and educational theory as well as planning theory, particularly in conjunction with a radical-reformist stance. Deegan (1988, p. 26), for instance, defines it as "a theory of science that emphasizes the need to apply knowledge to everyday problems based on radical interpretations of liberal and progressive values."

In distinction to such previous uses, I suggest to use the term for a methodological renewal and development of pragmatism, a project that in my view should not depend on any particular ideological or political stance. It would thus stand for a philosophical and practical *research program* – a vision, that is, for a future philosophy of practice – rather than for any individual's past achievements. In any case, as far as my personal involvement is concerned, I do not mean to lay claim to the term "critical pragmatism" but merely suggest to associate it with the mentioned methodological aims and ideas, with a view to developing a "philosophy for professionals" and, related to it, to a philosophical grounding of ethical practice that would overcome the application problems of discourse ethics and other approaches rooted in moral universalism. I hope both practitioners and theorists who share my interest in developing a "philosophy for professionals" will join in and contribute to this undertaking, and will then equally consider themselves as "critical pragmatists."

And last but not least: learning from the applied disciplines I suppose that most applied disciplines have developed their own practical principles and tools that lend themselves to reflective practice and which therefore might also yield useful cornerstones of a critically-pragmatist framework for professional practice. I am thinking, for instance, of the role of the participatory principle in action research; of the use of methodological triangulation in evaluation research; of the tool of stakeholder analysis in strategic management; and of the development of so-called "soft" (problem-structuring) and "critical" (problem-questioning) systems approaches in operational research and other fields of applied systems thinking, and quite generally of discursive methods in many fields of research practice and research education, among them the specific tool of boundary discourse (i.e., discursive boundary critique) worked out in my work on critical systems heuristics (CSH). An obvious way to advance pragmatic philosophy in

matters methodological is thus to "borrow" from these fields some of their methodological core principles and tools, and to review and develop them in the light of pragmatist philosophy (including the above suggestions for critical pragmatism).

Conclusion

Expanding and revising existent philosophical and methodological frameworks is never an easy undertaking. It is a continuous process that must go on along with and be based on both philosophy and practice, whereby the two sides must learn to closely work together. Neurath's (1959) metaphor of ship-at-sea repair is not a bad formula for describing the situation. By contrast, the hope that some grand theory might provide a secure methodological dry dock is probably futile, if not outright dangerous (Ulrich, 2004b, 2006c). Perhaps this is why I always found occasional exchanges with open-minded practitioners of different applied disciplines at least as meaningful for advancing and questioning my philosophical efforts as I found debates with theorists of these disciplines. Conversely, I suspect that thoughtful practitioners may find occasional (if not continuous) philosophical reflection to be just as meaningful for developing their practice as discussions with other practitioners. Meaningful is what can change us; when pragmatist philosophy and professional practice enter in an open and sincere conversation, chances are they will change one another mutually and thus will be most meaningful.

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Picture data Digital photograph taken on 19 April 2008 at 6 p.m. near Koniz (Bern, Switzerland). ISO 100, exposure mode aperture priority, with aperture f/5.6, exposure time 1/400 seconds, and exposure bias 0. Metering mode center-weighted average, contrast soft, saturation high, sharpness soft. Focal

length 42 mm, equivalent to 84 mm with a conventional 35 mm camera (i.e., with a full-format sensor). Original resolution 3648 × 2736 pixels; current resolution 700 x 525 pixels, compressed to 206 KB.

March-April, 2016

Philosophy for professionals: a second spring for pragmatist philosophy?

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