

Call for papers

Action, Agency and Praxis

Upcoming special issue in [Pragmatism Today](#)

Action is the central concept around which pragmatism pivots. Right from the beginnings of the tradition conceptual reconstructions pointed at human agency in redefining concepts like truth, meaning, experience, knowledge, value or the self. Thinking in terms of action helped pragmatism to overcome dualist accounts of the relation between mind and body, theory and practice, individual and society, ordinary life and the supposedly detached realm of the arts and sciences. Many pragmatists since Dewey and Addams went beyond finding new conceptual determinations and saw the point of their philosophical investigations in changing our social and political practices by means of a reciprocal engagement of practical endeavors and intellectual inquiries.

Various projects in philosophy and social theory – especially in critical theory, action research and actor network theory – paid tribute to pragmatists like Peirce, Dewey or Mead in developing a new understanding of practice, meaning, interaction, communication, identity, institutions, or the transactive continuum of human and non-human agency in environments. Yet, given the central position that the concept of action occupies in the pragmatist tradition, it is remarkable how few pragmatist scholars took an explicit agency-theoretic approach in delineating their standpoint. This said, a number of prominent authors have zeroed in on the way pragmatism affects our understanding of agency and practice. Classical works like Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* or Mead's *Philosophy of the Act* precede a number of more recent works like Bernstein's *Praxis and Action*, Joas's *The Creativity of Action* or Strauss's *Continual Permutations of Action*.

The upcoming issue in [Pragmatism Today](#) addresses implications and consequences of the pragmatist theory for our understanding of action, agency and practice. The below list of questions is far from exhaustive:

- What are the implications of pragmatist reconstructions of concepts like experience, knowledge, situation for a theory of human agency?
- What is the place and function of purposes and value in human agency?
- How is human agency constituted in and through social interactions and culture?
- How can we understand the relationship between habits, creativity and reflective action?
- Which challenges do concepts of imagination, creativity and intelligence pose for analytic/utilitarian theories of rational choice?
- Can pragmatism be used to conceptualize non-human forms of agency (technological, ecological, animal agency) as well as interactions between humans and non-humans?
- What are the social, political or environmental consequences of a pragmatist reconstruction of human agency?

Today's advances in fields like biology, robotics and artificial intelligence, human enhancement technology, or digital technology make questions about the transactive formation of coordinated agency and about the environmentally embedded nature of human action topical. Looming environmental catastrophes and failure of political systems to respond adequately pose urgent questions about collective and political agency and urge the search for solutions in a better understanding of human agency as embedded in social and environmental situations.

Please send your manuscript to Philipp Dorstewitz (philipp.dorstewitz@aurak.ac.ae) and Frithjof Nungesser (frithjof.nungesser@uni-graz.at)

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Editorial team: Philipp Dorstewitz, Frithjof Nungesser