

Dynamical Interpretant

1905 [c.] | The Basis of Pragmaticism | MS [R] 284:54-5

...when we speak of the interpretant of a sign, we may mean the *rational* interpretant which fairly and justly interprets it, or we may mean the *dynamic* interpretant, i.e. the way in which the sign will actually get interpreted in the mind of the person addressed in case the sign be of such a nature as necessarily to produce an interpretant, or we may mean the *immediate* interpretant, which the sign itself represents to be its intended interpretant.

1906 | Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism | CP 4.536

In regard to the Interpretant we have [...] to distinguish, in the first place, the Immediate Interpretant, which is the interpretant as it is revealed in the right understanding of the Sign itself, and is ordinarily called the *meaning* of the sign; while in the second place, we have to take note of the Dynamical Interpretant which is the actual effect which the Sign, as a Sign, really determines. Finally there is what I provisionally term the Final Interpretant, which refers to the manner in which the Sign tends to represent itself to be related to its Object. I confess that my own conception of this third interpretant is not yet quite free from mist.

1906 [c.] | On the System of Existential Graphs Considered as an Instrument for the Investigation of Logic | MS [R] 499(s)

...there is the dynamical interpretant which is the effect or the result which the sign actually *does* determine...

1908-Dec | Letters to Lady Welby | CP 8.343

... it is necessary to distinguish the *Immediate Object*, or the Object as the Sign represents it, from the *Dynamical Object*, or really efficient but not immediately present Object. It is likewise requisite to distinguish the *Immediate Interpretant*, i.e. the Interpretant represented or signified in the Sign, from the *Dynamic Interpretant*, or effect actually produced on the mind by the Sign; and both of these from the *Normal Interpretant*, or effect that would be produced on the mind by the Sign after sufficient development of thought.

The Dynamical Interpretant is whatever interpretation any mind actually makes of a sign. This Interpretant derives its character from the Dyadic category, the category of Action. This has two aspects, the Active and the Passive, which are not merely opposite aspects but make relative contrasts between different influences of this Category as More Active and More Passive. In psychology this category marks Motion in its active aspect of a force and its passive aspect as a resistance. When an imagination, a day-dream fires a young man's ambition or any other active passion, that is a more Active variety of his Dynamical Interpretation of the dream. When a novelty excites his surprise, - and the scepticism that goes along with surprise, - this is a more Passive variety of Dynamical Interpretant. I am not speaking of the *feelings* of passion or of surprise as *qualities*. For those *qualities* are no part of the dynamic Interpretant. But the agitations of passion and of surprise are the actual dynamic Interpretants. So surprise again has its Active and its Passive variety; - the former when what one perceives positively conflicts with expectation, the latter when having no positive expectation but only the absence of any suspicion of anything out of the common something quite unexpected occurs, - such as a total eclipse of the sun which one had not anticipated. Any surprise involves a resistance to accepting the fact. One rubs one's eyes, as Shaler used to do, determined not to admit the observation until it is plain one will be compelled to do so. Thus every actual interpretation is dyadic ... [As] pragmatism says ... (one part of pragmatism, for Pragmatism is not exclusively an opinion about the Dynamic Interpretant), ... it says, for one thing, that the meaning of any sign for anybody consists in the way he reacts to the sign. When the captain of infantry gives the word "Ground arms!" the dynamic Interpretant is in the thump of the muskets on the ground, or rather it is the Act of their Minds. In its Active/Passive forms, the Dynamical Interpretant indefinitely approaches the character of the Final/Immediate Interpretant; and yet the distinction is absolute.

...suppose I awake in the morning before my wife, and that afterwards she wakes up and inquires, "What sort of a day is it?" This is a sign, whose Object, as expressed, is the weather at that time, but whose Dynamical Object is the *impression which I have presumably derived from peeping between the window-curtains*. Whose Interpretant, as expressed, is the quality of the weather, but whose Dynamical Interpretant, is *my answering her question*. But beyond that, there is a third Interpretant. The *Immediate Interpretant* is what the Question expresses, all that it immediately expresses, which I have imperfectly restated above. The *Dynamical Interpretant* is the actual effect that it has upon me, its interpreter. But the Significance of it, the *Ultimate, or Final, Interpretant* is her *purpose* in asking it, what effect its answer will have as to her plans for the ensuing day. I reply, let us suppose: "It is a stormy day." Here is another sign. Its *Immediate Object* is the notion of the present weather so far as this is common to her mind and mine - not the *character* of it, but the *identity* of it. The *Dynamical Object* is the *identity* of the actual or Real meteorological conditions at the

moment. The Immediate Interpretant is the schema in her imagination, i.e. the vague Image or what there is in common to the different Images of a stormy day. The *Dynamical Interpretant* is the disappointment or whatever actual effect it at once has upon her. The *Final Interpretant* is the sum of the *Lessons* of the reply, Moral, Scientific, etc. Now it is easy to see that my attempt to draw this three-way, “trivialis” distinction, relates to a real and important three-way distinction, and yet that it is quite hazy and needs a vast deal of study before it is rendered perfect.

1909 | Letters to William James | EP 2:496

...it appears to me that all symptoms of disease, signs of weather, etc., have no utterer. For I do not think we can properly say that God *utters* any sign when He is the Creator of all things. But when [Lady Welby] says, as she does, that this is connected with Volition, I at once note that the volitional element of Interpretation is the *Dynamical Interpretant*.

1909 | Letters to Lady Welby | SS 110-1

My Dynamical Interpretant consists in direct effect actually produced by a Sign upon an Interpreter of it. [—] My Dynamical Interpretant is that which is experienced in each act of Interpretation and is different in each from that of the other... The Dynamical Interpretant is a single actual event.

1910-08-23 | Letters to Paul Carus | ILS 285

Now we can regard the Interpretant in 3 ways, or rather there are 3 distinct things which may properly be regarded as the Interpretant. For any thing that the sign, *as such*, effects may be considered as the Interpretant. And this may be 1st something merely subjective, the vague determination of the consciousness effected by the sign, 2nd the *actual event* that some signs by virtue of really acting as such bring about. For instance, let the sign be a military word or command. Then the instant action of the whole rank of men will be the Dynamical Interpretant, as I call it.