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15.1. Introduction

JOHN DEWEY was born on 20 October 1859 in Burlington, Vermont. He graduated from the University of Vermont and then spent two years as a high school teacher in Oil City, Pennsylvania. He obtained a doctorate in philosophy from Johns Hopkins University where he met and studied with Charles Sanders Peirce. He then taught at the University of Michigan (1884-1894), University of Chicago (1894-1904), and Columbia University (1904-1930).

Dewey was renowned for being one of the most controversial philosophy professors of his generation. He published over 700 articles in 140 journals and wrote approximately 40 books in his lifetime. He wrote extensively on many different subjects including philosophy, psychology, political science, education, aesthetics, and the arts. His pragmatist philosophy was developed over a number of critically acclaimed books, including *Essays in Experimental Logic* (1916/1989), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922/1983), and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938/1991). In psychology, some of Dewey's major writings were *Psychology* (1887), where he attempted a synthesis between idealism and experimental science, and *The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology* (1896), where he argued against the traditional stimulus-response understanding of the reflex arc, suggesting that one's response depends on how the situation is understood in light of previous experiences. His writings on education include *Democracy and Education* (1916/1980), *The School and Society* (1899), and *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), which accentuated the interests of the child and the use of the classroom to cultivate the interaction between thought and experience. In politics, he wrote *Freedom and Culture* (1939), which looked at the roots of fascism. He published *A Common Faith* (1934) in aesthetics and *Art as Experience* (1934/1987) in art.

Along with Peirce and James, Dewey has been credited as one of the most prominent classic pragmatist thinkers and pioneers. Dewey first became interested in the work of William James in the 1890s whilst he was trying to free himself from the restraints of Hegelian influences. He was also inspired by Charles Peirce's work. Drawing on these two thinkers, Dewey started defining his own theory of pragmatism, which took a distinguishable shape and is often referred to as 'instrumentalism' or 'experimentalism'.

15.2 Dewey's Pragmatism: The Main Tenets

The pragmatist thinkers sought to bring about a sea change with their rejection of Cartesian dualism (Bernstein, 2010). Peirce's saying that 'knowledge is habit' encapsulates this pragmatic stance (Kilpinen, 2009). James also challenged the subject-object or consciousness-content distinction in his essay 'Does "Consciousness" Exist?' (James, 1904). Subsequently, Dewey clarified that such a dualistic scheme is not the inevitable or necessary point of departure for all philosophy (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). He said: 'What have been completely divided in philosophical discourse into man and world, inner and outer, self and not-self, subject and object, individual and social, private and public, etc., are in actuality parties in life- transactions' (Dewey and Bentley, 1949/1989: 248).

Pragmatist thinking also implies a processual orientation. Dewey saw reality as emergent and processual rather than static and formed by ready-made elements. For him, the world exhibits: 'an impressive and irresistible mixture of sufficiencies, tight completeness, order, recurrences which make possible prediction and control, and singularities, ambiguities, uncertain possibilities, processes going on to consequences yet indeterminate' (Dewey, 1925/1981: 47).

These two dimensions are configured in the central tenets of Dewey's philosophy, as presented in what follows.

15.2.1 Experience and the Transactional Relationship between Man and the Environment

Dewey's notion of experience is at the core of his philosophy (Elkjaer, 2004). He developed this notion throughout his long life (Dewey, 1917/2000, 1925/1981, 1934/1987, 1938/1988). In Dewey's view, experience should not be mistaken with the everyday understanding of the notion, i.e. as an inner personal reservoir of earlier experiences (Meittinen, 2000). It is not merely the sense perceptions of passive spectators looking at the world, the 'veil that shuts man off from nature', but rather the 'dynamic participation, the continuing process of an organism's adjustment not simply to environing conditions but within a biological (physical) and cultural environment' (Dewey, 1925/1981: 9). Dewey (1916/1980: 146) stated that: 'when we experience something, we act upon it, we do something with it: and then we suffer and undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination.' The value of experience results from the connection of these two sides. Experience occurs continuously because the interaction man and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living (Dewey, 1934/1987).

Thus, the relationship between man and the environment is not dualist but transactional. (Dewey 1934/1987) believed that man does not live in an environment: he lives by means of an environment. Dewey (1905/1983: 158) claimed that 'things-anything, everything, in the ordinary or non-technical use of the term thing"- are what they are experienced as'. Dewey's transactional approach implies that reality only reveals itself as a result of the activities - of the 'doings' - of the organism (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). The process of living is enacted by both the environment and the organism, because they are integrated (Dewey, 1938/1991). An animal does not have the same environment as a plant, and the environment of any fish differs from that of a bird. The difference does not only lie in the fact that a fish lives in the water and a bird in the air, it also resides in the special way in which water and air enter and are made to enter into their respective activities (Dewey,1938/1991). This means that everyone's experience is equally real; their accounts turn out to be different only because they bring with them to the transaction different standpoints, backgrounds, histories, and purposes and intentions (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

15.2.2 Continuity and Habit

The principle of continuity rests upon the notion of habit. Dewey, Peirce, and James share similar conceptions of habit (Kilpinen, 2009). Habits, for them, are not only patterns of action but should be understood as predispositions to act. 'The essence of habits is an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response, not particular acts ... Habit means special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli, standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts' (Dewey, 1922/1983: 32). All three authors emphasized mental and mechanic dimensions of habit.

The pragmatist position is that intentionality (or rationality) without habituality is empty, whereas habituality without intentionality and rationality of course is blind (Kilpinen, 2009). 'Habits of mind' is an expression favoured by both Peirce and Dewey, while James mentioned 'the principle of parsimony in consciousness' (1950/1890: 2-497) to point out that 'the more of the details of our daily life we can hand over to the effortless custody of automatism, the more our higher powers will be set free for their own proper work' (1950/1890: 1.22). The notion of habit so understood goes deeper than the ordinary conception of a habit as a more or less fixed way of doing things. 'It covers the formation of attitudes, which are emotional and intellectual; it covers our basic sensitivities and ways of meeting and responding to all the conditions that we meet in living' (Dewey, 1938/1988: 19).

From this point of view, the principle of continuity means that every experience takes up something from previous experience and also provides man with possibilities to cope to some extent with what comes after (Dewey, 1938/1988). As man passes from one experience to another, he does not move to another world, but to a different part or aspect of the same world. What he has learned in earlier experiences becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively in the future. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue (Dewey, 1938/1988).

15.2.3 Situation

Any normal experience, according to Dewey, is an interplay of two conditions: objective and internal conditions. Taken together, in their interaction, they form what we call a situation. It denotes the entire and unique character of all conditions under which and within which a human acts at a given time. The phrase 'objective conditions' covers what is done and the way in which it is done. For example, a situation includes not only the words but the tone of voice in which they are spoken, the materials with which an individual interacts such as equipment, books, apparatus, and toys, and importantly, the total social set-up of the situation (Dewey, 1938/1988). An individual's life is composed of a sequence of situations, in which any given situation is supplied with the consequences of past experience and loaded with new possibilities.

There are, for Dewey, at least four types of situations (Dewey, 1938/1991; Kennedy, 1959). First, there are situations in which there is a smooth, ongoing routine of activity. Man and the environment are in tune. This type of situation can be called 'determinate'. Second, when this harmony is disrupted, things are unsettled, and man is disoriented and confused; here, another type of situation ensues. The situation now is 'indeterminate'. A situation is indeterminate with respect to its issue. It may be confused with respect to the anticipated outcome; it may be obscure about what movement is needed to reach final consequences, it may be conflicting due to discordant responses being evoked. Third, if the indeterminate situation gives way to an attitude of doubt, the situation becomes 'problematic'. Fourth, if the confusion disappears and the doubt is resolved as a result of a problem-solving activity, the situation then becomes 'determinate'. A new equilibrium has been achieved, but this determinate situation is not the original one.

Man is now a different being within the environment, which has also been changed to some extent due to his problem-solving activity.

15.2.4 Inquiry

Dewey explored in detail a particular type of experiencing called inquiry. The transformation of an indeterminate situation into a determinate one happens in the process of inquiry.

Inquiry is fuelled by the existence of doubt. Doubt arises when our normal ways of doing things are disrupted because of surprises or unusual events that are difficult to comprehend and deal with. Dewey (1938/1991) referred to such disruptions as indeterminate situations in which habits and routines are not enough to explain what is going on and to offer a way out. The indeterminate situation is itself not cognitive. It is simply a normal event. It is only when such a situation is identified as a problematic situation that inquiry begins and experience turns into the cognitive mode. As Dewey put it, 'to see that a situation requires inquiry is the initial step in inquiry' (1938/1991: m). It is important to note that what is problematic is not outside and independent of the individual. What is clear or confusing for one person is not necessarily the same for another person. All depends upon the organism-environment transactional relationship (Dewey, 1938/1991).

Qualification of a situation as problematic does not carry inquiry far. It is just an initial step in the institution of a problem; finding out what the problems are is to be well along in inquiry (Dewey, 1938/1991). The first step toward finding out what actually is problematic about the indeterminate situation involves the identification of the constituents of the indeterminate situation. 'They are the conditions that must be reckoned with or taken account of in any relevant solution that is proposed' (Dewey, 1938/1991: 113). This process results in a proposal for action: the hypothesis which articulates a relation between actions and consequences on the basis of a hypothetical interpretation of what is problematic about the indeterminate situation. Whether the suggested hypothesis corresponds with the actual connections can only be found out by means of acting out with the suggested line of action. If the action indeed has the expected result, a determinate situation has been created and the process of inquiry comes to an end (Dewey, 1938/1991).

It should be noted that there is no absolute end to inquiry. Inquiry does not remove doubt by returning to a prior equilibrium, but by the transformation of the current situation into a new one. It institutes new enviroing conditions that occasion new problems. There is no final settlement, because every settlement introduces the conditions of some degree of a new unsettling (Dewey, 1938/1991). As special problems are resolved, new ones tend to emerge, and the cycle repeats itself (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

15.3 DEWEY'S PRAGMATISM AND ORGANIZATION STUDIES

Dewey's philosophy has influenced different areas of organization studies. Much of what counts as knowledge, knowledge generated by academic research, learning and organizational learning, research methods, and organizational research methods have been influenced by Dewey's work.

15.3.1 Knowledge

One can distinguish two major perspectives about knowledge in the literature (Chiva and Alegre, 2005; Vera and Crossan, 2003). From one perspective (cf. Grant, 1996; Nelson and Winter, 1982; Nonaka, 1994), knowledge is a collection of representations of reality; it exists prior to and independently from the knowing subject. It is possible to codify, store, and transmit knowledge between people, just like a commodity. This perspective posits that knowledge is universal and, hence, two cognitive systems should come up with the same representation of the same objects or

situations. From the other perspective, knowledge is not in the head, nor does it exist as a commodity; it is socially constructed (cf. Spender, 1996), yet it is not seen as a static map of reality.

Practice articulates knowledge in and about organizing as practical accomplishment, rather than as a transcendental account of decontextualized reality. This perspective understands knowledge as a process, referring to it as knowing (Cook and Brown, 1999; Gherardi, 2000).

Dewey questioned the opposition between contextually constructed knowledge and universal knowledge. Being strongly influenced by James, who also sought to bridge the divide between the epistemological atomism of the empiricists and the 'block universe' monism of the idealists (Bernstein, 2010), Dewey did not deny the importance of theorizing but equally he did not believe in generating universal understandings (1938/1991). Dewey acknowledged the context-dependent and personal nature of knowledge to the extent that he defined knowledge as being the outcome of inquiry, located in the transaction between man and the environment (Dewey, 1938/1991).

Knowledge, in this account, is always contextual, because it is always related to the specific inquiry in which it was achieved. On the other hand, there is also generalized knowledge, such as the kind of knowledge that explains why turning a handle causes the door to open (Polkinghorne, 2000). It is the convergent and cumulative effect of continued inquiry that defines knowledge in its general meaning. However, for him theory does not offer us a factual way of looking at the world. Theory is simply another account of the world. For these reasons, Dewey preferred to use the expression warranted assertion to denote the conceptual outcome of inquiry, rather than knowledge (Biesta and Burbules, 2003).

Rejecting the dualism of constructed knowledge and universal knowledge, Dewey conceived of knowledge not as an ensemble of absolute truths and certainties but as a series of practical acts judged by their consequences. It is not permanent and immutable. It is not a description or photograph of an external reality, independent of who and what one is as a person (Fenstermacher and Sanger, 1998). Just like in science, the question of the advance of knowledge is the question of what to do (what experiments to perform), so the problem of practice is what we need to know, how to obtain that knowledge, and how to apply it. Dewey argued that it is an illusion to imagine that our thoughts are purely theoretical for we must always consider consequences, which hang upon our thoughts. Otherwise, there is no point in thinking. The ultimate ground for the quest of cognitive certainty is the need for practical certainty in the results of action. Some scientists may readily persuade themselves that they are devoted to intellectual certainty for its own sake. However, according to Dewey, they want this certainty because of its bearings on safeguarding what they desire and esteem.

15.3.2 Knowledge Generated by Academic Research

'There has been a controversy regarding the practical utility of academic research, which is characterized by the opposition between 'relevance' and 'rigor' or the academic-practitioner gap (Araiu and Salipante, 2003; Kelemen and Bansal, 2002).

'The topic has been the subject of a number of special issues in academic journals and the focus of three presidential addresses at the annual meetings [the Academy of Management (Hitt, 1998; Huff, 2000; Mowday, 1997)]. Knowledge generation and testing by academics and practitioners have

canonically been seen as, separate endeavours, despite the claim that academic knowledge often arises from the study of real-life organizational problems and issues (Jarzabkow K, et al., 2010) . Academic are usually concerned with the issue of methodological rigour. It involves the quest for universal laws and principles describing the nature of things by relying on sophisticated data collection and analysis methods (Gulati, 2007). Relevance, on the other hand, is the practitioners' primary interest. Academic knowledge becomes relevant for them when it is context-specific, providing concrete recommendations for action or plans of action (Palmer et al., 2009).

Dewey, however, argued against the distinction between relevant and rigorous academic knowledge (Dewey, 1916/19 80). He used the criterion of usefulness as an alternative to rigour and relevance. Dewey would see organization studies as a vehicle to help people lead better lives. It would be characterized by a focus on the practical relevance of research as well as a desire to search for novel and innovative approaches that might help serve human purposes (Wicks and Freeman, 1998).

First, the chief value of theory for Dewey is that it can be a useful organizing device to help solve real-world problems. A pragmatist researcher is interested in knowing what difference a given knowledge will have in practice. The practicality of knowledge is an important criterion to differentiate between meaningful and non-meaningful knowledge (Dewey, 1931/1984). From this it follows that theories should be judged by their usefulness in solving problems. Dewey argued for a shift from 'knowing as an aesthetic enjoyment of the properties of nature as a world of divine art, to knowing as a means of secular control- this is a method of purposefully introducing changes which will alter the direction of the course of events' (Dewey, 1929/1984: 81). Also, for Dewey (1916/1980) the reference of knowledge is future or prospective, although its content is based on what has happened and what is finished. Knowledge has to furnish the means of understanding or give meaning to what is still going on and what is to be done.

Second, for Dewey, academic knowledge does not involve the quest for universal laws and principles of organizational behaviour. Using pragmatic logic, one would not expect a unifying theory. But Dewey argued that knowledge must be credible and reliable. This does not mean that one has to systematically collect empirical data and use multivariate statistical techniques in analysis. Dewey (1938/1991) believed that to ensure the reliability and credibility of knowledge, a philosophical theory of knowledge must not only maintain, a reasonable degree of internal consistency but must respect some methods by which beliefs about the world are reached. Such methods must abandon the traditional separation of knowledge and action and instead install action at the heart of knowledge (Dewey, 1929/1984). Such a view requires constant and effective interaction of knowledge and action. Action, when directed by knowledge, is method and means, not an end.

15.3.3 Learning

Learning has been traditionally conceptualized as either the acquisition of a piece of knowledge or the development of situated identities based on participating in a community of practice. Seen this way, learning is either a way of knowing the world or a way of being in the world. Dewey proposed a different view. For Dewey, learning is inherent in the process of inquiry. Dewey coined the concept of inquiry to refer to the actual way in which one has experiences and becomes knowledgeable.

Dewey believed that background knowledge functions below the level of consciousness and language (Polkinghorne, 2000). Background knowledge is our practical or know-how knowledge,

which enables us to perform most of life's tasks without reflecting on how to do them, to know how and have the competence to cope in most situations without having to consciously think about what to do. This knowledge usually functions tacitly in the background and out of conscious awareness.

Dewey distinguished between this everyday, practical knowing-how and theoretical knowing-that-and-why, as illustrated in his statement that:

We walk and read aloud, we get off and on streetcars, we dress and undress, and do a thousand useful acts without thinking of them. We know something, namely, how to do them ... If we choose to call [this] knowledge ... then other things also called knowledge, knowledge of and about things, knowledge that things are thus and so, knowledge that involves reflection and conscious depreciation remains of the different sort. (1922/1983: 124)

Although the background knowledge usually functions smoothly and without deliberation to complete our daily tasks, there are times when it is unsuccessful. Dewey (1922/1983: 125) wrote: 'it is a commonplace that the more ... efficient a habit the more unconsciously it operates. Only a hitch in its workings occasions emotion and provokes thought: When a breakdown occurs in the functioning of the background, we move from our practical mode of engagement with the world to a mode of deliberation or reflection and learn to enlarge or deepen our practical know-how and background knowledge. Dewey stated: 'Knowledge arises because of the appearance of incompatible factors within the empirical situation' (Dewey, 1916/1989: 7).

Moreover, we need overt action to determine the worth and validity of our reflective considerations. Otherwise, we have, at most, a hypothesis about the problem and a hypothesis about its possible solution. This means that learning is the combination of reflection and action (Dewey, 1939/1991). Dewey's position is neither an anti-intellectual praise of action, nor an elevation of praxis over knowledge, but rather an affirmation of the inseparability of thought and action and an acknowledgement of the role of consequences in reflective deliberation. Ideas are neither copies of the world, nor representations linked to one another, but rather ingredients for rule and plans of action. From this it also follows that learning is not something that takes place inside the human mind (Biesta and Burbules, 2003), which is why Dewey discusses learning by using the term 'knowing', which 'consists of operations that give experienced objects a form in which the relations, upon which the onward course of events depends are securely experienced' (Dewey, 1929/1984: 235).

15.3.4 Organizational Learning

According to Elkjaer (2004), there are two metaphors for organizational learning: acquisition and participation. The former sees individual learning as a model for organizational learning (cf. Cyert and March, 1963; Levitt and March, 1988) or as individual learning in an organizational context (cf. March and Olsen, 1975; Shrivastava, 1983). Organizational learning is perceived as the accumulation of individual acquisition of relevant knowledge (Huysman, 1999). The latter implies that individuals are social beings who together construct an understanding of what they have around them, and learn from social interaction within social systems such as organizations (Gherardi et al., 1998). According to this view, organizational learning becomes a cultural process (Cook and Yanow, 1996) and a social construction (Brown and Duguid, 1991) within communities of practice. These two metaphors correspond to the two views of knowledge as independent object and contextual process

as presented earlier. Elkjaer (2004) proposed a third way of organizational learning, which combines both the acquisition and participation metaphors for learning, by relying on the pragmatist philosophy of Dewey.

We share Elkjaer's view and argue that Dewey's notion of a community of inquiry can serve as a transcending concept of organizational learning. By applying his notion of a community of inquiry to public administration, Shields (2003) suggested that it is the uncertainty of practice that triggers the need for inquiry. But there are no universal standards by which one could judge the outcome of inquiry: it is the actual community being affected and affecting the inquiry that will decide what 'counts' as useful.

According to Dewey, focusing on a problematic situation is essential for it helps a community to form around the issue requiring resolution. Members of a community of inquiry must bring a scientific attitude to the problematic situation, but this attitude does not only refer to science but also to common sense and practical intelligence.

Finally and most crucially, communities of inquiry must be democratic. They must take into account values and ideals such as freedom, equality, and efficiency in pursuing their goals and objectives (Evans, 2000). The community of inquiry is a powerful concept, although not without its shortcomings, that sees truth and knowledge as social phenomena, marked by contextual contingency (Shields, 2003).

15.3.5 Research Methods: Experimentalism

As mentioned previously, there has been a heated debate in organization studies about whether one could bridge academic rigour and practical relevance (Aram and Salipante, 2003; Gulati, 2007). The quest for rigour tends to favour sophisticated data collection and analysis methods (Gulati, 2007) and include quantitative measures with multivariate statistical techniques. The relevance perspective requires context-specific and problem-focused investigations that make practitioners' interest the focal point of inquiry. Action research (Susman and Evered, 1978) and Mode 2 of knowledge production (Gibbons et al., 1994; Tranfield and Starkey, 1998) are examples of this approach.

Dewey's pragmatist experimentalism differs from these two approaches in that it provides a perspective that is new not only in detail but also in kind (Dewey, 1941). Here we would focus on an entirely different question: 'how the world works' (Watson, 2011). The guiding principle is that truth is not to do with getting a correct representation of reality but is an expression of an interest of the power to act in relation to an environment (Joas, 1993). Dewey preferred to characterize his philosophy as experimentalism or instrumentalism, but gradually pragmatism was used as a convenient label to refer to a group of thinkers, including Peirce, James, and Dewey (Bernstein, 2010). Experimentalism seeks both creation of generalized knowledge and testing in actual context; it fuses practices arising from empirical situations and those of academic pursuits.

Instead of accepting this world as providing the objects of knowledge, scientific inquiry treats it as offering the materials of problems (Dewey, 1938/1991). It is the day-to-day richness of reality and its inbuilt ambiguities that triggers the need for scientific inquiry (West, 1989). The first step of an experimental research, then, is to localize the problems that are driven by the environment

experienced in our everyday life (Dewey, 1938/1991). The researcher executes certain experiments- which are operations of doing and making-that 'modify antecedent given existential conditions so that the results of the transformation are facts which are relevant in solution of a given problem' (Dewey, 1938/1991: 498). This experimental strategy is to clarify the problem, as well as observe and find solutions. In other words, one should develop hypotheses on the problem and its solution, execute the suggested actions, reflect on the results, draw conclusions, continue the cycle if the problem remains, and retain an open attitude towards unforeseen ideas (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Dewey suggests: 'the social scientist should conduct experimental research not as laboratory experiments but as reactions, influences, changes-on the process and from within the process' (Dewey, 1938/1991: 180, emphasis added).

Moreover, methods and products must be traced back to their origin in primary experience: the researcher needs to state when and where and why his actions took place, the needs and problems out of which they arise, and the conclusions must be brought back to the ordinary experience for verification (Dewey, 1917/2000).

An important element in Dewey's experimental methodology is democracy. In Dewey's ideal, experimental inquiry and democratic behaviour become fused (Gouinlock, 1990). This means a willingness to question, investigate, and learn, a determination to search for clarity in discourse and evidence in argument. There is also a readiness to hear and respect the views of others, to consider alternatives thoroughly and impartially, and to communicate in a like manner in return. The blind following of custom, authority, and impulse is not allowed.

Moreover, no claims for universality can be made (Aram and Salipante, 2003). All conclusions of inquiries, or knowledge, are continually renewed. They serve as inputs for future inquiries to generate newer knowledge. It can be seen that Dewey does not speak much about concepts in inquiry process. He often uses the terms of hypothesis, working hypothesis, and guiding idea instead of concept to stress that concepts are always tentative and have the nature of hypotheses (Miettinen, 2000). He said: 'The recorded scientific result is in effect a designation of a method to be followed and a prediction of what will be found when specified observations are set on foot' (Dewey, 1925/2000: 36).

Finally, in experimental methodology, scholars need to consider validity as utilization (Aram and Salipante, 2003). As the value of the constructed knowledge lies in its applicability, the test is the functionality, the instrumental use of what results from the experimental process.

15.3.6 Researching Organizations and Management

For Dewey and his fellow pragmatists, science is distinguished from all other methods of inquiry by its cooperative or public character (Shields, 2003). Dewey's work conceptualizes further the scientific method by suggesting that it is ultimately a technique for turning doubt into a resource to help pursue inquiry (Dewey, 1929/1984). Dewey applauded science for offering methods for solving problems and acquiring information about how the world works, but science was not regarded as the ultimate or the only way to know the world. According to Dewey, there may be other, equally valid, means of experience (such as common sense or art) and the activity of knowing through them could also enrich human understanding (Shields, 2003). While the universal quest for certainty is impossible and even destructive, the scientific method allows one to reach relatively settled mini-

truths that speak to particular situations. Though neither Peirce nor Dewey privileged science, they both saw it as the most successful intellectual enterprise that could help bring individual situations together. The scientific model of inquiry upheld by the pragmatists sees knowledge as inextricably linked with experience and, as such, open to fallibilism and criticism.

The pragmatist's interest in what works and how and why it works (or does not) translates into a notion of knowledge, which is anti-foundational, directed towards problem solving using the data and the understandings available at the time. The researcher is permitted (indeed encouraged) to use indeterminate truth values in the attempt to handle situational indeterminacy. The quest for pragmatic certainty sensitizes the researcher to multiple realities, paradox, and ambiguity. Doubt, then, rather than certainty, is central to the methodological process.

According to Dewey's pragmatism, the problem of practice is related centrally to what humans need to know, how to obtain that knowledge, and how to apply it. The practice of engagement/leadership in organizations cannot therefore be separated from the practice of conceptualizing what needs to be done and the consequences this will have upon various individuals and groups. The doings of managers have been the subject of numerous empirical studies going back many decades.

Indeed, it is not just the leaders who have to cope with ambiguity by trying to understand what is going on in organizations: individuals at all levels in the organization have no choice but to make sense of these practical situations in order to ensure they can survive in a complex environment, with a view to achieving their own agendas and needs. It is precisely the ambiguous and progressive nature of experience that allows the possibility of responding to the environment in new ways as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of such responses.

Conceptualizing day-to-day organizational practices in particular ways (rather than others) allows for making choices that help organizational members, be they managers or otherwise, to survive according to their own wishes, understandings, and material resources in a world full of contingencies and unpredictability. To regard organizational practice as separate or removed from the process of conceptualization would deny any possibility for making moral choices and rejecting alternatives that are not deemed suitable by individuals and groups.

What can Dewey teach organization researchers? First of all, management is a problem of life: we all do management in various guises and are subject to it. For Dewey, it is the day-to-day experiential uncertainty that triggers any scientific inquiry. Problems of science are therefore no more than practical problems of life, and science cannot be viewed as superior to practice but as part of it. Secondly, management as practice is never straightforward and unproblematic for it involves groups of people who usually have different agendas and interests. One could easily argue that inquiry into the practice of management by those who contribute to its workings is a prerequisite and a necessity. The methodological steps suggested by Dewey could easily apply to how individuals and groups in organizations approach their day-to-day problems.

In accordance with pragmatism's theoretical cornerstone, the pragmatist researcher is most likely to adopt research practices that will allow them to solve a practical problem in an efficient way. Abstract concepts and theories are translated/understood with respect to practice. Pragmatist theorizing means an acknowledgement of the full dialectics between knowledge and action. Hence, proper knowledge is knowledgeable action and proper action is actionable knowledge. Moreover, the

practicalities of knowledge help establish the difference between meaningful and non-meaningful knowledge.

The pragmatist researcher concentrates on human actions. By studying actions, they can better grasp how individuals and groups render the world meaningful. The sayings and the doings of organizational actors are both regarded as actions and therefore worth studying. Moreover, actions are placed in their practical context in order to avoid atomistic descriptions of individual actions.

The focus is on both successful and unsuccessful actions for learning from failure mistakes are as fruitful as learning from successes. Indeed, much can be learnt from the experiences of the multinational corporations which have failed to tap into the local cultures or from the experiences of senior managers who feel overwhelmed by the multiple, conflicting demands from below and above and go down with stress and burn out (Kunda, 1993). Moreover, the focus on action is not done for its own sake but to ensure that individual and communal problems are solved more effectively and according to the interests of all parties involved. Thus, the task of the pragmatist researcher is not only to outline and challenge the relationship between agency and structure but also provide an account and an explanation of change. Why is it, for example, that some people seek change when others placed in the same context are content to accept existing arrangements (Archer, 2003)? Why is it that the Anglo-Saxon model is at times accepted and at times resisted by the local cultures?

It is worth noting that in recent years a large and varied set of scholars has been investigating 'recurring action patterns' (Cohen, 2007), which have been labelled 'routine' (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Nelson and Winter, 1982), 'practices' (Gherardi, 2000), or 'collective mind' (Weick and Roberts, 1993). One of the root foundations of their work is the notion of routine as developed in Simon's *Administrative Behavior* (1945/1997), who was also influenced by the philosophy of Dewey (Cohen, 2007). However, Simon's conceptualization of routine differs from that of Dewey, although both viewed individuals as having three broad faculties: habitual, cognitive, and emotional. While Simon emphasized cognition at the expense of action, Dewey was most interested in habits because they 'shape and empower the other two faculties' (Cohen, 2007: 775). For him, habits are basic blocks of all our actions, being integral to how we think and act. Effective action, whether at an individual or collective level, is mediated by habits. When we cannot comprehend new situations and engage in emotional and cognitive work to do repair work, the outcome is a vast array of relatively effective and coherent new habits that allow us to function smoothly at an individual and collective level.

To return to Dewey, his focus on experience has the potential to lead to the identification and formulation of connections between individuals and social structures that bridge the Cartesian dualism of individual and society; micro and macro environment. Viewed in this way, pragmatism's concern for experience as a route to knowledge and theorizing strikes one as harbouring considerable promise for management researchers wishing to develop anti-oppressive/ emancipatory forms of research.

15.4 Conclusion

Organization studies have not been impervious to the influence of American pragmatism, although it is reasonable to assert that its influence is rarely acknowledged. As discussed at the outset, our aim in the chapter has been to examine what Dewey's work can offer organization studies. In so doing,

we join a growing number of writers for whom American pragmatism is relevant to organization and management scholars concerned with understanding the dynamic processes and practices of organizational life (Elkjaer and Simpson, 2011). Such discussions are starting to gather momentum (Elkjaer, 2004; Evans, 2000; Jacobs, 2004; Simpson, 2009; Wbetsell and Shields, 2011). As we see it, these contributions add to the vitality of the field of organization studies, which is not always curious and open in its scope, ambition, and concerns.

Ontological debates in organization and management studies have seen an increased polarisation of structuralist positions, where organizational life is seen in terms of objective entities with clear attributes that can be quantified and classified according to some general model, on the one hand, and social constructivist perspectives where ideas and meanings are central to what constitutes organizational reality, on the other hand. According to Thompson (2011), the epistemological response to such ontological divides has been to adopt positions that embrace an objective and evolutionary perspective on organizations while at the same time acknowledging the role played by intersubjective factors. Such mid-range theories (Weick, 1989) build on the idea that general principles and abstractions are necessary, despite the fact that they cannot cope fully with the singularities and complexities of organizational life. As Thompson (2011) argues, mid-range theories also embrace the view that there is a continuum between entity and process form of organizational reality and any ontological movements researchers make on this continuum will represent an epistemological trade-off that could have positive or negative consequences on the theory developed. Ontological shifts are associated with positive theory outcomes while ontological drifts are seen as leading to bad theorizing.

With this in mind, we suggest that Dewey's ideas provide a useful platform for making ontological shifts and preventing the occurrence of ontological drifts. Such drifts refer to reification, a process that happens when a social construct is turned into an objective phenomenon with an undeniable objective existence (e.g. markets, institutions). Ontological drifts can also lead to processification, a situation that may be encountered when the attributes of a process are relegated to an entity. Dewey's pragmatism encourages us to make two types of ontological shifts, which are crucial to developing theories that are both rigorous scientifically and relevant to the communities of practice affected. Abstraction takes place when the complexity of organizational processes is simplified and translated into an isolable entity whose characterization could be used to advantage. Conjunction is the situation where one shifts from an entity-driven view of the world to one that seeks to acknowledge the processual dimensions of a construct. These shifts are at the heart of pragmatist theories, the tension between them encouraging researchers to change mental gear and see the world in its multitude of potentialities, in order to arrive at a workable solution and an acceptable explanation.

It is widely accepted that managers and other practitioners from organizational worlds prefer static constructs, since they are more likely to be expressed in a transparent language and hence are easier to implement. However, the subtleties and complexities present in organizations require a more processual understanding and a treatment that, although it may not yield quick solutions and a la carte management recipes, will lead to real dialogue amongst the affected parties and ultimately to effective problem solving.

Dewey and his fellow pragmatist thinker are not against scientific rigour per se but redefine it in ways that are more relevant to the world of practice. As Schultz (2010) reasoned, scientific rigour, in its most traditional sense, emphasizes standardization, quantitative methods, testing, and generalization and leads to well-crafted studies of minor issues that may not be important for practitioners. The studies, while methodologically complex and cleverly written up, tend to be just some kind of intellectual acrobatics that serves no purpose beyond academia. Academic career are propelled by a drive to discover and institutionalize new concepts in order to achieve recognition from peers, rather than by the wish to engage with significant problems rooted in the practice of day-to-day life.

According to Schultz (2010: 275), 'the virtue of the pragmatist tradition has been its ability to address issues in organizations that matter to people and point to different ways of organizing'. This takes us back to a central question in organization studies: what is a good theory? As suggested earlier, Dewey's way of theorizing looks for the most plausible explanations to a problematic situation by using creativity and insight. Such insight could come from the anomalies present in the real world or from combining theories from different fields to come up with a workable answer to an existing problem.

Creativity could be the result of deductive or inductive logic: what matters then, not least for organization studies scholars, is that the resultant explanation is useful to the community of practice affected by the issue at hand. This is the most appealing insight Dewey has to offer organization studies.

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