What Difference Could Pragmatism Have Made?
From Architectural Effects to Architecture's Consequences

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10 November 2000. The auditorium at the MoMA in New York is packed. The audience is patiently waiting for the proceedings to start. On the stage, a long empty table with five chairs and their associated microphones awaits the contributors who will confer. On the screen behind that scene, a projection exhibits the name of the event: 'Things in the Making, Contemporary Architecture and The Pragmatist Imagination'.[1] These two days (and the preliminary seminar that had taken place at Columbia University a few months earlier) were an attempt to introduce Pragmatism – the American philosophy first defined by Peirce, James and Dewey – into architectural discourse.

Joan Ockman – with the help of the philosopher John Rajchman – convened the assembly because she thought Pragmatism provided an opportunity to address the main issue architectural theory had been facing in the last few years: the increased schism between theory and practice, and the recent eagerness to refocus on practice at the expense of theory. This desire for a shift in architectural thinking – less theory, more practice; less discourse, more action; less criticism, more work done – is often labelled a 'post-critical' moment and dated to the first years after the turn of the century.[2] Ockman's initiative attests that such an idea was already flourishing before 2000, but the movement indeed reached its peak after the event. More and more provocative and irreverent contributions were then published, most famously by the American theorists Robert Somol, Sarah Whiting and Michael

Speaks, who came to incarnate the post-critical position.[3] In 2000, right before that wave, at 'The Pragmatist Imagination' conference, Pragmatism had appeared convenient to mark, accompany, but also temper this (upcoming) turn. As a 'theory of practice', it could potentially counter the domination of theory upon practice, without dismissing it altogether. It was supposed to help architects refocus on the practical instead of conceptual or discursive effects of their production, while preventing them from falling into the anti-intellectual and politically complicit posture that often characterised such dismissal of former critical legacies. It was indeed critical theory – and the once fruitful connections that architecture had established with Continental philosophy in general – that was held responsible for the unprecedented schism between theory and practice. Pragmatism, the American philosophy, was called to serve as an alternative to that influence.

History – from Continental philosophy to Pragmatism, or not

Since the 1960s, exchanges between architecture and various theories formulated by European intellectuals had been fertile. Structuralism first, but also critical theory from the Frankfurt School or, later, post-structuralism, were highly seductive to architects and architectural theorists, who used their concepts to reflect on architectural form and practice, or to experiment with new design tools. Apart from their general success on the American campus, the very spatial aspect of some of these theories explains architects' direct affinity with

them.[4] In a way, the Deleuzian notion of 'the fold' or the Derridian movement of 'Deconstruction' were offering themselves to straightforward recuperations. But beyond such literal translations, architects found something fascinating, intriguing and guiding in the complicated and provocative language of these philosophers. There was something appealing in the way they were dismissing the old way of practicing philosophy and thinking about the world; in the fluid, the ever-changing, the uncertain, the disruptive, the marginal, which they were bringing in.

But, by the late 1990s, the connection with Continental philosophy seemed to have exhausted architectural theory. Some started to disregard those architects who had got lost in complicated philosophical readings they could not really master. Their understanding was too literal, turning concepts into formal games and emptying them from their political or societal content. Also, architects were distracted from their own prerogatives. Despite the fact that theory had contributed to architecture's definition as a proper discipline, it was at the same time dissolving architecture's specificity. Again, the introduction in architecture of methods, vocabularies, questions, contents coming from other fields of the humanities – literary studies, semiotics, philosophy, feminism, and so on – reached a point where it was considered a threat to architecture's particularity. Among others, Cornel West, a pragmatist philosopher who was invited to 'The Pragmatist Imagination' in 2000, did not hesitate to call this phenomenon an 'invasion' or 'occupation' of architectural criticism, leading to a loss of its identity.[5] In her introduction at the conference, Ockman identified this situation of exhaustion, in order to promote Pragmatism as a useful alternative:

> Partly in reaction to this situation, but also in the climate of a booming economy and plenty of buildings coming out of the ground, a desire to reconceptualise

architectural practice in terms of new realities became manifest. […] [Pragmatism] might serve as a lever to pry open some hardened formations in architecture, by now giving signs of having run their course.[6]

Even though it was convenient to present Pragmatism as an alternative, its introduction appears to be more of a continuity than a rupture with the heritage of Continental philosophy. It occurred at the same time as architects' readings of Deleuze and Foucault on the diagram. The main protagonist behind this transition was John Rajchman, the philosopher who co-organised 'The Pragmatist Imagination' with Joan Ockman, and who had also been a major actor in the introduction of Deleuze in architectural theory in the 1990s.[7] He explicitly articulated these two legacies in a paper presented at the 'Any' conference held in Rotterdam in 1997. The paper is entitled 'A New Pragmatism?'. However, in terms of its content, the paper still fully belongs to a scene that preceded 'The Pragmatist Imagination': the latest Deleuzian episode in architectural theory, composed of a series of papers published around 1998 about the possibility of a 'diagrammatic' architecture. Rajchman's paper differentiates itself mostly because it evokes a connection between the Deleuzian/Foucauldian notion of the diagram and the less known philosophical tradition defined by Peirce, James and Dewey.

The discussion around the opportunity of thinking architecture in a diagrammatic way had appeared during the 1990s when some architects started to read the recent English translations of Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault. The diagram can be described as one next step after the success of the fold, or the virtual, among Deleuzian concepts that were sufficiently architectural to be easily consumed by architectural theory. In the last years of the 1990s, publications revolving around the diagram flourished.[8] The notion referred not only to the increased use of a given mode of representation or tool for designing buildings and for taking a

certain amount of data into account. In this specific moment, the diagram turned into a concept, found in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, but also in Foucault's writings about Bentham's Panopticon.

In Deleuze and Guattari's post-structuralist program, the diagram forms part of an argument about the end of the domination of language, of the 'signifying regime'. Deleuze and Guattari propose to multiply the regimes of signs under consideration and to build up a pragmatics that also considers the transformations among them. The diagram is not a type of sign; it is one kind of transformation between different regimes of signs. It is an 'abstract machine', an operation characterised by the absence of stabilised form and content, instead organising form and content at multiple levels.[9] In architecture, the diagram is then understood as another way to relate to the real than the 'indexical' relation that had been central since the 1970s, in conceptual art and architecture:[10] instead of referring to the real under the form of a trace, a comment or a sign, a diagrammatic architecture would rather deal with the virtual, instigating unforeseen possibilities by working on the level of *effects* to be felt rather than meaning to be read.[11]

Beyond the argument against the domination of semiotics, the diagram also relates to a new form of socio-historic work, as conducted by Foucault about the prison.[12] The way Foucault describes the Panopticon constitutes an example of what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they consider the diagram as an abstract machine. The Panopticon is not just a plan pointing to the construction of a specific prison, nor even just a type of prison, it is also the diagram of the disciplinary society at large. Its functioning permeates all layers of a society, normalising and controlling behaviours. It works not only through its institutions (prison, schools, hospitals); it is also actualised through individual conduct. To draw the diagram of the state of our society in such a way as

Foucault did provides awareness of these mechanisms and a chance to intervene among, between, or even against them.

This is what Rajchman insists on in his paper in 1997. The diagram is used as an alternative to the plan or the programme, which were brandished by modern architects as a way to tame contingencies. The diagram is a chance to map the unpredictable, unstable, invisible state of a society at a given moment. It provides awareness about the fact that phenomena permeate many other levels than language: the unsaid, the body, the organisation of space… The diagram gives us clues about how to act and maybe provides a chance to intervene. A step further, Rajchman describes some traits of a 'diagrammatic architecture', characterised by its ability to deal with the uncertain, to instigate unpredictable movements and events, to form new subjectivities, to make sense without referring to something that precedes, and so on.

Despite its deeply theoretical traits, this discussion about the diagram is directly linked to both the post-critical scene and the introduction of Pragmatism in architecture at 'The Pragmatist Imagination'.[13] Rajchman's paper constitutes a major point of overlap between these three episodes, both in terms of content and of the references he uses. He contributes to what will be called a post-critical movement insofar as he sees the notion of the diagram as a chance to revise architects' ways of being critical, which he finds not only in French post-structuralism, but in a larger philosophical tradition, of which American Pragmatism forms part:

> Perhaps in this way the pragmatism of diagram and diagnosis might help transform the sense of what is 'critical' in our thought and our work. It might help move beyond the impasses of older images of negative theology, transgression, or abstract purity and

introduce a new problem: that of resingularizing environments, of living an indefinite 'complexity', prior to set determinations, which questions the simplicities and generalities of our modes of being and suggests other possibilities.[14]

Rajchman inscribes this movement into a history of philosophy that opposes the critical tradition inherited from Kant to some alternatives, among which the direction taken by Pragmatism.[15] If Rajchman talks about 'a new pragmatism' it is because he attempts to connect the ideas of Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault to those of Peirce, James, and Dewey. He considers the French theories about the diagram as a 'diagrammatic pragmatism', 'a new pragmatism' which continues what had been started by the Pragmatists, but under new conditions. It is in this paper about the diagram that Rajchman first introduces the Jamesian notion of 'things in the making' that would prove central at 'The Pragmatist Imagination' in 2000.[16] Rajchman uses it to insist on the experimental aspect of architectural practice, and the necessity to develop new tools enabling architects to deal with complex and unstable situations.

Pragmatism thus makes its appearance in architecture at the height of the success of French theory in the field, and not after or in opposition to it, as Ockman argued in 2000 when she introduced 'The Pragmatist Imagination'. Actually, the revival of Pragmatism in American philosophy is itself tightly linked to the influence of Continental philosophy.[17] In the late 1970s–early 1980s, American philosophy undertook a 'post-analytical' shift away from the positivistic aims that characterised it for decades; that shift was based on a reconciliation of Pragmatism and Continental philosophy.[18] To understand the revival of Pragmatism, one must first recall the fact that this philosophy – which had been very successful in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century – had fallen into oblivion after the Second World War.

American philosophy had then taken a positivistic turn, due to the influence of the logical positivists of the Vienna Circle who had emigrated to the United States. American philosophy departments were driven away from Pragmatism and began developing analytic philosophy instead. The general aim of analytic philosophy was the logical clarification of thoughts, with the help of formal logic and the analysis of language. It was based on the premise that constructions close to those found in mathematics would help provide definite answers to given questions. This idea stood in sharp contrast with Continental philosophies. Philosophy departments were largely indifferent to – even protective against – the post-structuralist or Marxist waves that washed through American campuses in the 1970s and 80s. At least until some thinkers started to propose a parallel history of philosophy, able to reconcile analytic and continental philosophy, thanks to a third forgotten tradition: Pragmatism. Rorty famously contributed to that programme, and wrote: 'On my view, James and Dewey were not only waiting at the end of the dialectical road which analytic philosophy traveled, but are waiting at the end of the road which, for example, Foucault and Deleuze are currently traveling'.[19] It is that revival only – in the form of what Rajchman and West call a 'post-analytic philosophy' – that led architectural theory to establish connections with American philosophy. Until then, architectural theory had favoured literary (and other fields of) studies, as a means of access to the post-modern, inspiring, subversive theories coming from Europe. This explains, I believe, why, around 2000, architectural theory looked into the original Pragmatism of Peirce, James and Dewey, as an 'alternative' to the influence of Continental theories, instead of adopting analytic philosophy per se.

Architects were eager to diminish the pretensions of theory and to refocus on practice. Architects were seeking a fluid and responsive way of dealing with shifting realities and fast changes. Some of the

questions at stake were the new, computer-based, modes of design; the irruption of media, globalisation and the emergent cities; or the privatisation of public space. Architects were not looking for a more precise, truer, way of defining architecture. They were not interested in building a philosophy of architecture with the help of analytic philosophy, which would give itself the role of defining what architecture *is* in an almost scientific way.[20] This appears very clearly in Stan Allen's words at 'The Pragmatist Imagination':

> I identify myself with those who don't ask themselves *what architecture is* or *means* but only *what it can do.* […] The skepticism for a certain kind of theory is legitimate. The questions were mainly of two kinds for the theory of the 80s, either ontological or semiotic. When the question is ontological, it interrogates the origins, the limits, and the specificities of architecture. When semiotic, the question is that of meaning and representations. […] For my generation, these interrogations were not interesting anymore.[21]

What was at stake in this architectural milieu in the late 1990s was a way to find effective conceptual tools able to accompany the complex task of the architect, who wanted to fully engage in the building of new environments. As with the concept of the diagram, the main expectation from Pragmatism was in shifting how architecture could make itself significant: not by producing a meaningful message but by acting in and on the world, by inducing *effects*, on another level than language. Architectural theory was also to change its questions: neither what architecture means, nor what it fundamentally is, but what it does, what it entails. Formulated in these terms, the move can indeed be characterised as 'pragmatist'.

However, despite Ockman's and Rajchman's ambitious initiative, 'The Pragmatist Imagination' did not manage to push this strand of architectural theory into a pragmatist decade after 2000.

The absence of Pragmatism – in the form of a philosophical legacy – in what directly followed the conference constitutes an evident lack of success in that milieu:

> And the 'New Pragmatism'? If only it were so! I can confidently say that if there were such a thing, the able trend-spotting machine of New York architecture culture would have taken it up, and if a critical mass of suitable practitioners could be found – I can think of two – a show would have been put together, a manifesto written, and a catalog published (Two Architects?).[22]

Instead, what followed in this (mostly North-American) context in the first decade after 2000 was the crystallisation of a 'post-critical' moment. The revision of the role of architectural theory in favour of a refocus on practice was conducted in a more and more irreverent and easy way, and with no consistent reference to Pragmatism.[23] The post-critical opted for the anti-intellectual direction that Ockman was precisely trying to avoid when she introduced Pragmatism as an alternative. The post-critical tone was provocative, not only against theory or critique, but also against any form of critical resistance that would tame the free conduct of design practice.

Because of that, the post-critical gave rise to fierce objections. Many feared that such an easy-going rejection of theory *and* criticality would set architects adrift, as they would blindly rush into the pervasive logic of capitalism. Therefore, 'The Pragmatist Imagination' can retrospectively be considered a welcome but unfortunate attempt to consider what Pragmatism could have contributed to that situation. For a couple of years, James, Dewey and Peirce made a few appearances in architectural theory, before they fell back into oblivion, in that particular architectural milieu at least.[24] Maybe Ockman's diagnosis was too optimistic: the architects who were seeking an alternative to the strong

influence of philosophy on the field, were not just opposing Continental philosophy, but philosophy in general. Pragmatism was no exception.

Speculation – So what about Pragmatism?

Instead of lamenting this lack of success, I see it as an opportunity to consider the initiative anew and use it to retroactively make propositions within the discussions about criticality. The second part of this paper will consider some post-critical propositions in more detail, and see what kind of responses Pragmatism might have provided to the objections that were formulated against them. I will focus on an issue that spans from the diagrammatic (around 1998) to the post-critical (around 2002) and through 'The Pragmatist Imagination' (2000). The issue at stake in all three scenes is the need for architecture to overcome the notion of 'representation' or 'meaning' in favour of its 'effects': instead of *representing* its condition, *expressing* its design process, *telling* ideas, *commenting* on the world, the 'diagrammatic' or 'projective' or 'post-critical' architecture 'focuses upon effects', 'is not for reading but for seducing', 'instigating new events and behaviors'.[25]

The above-mentioned qualities of a 'projective' architecture are found in the famous 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism' published by Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting in 2002, which is often used to mark the advent of a post-critical stage in architecture. Ahead of that co-authored – and now seminal – paper, Somol had already been building on the architecture of WW, Whiting's practice, to describe the turn from meaning to effect, which is at stake in what he was then calling a turn towards the 'diagrammatic' in architecture: '[it is] not an architecture to pay attention to (not about its meaning), but an environment for acting in, for instigating new events and traits'.[26] In their design for a community centre in Kentucky, developed in the late 1990s, WW attempted to blur the boundary between the inside and the outside, and between different programmes on each floor,

by implementing a series of curved 'brackets' across the plan of an otherwise simple box with three floors. These 'figures' imply that the surface of the façade sometimes ribbons towards the inside and that the definition of the rooms on each floor is slightly disturbed. Somol insists on the fact that 'the effects of the IntraCenter are aimed not toward the production of critical exegesis or uncanny self-reflection, but strictly toward the generation of anomalous ecstasy'.[27] They are not meant to be interpreted but to generate new subjectivities. Somol does not fully reject the critical aspect of architecture – the fact that architectural form is imbued with meaning that can be interpreted – but he believes that the critical has been given too much importance: it repressed other ways in which architecture matters and inhibited other possibilities for architectural experimentation.

The diagrammatic and the post-critical programme overlap as they both invite architects to move from meaning to effects. The notion of effects is here articulated with that of *affects*. It is understood in terms of 'seduction', 'atmosphere' or even 'ecstasy'. This is also true of other architects who participated in the discussion around a diagrammatic architecture. UNStudio, the Dutch firm who edited issue 23 of *ANY Magazine* about the diagram in 1998, published a volume entitled *Effects* in their monograph *Move* just one year after. They explain that 'effects are felt, but cannot be grasped […] Being active as sensation, effects are not standardized and categorized but remain an agitated, undefined mass in the territory of the unconscious'.[28] The characteristic of effects is that they do not look like what provokes them. Therefore, they escape the notion of 'representation'.

This 'post-representational' (and 'post-critical') attitude, which spread in architecture in the late 1990s, provoked a series of objections. Some authors feared that such a posture would entail an unabashed formalism. Among these, Roemer Van

Toorn's critique is particularly severe. In 2004, he considers this trend to be 'the degree zero of the political':

> This [projective architecture] is a strategy without political ideas, without political or socio-historical awareness, that is in danger of becoming the victim of a dictatorship of aesthetics, technology and the pragmatism of the blindly onrushing economy. Instead of taking responsibility for the design, instead of having the courage to steer flows in a certain direction, the ethical and political *consequences* arising from the design decisions are left to the market and the architect retreats into the givens of his discipline.[29]

Focused on *effects*, these architects run the risk of neglecting the larger *consequences* of their design. It is in this sense that, in another paper published that same year, Van Toorn criticises UNStudio's project for La Defense office complex in Almere. The architects designed a series of volumes characterised by the changing colour of their façades; Van Toorn explains that this architecture does not want to *express* any meaning, to *signal* any content, to *communicate* any message, which it would have done by *representing* the identity of the company that commissioned the complex for instance. Instead, the skin of the building acts as a cosmetic layer, 'a hypnotic seducer': it organises emotional or sensational effects. Van Toorn criticises this sort of architecture, because he believes that the effects produced are gadget-like, that they serve as mere decoration. Therefore, they 'elicit a committed response [in favour of] an intimate experience', and prevent architects from 'contribut[ing] to certain pressing social tasks'.[30]

The problem lies in the restrictive scope of the effects that are considered by these architects: instead of looking at the broad consequences of their design and the situation in which it takes place, architects narrow down their interest to material, visual, sensual effects. The movement away from an autonomous architecture – considered as mere wordplay or representation – could have led to a more conscious architecture, aware of its social, political, economical, cultural consequences. In 'Doppler Effect', Somol and Whiting seem to know that risk, when they defensively conclude that 'setting out this projective program does not necessarily entail a capitulation to market forces, but actually respects or reorganises multiple economies, ecologies, information systems, and social groups'.[31] However, that line of defence proved to be too weak to prevent the wave of criticism that followed. This so-called 'new architectural pragmatism' was soon accused of being complicit with the market economy as it was giving up critical resistance in favour of a posture of acceptance.[32]

Despite the fact that these projective or post-critical propositions have eventually been qualified as 'a new architectural pragmatism' and that most of their authors were at 'The Pragmatist Imagination' in 2000, American Pragmatism was almost completely absent from the discussion. Only a common sense 'pragmatism' remained: the idea that theory had to be rejected in favour of practice and that utopias or any form of ideals could be discarded in favour of an unleashed realism. My hypothesis is that Pragmatism – not in its common sense but as a full-fledged philosophical body of knowledge – could have helped in avoiding the reductive appeal to effects that was at stake in the 'new architectural pragmatism'. However, the aim is not to imply that the post-critical architects were pragmatists who just never acknowledged that legacy. The aim is to measure affinities as much as contrasts between that specific trend in architectural discourse and the philosophy with which it did not align at that point. The proposition is thus more of a speculation: *what if these architects had chosen to read Pragmatism? What differences would it have made?*

I believe that an alliance with Pragmatism would allow a retroactive consideration of the objections to

the post-critical along two lines: (1) to insist on architecture's practical effects does not mean that theory and discourse need to be dismissed altogether; (2) instead of just 'practical effects', Pragmatism is a philosophy that encourages us to take into account *consequences* on a much larger (and thus very demanding) scope. I thus intend to establish a contrast between 'effects' and 'consequences' parallel to the distinction between common-sense pragmatism and what the philosophy of Pragmatism invites us to consider. Despite the fact that these two pairs of terms are respectively synonymous and homonymous, it seems to me that widening the interstice between them opens up an interesting space for reflection.

I will explore the way in which the first definitions of Pragmatism by Peirce, James and Dewey were characterised by a similar spectrum, proceeding from effects to consequences. Their respective definitions of Pragmatism are known to be increasingly moral and political, as they pass from Peirce's notion of the practical bearings of ideas to James's concern for their particular consequences and Dewey's ideas about their role in the adaptation of individuals to their (social) environment.

It is often said that James took over Peirce's Pragmatism and added a moral dimension to it, by using what was at first a method to eventually choose among various philosophical conceptions (for example, between monism and pluralism). It is also clear that Dewey is the most political among the pragmatist philosophers, as he was a convinced liberal and democrat who thought that the role of philosophy was to help social improvement. Also, the pragmatist philosophers had to react against accusations of instrumentalism, utilitarianism, anti-intellectualism and even mercantilism. Their own writings thus contain lines of defence against these claims, which echo the controversies around the 'new architectural pragmatism'.

Pragmatism was first defined in the late 1870s by Charles Sanders Peirce in a two-part paper entitled *The Logic of Science*. This is where Peirce lays out the basis on which Pragmatism is founded: the meaning of an idea is found in its 'practical bearings' or 'sensible effects'. Peirce reaches this conclusion after he explains that research or reasoning always starts with a lively doubt that needs to be overcome. The aim of any research, of any inquiry, is the fixation of a belief: doubts need to be tempered, as they interrupt the course of actions. For Peirce, the aim of thought is thus to assure the conduct of an action, the establishment of habits. The meaning of an idea thus depends on the habits it produces, on the actions it entails, more generally on its 'sensible effects'. As a method to 'make our ideas clear', Peirce proposes the following rule, which would soon become the Pragmatist method: 'consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object'.[33]

Twenty years later, William James took this maxim and popularised it under the name *Pragmatism*. In 1898, he gave a talk entitled 'Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results' in which he affirmed that philosophy should deal with metaphysical alternatives only if the competing terms differ regarding their practical results. If two options do not make an actual difference, then the alternative is vain and deserves no consideration. Pragmatism is thus first a method to escape useless metaphysical debates. More generally, it invites us to concentrate our thoughts on effects rather than causal or essential explanations.

> It is astonishing to see how many philosophical disputes collapse into insignificance the moment you subject them to this simple test of tracing a concrete consequence. There can be no difference anywhere that doesn't make a difference elsewhere – no difference in abstract truth that doesn't express itself in a

difference in concrete fact and in conduct consequent upon that fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere and somewhen. The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one.[34]

For James, ideas or facts count as far as they make differences in our particular existences, as far as they result in different behaviours and experiences for each of us. It is not merely that ideas have practical effects *in general* but, more dramatically, that they have 'particular consequences'. As a philosopher, he addresses the differences between, for instance, theism and materialism, or monism and pluralism. He considers them first as a matter of preference based on personal temperament, but then develops their respective practical and particular consequences, and describes the very different world that each of these metaphysical options brings about. This might first appear as a relativist utilitarianism: everyone freely chooses what hypothesis suits them best. But, by insisting on the world produced by each term of the alternative, James ends always opting for the one that is the most inclusive. As a result, he shows how demanding the pragmatist method is:

> You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It [the pragmatic method] appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be *changed*.[35]

James's Pragmatism is thus also deeply melioristic. As he himself says, 'Pragmatism [is] far from keeping her eyes bent on the immediate practical foreground, as she is accused of doing.'[36] Instead, Pragmatism adds to our responsibilities the task of bringing into existence the long and intricate series of consequences, not only of deeds and facts, but also of ideas, however remote, abstract or metaphysical they may be. Therefore, James is far from dismissing theory or philosophy. Instead, by insisting on their practical bearing, he reaffirms their importance. Moreover, far from focusing only on direct effects, he insists on further consequences, showing what a different world distinct ideas or deeds can imply.

James's Pragmatism brings to light the contrast between 'effects' and 'consequences'. Dewey's Pragmatism, even more than James's, is focused on particular situations and, more precisely, on the interactions that define them. Consequences, with Dewey, are thus considered less on a particular or individual level than on a social and political one. Dewey underscores Pragmatism's meliorism. He adds to James's Pragmatism, when he affirms that Pragmatism should not only be a philosophical tool to choose among different options, but also to propose new ones:

> [James] wished to force the general public to realize that certain problems, certain philosophical debates have a real importance for mankind, because the beliefs which they bring into play lead to very different modes of conduct […] Such a statement implies that the world formulas have already all been made, and that the necessary work of producing them has already been finished.[37]

Dewey argues that Pragmatism cannot be reduced to a method, because it has important metaphysical implications. The fact that Pragmatism obliges us to take future consequences into consideration leads to a conception of a universe that is unfinished, made of 'things in the making', rather than things made. Philosophy should thus not only be anchored within experience, but also enrich it.

When James defined *Pragmatism* in his famous essay in 1907, he did not only look into Peirce's method but also into Dewey's logic, his

'instrumentalism'. Influenced, like his peers, by Darwinism and the theory of evolution, Dewey understood ideas as tools used by organisms to adapt to their environment. An idea is true only insofar as it satisfies the individual, which means that it makes his or her relationships to the environment more fruitful, the experience more fluid. Ideas are instruments of adaptation or adjustment. Their meaning depends on their ability to meet the conditions involved in a specific situation.

Dewey thus insists – like Peirce and James, but in other terms – on the continuity between ideas and facts. The distinction between the two is purely instrumental: they each play their role in the process of establishing knowledge. More importantly, Dewey believes ideas should never be considered separately from their role in a particular experience; abstractions are problematic only as far as they are disconnected from the situation in which they emerge and from their consequences upon that situation.

> From its [the instrumental type of logic's] point of view, an attempt to discuss the antecedents, data, forms, and objective of thought, apart from reference to particular position occupied, and particular part played in the growth of experience is to reach results which are not so much either true or false as they are radically meaningless because they are considered apart from limits. Its results are not only abstractions (for all theorizing ends in abstractions), but abstractions without possible reference or bearing.[38]

Dewey thus encourages the adoption of a method with which 'thought would be connected with the possibility of action, and every mode of action would be reviewed to see its bearing upon the habits and ideas from which it sprang'.[39]

From Peirce to James and Dewey, Pragmatism thus not only invites us to consider the practical bearings and sensible effects of our actions *and*

ideas. It emphasises their broader consequences as well, and thereby encourages us to face the very different worlds our choices are unfolding. With Dewey especially, Pragmatism also insists on the importance of the situations we are necessarily part of, and on the necessity to take all their intricacies into consideration.[40]

To conclude, I would like to demonstrate how these definitions of Pragmatism can retroactively (speculatively) intervene along two lines in the debate about criticality: (1) What is the role of theory and its relation to practice? (2) Can we look at architecture's effects without being mesmerised to such extent that we forget about architects' political and social role?

Pragmatism is particularly interesting in dealing with the problematic relationship between theory and practice, in part because of its ambiguity. Common sense makes us think that 'pragmatism' favours practice over theory, concrete facts and deeds over discourse and abstractions. However, contrary to what would then be expected of Pragmatism, it has nothing to do with a rejection of theoretical knowledge in favour of practice. Instead, it invites one to consider abstract conceptions in the light of the practical differences they make. Pragmatism – unlike most post-critical architects – does not put practice *against* theory, but displaces the distinction itself. It proposes an instrumental continuum between the two, where theories and practices (thoughts and deeds) complete each other to reach a given objective. While insisting on the practical differences they both make, Pragmatism emphasises the importance of conceptual distinctions. They do not diverge only on an intellectual level, but they also produce very different worlds, some of which are more desirable than others. Pragmatism points to these worlds that our conceptions and actions bring into existence. By giving importance to these worlds, Pragmatism restores the role of both theory and practice. There is no need to dismiss theory, the

production of discourse, the practice of research. Pragmatism rather encourages us to interrogate what they produce and judge them against their consequences.

A Pragmatist approach can also amend the somewhat reductive focus on architectural effects. Since post-critical architecture focuses on how architecture acts on the level of effects instead of meaning, architects run the risk of losing an important critical tool. Being satisfied with material and atmospheric effects, with the seductive appearance of their architecture, leads architects to neglect the broader consequences of architecture, on the site, on the users, on the economy, and so on.

Against that reductive account of effects versus meanings, Pragmatism addresses both effects *and* consequences, of both material *and* discursive matters. This is how, for instance, the architect Stan Allen interprets James's notion of Pragmatism at 'The Pragmatist Imagination', and in an essay he published that same year: 'This necessitates a close attention to the material effects and worldly consequences of *all* of architecture's matter – semantic *and* material – while maintaining a strict indifference to the origin of those effects'.[41]

The way Stan Allen built on Pragmatism to expand on his late 1990s writings about the diagram is useful for the speculation I am conducting here: he is among the few in the 'post-critical' debate who seized upon Pragmatism as an opportunity to emphasise architects' responsibility regarding the consequences of their practice. The diagram is for him a tool to 'engage with the real', in all its contingencies. In the aforementioned essay, Allen does not dismiss theory but the notion of conformity to norms, which are established ahead and independently of any experimentation. Instead, he prefers for increased attention to be paid to the consequences. He thus accepts the fact that architects 'compromise', because conformity is not the

issue; what matters is the result. But he insists that turning decisively towards the result does not lead to the political and moral dissolution of architecture. Instead, it forces architects to think of their public role. In a Pragmatist fashion, Allen explains that meaning is always the result of interactions:

> Meaning happens during the encounter of the public with the building, not during its design. It is most urgent to move away from the private world of the architects designing and focus our preoccupations on architecture's performance in the public sphere.[42]

If I use Allen's discourse in the context of this speculative exercise, it is because Pragmatism leads him to propose a posture for architects that better takes into account the contingencies of their practice. Architecture is constrained from the outside: architects react to demands and their practice is necessarily contingent because it negotiates with realities that are complex and uncertain. Architecture needs to be 'agile and responsive' in order to confront these realities. In this sense, Pragmatism contributes to the idea that constraints are not obstacles against creativity, but opportunities.

This is precisely where I believe Pragmatism might propose a double line of response: Pragmatism does not suggest the abolishment of theory nor does it imply a focus on architecture's practical effects in a narrow sense: its forms, its materiality… Interrogating consequences (rather than mere effects) situates architecture in all the intricacies that characterise it: elements of context, demands to which it has to answer, new elements it brings to existence, and so on. The entire world is included in the 'consequences' that Pragmatism brings to the fore. In my view, Pragmatism thus constitutes a highly demanding stance, as it constantly requires us to ask: what is the world that our design choices bring into being, and how can it be better than the one we have now?

Notes

1. *Things in the Making: Contemporary Architecture and the Pragmatist Imagination* (New York: MoMA Archives, 2000), video recordings 2001. 26a–27d.

2. The most-often cited description of the situation is: Georges Baird, '"Criticality" and Its Discontents', *Harvard Design Magazine* 21 (2004): 16–21. Since then, anthologies started to integrate this episode: A. Krista Sykes, *Constructing a New Agenda: Architectural Theory 1993–2009* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010); Harry Francis Mallgrave, 'Pragmatism and Post-Criticality', in *Introduction to Architectural Theory: 1968 to the Present* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 177–93; Ole W. Fischer, 'Architecture, Capitalism and Criticality', in *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory* (London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications, 2012), 56–69. However, the notion of a post-critical turn in architectural theory was already explicit before the first years of 2000s, for instance in K. Michael Hays and Alicia Kennedy, 'After All, or the End of "The End of"', *Assemblage*, no. 41 (1 April 2000): 6–7.

3. Robert E. Somol and Sarah Whiting, 'Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism', *Perspecta* 33 (2002): 72–77; Michael Speaks, 'Design Intelligence and the New Economy,' *Architectural Record* 190, no. 1 (January 2002): 72–75.

4. François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008 [2005]).

5. Cornel West, 'A Note on Race and Architec*ture', in Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race* in America, (New York, London: Routledge, 1993); Cornel West and Rem Koolhaas, 'Critical Mass: Urban Philosophies', *AV Monographs*, no. 91 (2001): 15–33.

6. Joan Ockman, *The Pragmatist Imagination. Thinking about 'Things in the Making'* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 17.

7. In 1990 at the first of the ten conferences organised annually by Anyone Corporation, John Rajchman explained that he had been invited to introduce Deleuze in architecture. This philosophy was supposed to provide a useful alternative to the former success of Derrida on the field, which by then was already exhausted since it had proved its limits at accompanying architectural practice. (John Rajchman, 'On Not Being Any One', in *Anyone* (New York: Anyone Corporation, 1991), 100–111; Simone Brott and John Rajchman, 'An Interview with John Rajchman, Department of Art History, Columbia University, on Architecture, Deleuze and Foucault', *Subjectivizations: Deleuze and Architecture (Masters Thesis)*, 2003, http://eprints.qut.edu.au) The shift from Derrida to Deleuze in 1990 curiously echos a similar shift from Continental philosophy to Pragmatism seen at 'The Pragmatist Imagination' in 2000. The Deleuzian 1990s were to follow the Derridian 1980s, before they were themselves replaced by Pragmatism in 2000.

8. Between 1998 and 2000, three journals dedicated an issue to the diagram: Caroline Bos and Ben Van Berkel, eds., 'Diagram Work: Data Mechanics for a Topological Age', *ANY*, no. 23 (June 1998); Like Bijlsma, Udo Garritzman, and Wouter Deen, eds., *Diagrams*, OASE 48 (Sun Publishers, 1998); *Daidalos – Diagrammania*, vol. 74 (Berlin, 2000). In 1999 alone, three monographs were published in which the diagram played a central role: Stan Allen, *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999); Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos, *Move* (Amsterdam: UNStudio & Goose Press, 1999); Peter Eisenman, *Peter Eisenman: Diagram Diaries* (New York: Universe Publishing, 1999).

9. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1988 [1980]).

10. About the role of the index in the description of conceptual art, see: Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America', *October* 3 (1977): 68–81.

11. Beside Rajchman's contribution at *Anyhow*, several

contributions in *ANY 23* are explicit about this contrast, among which: Stan Allen, 'Diagrams Matter', *ANY*, no. 23 (1998): 16–19; Robert E. Somol, 'The Diagrams of Matter', *ANY*, no. 23 (1998): 23–26. Somol keeps insisting on a shift 'from index to diagram', most notably in: Somol and Whiting, 'Notes around the Doppler Effect.'

12. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978 [1975]).

13. Many of the authors contributing to *ANY 23* about the diagram in 1998 – UNStudio, Stan Allen, Peter Eisenman, Robert Somol – will also be invited to 'The Pragmatist Imagination' *t*wo years later. They outline the same argument there as they did about the diagram, and as some of them would later do in the post-critical controversy.

14. John Rajchman, 'A New Pragmatism?' in *Anyhow*, ed. Cynthia D. Davidson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 217.

15. Actually, this idea was not new in 1997. Rajchman had proposed the same philosophical lineage as an alternative to Kant in his first intervention at the ANY series of conferences, in 1990 (see note 7). While introducing how Deleuze could appeal to architects, he was already establishing a connection with Nietzsche and Peirce.

16. James himself uses this notion in an essay about Henry Bergson, which reinforces the connections established by Rajchman between American Pragmatism and French philosophy: William James, 'Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism', in *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977 [1908]), 223–74.

17. Morris Dickstein, *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

18. John Rajchman and Cornel West, *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

19. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays, 1972–1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xviii.

20. Let's consider Saul Fisher's words, in a lecture on analytic philosophy of architecture, when he explains the type of question that this field of inquiry would address: 'What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for being an architectural work? What are the essential hallmarks of a given individual architectural work, such that we can identify (a) when some x is a work of architecture (and not anything else, e.g. sculpture) and (b) when some x is a particular work of architecture (and not any other)?' (Saul Fisher, 'Analytic Philosophy of Architecture: A Course', *American Society For Aesthetics*, accessed May 9, 2016, http://aesthetics-online.org.

21. Stan Allen at *Things in the Making.*

22. Philip Nobel, 'What Pragmatism Ain't,' *Metropolismag. com*, July 2001, http://www.metropolismag.com.

23. Ironically enough, it is Michael Speaks among the major 'post-critical' authors who refers most explicitly to Pragmatism and to Ockman's initiative. See: Michael Speaks, 'Design Intelligence and the New Economy', in *Architectural Record* 190, no. 1 (January 2002): 72–75.

24. It is important to mention that the story told here is focused on the discussions around 'a new architectural pragmatism', which occurred among a very limited group of architectural theorists. This narrow perspective is maintained for the purpose of the speculative exercise, which is interesting in reopening unexplored opportunities in that specific controversy. However, it is necessary to acknowledge other areas of architectural thinking where strands of Pragmatism were actually considered, often via other sources. I think, for example, of the recent ethnographies of architectural practice conducted in the prolongation of similar works in Science and Technology Studies and as an application of the Actor-Network Theory. But I should also quickly mention the few 'turns' that architectural theories recently followed: the 'practice-', 'affective-' or 'material-' turn, to name just a few recent engagements of architecture with authors and currents whose affinities with Pragmatism could be traced.

25. Somol and Whiting, 'Notes around the Doppler Effect', 75.

26. Robert E. Somol, 'The Seduction of the Similar',

Assemblage, no. 40 (1999): 75.

27. Ibid.

28. Van Berkel and Bos, 'Volume 3: Effects. Radiant Synthetic', in *Move*, 15.

29. Roemer Van Toorn, 'No More Dreams? The Passion of Reality in Dutch Architecture... and Its Limitations', *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 21 (2004): 22–31. My emphasis.

30. Roemer Van Toorn, 'From Representation to Presentation and Back', in *Architecture in the Netherlands Yearbook 2004–2005*, ed. Anne Hoogewoning, Roemer Van Toorn, and Arthur Wortmann (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2005).

31. Somol and Whiting, 'Notes around the Doppler Effect', 77.

32. William S. Saunders, 'Accept, Resist, or Inflect? Architecture and Contemporary Capitalism', in *The New Architectural Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

33. Charles Sanders Peirce, 'How To Make Our Ideas Clear', *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January 1878): 293.

34. William James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995 [1907]), 20.

35. Ibid., 21.

36. Ibid., 47.

37. John Dewey, 'The Development of American Pragmatism', in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, 'Pragmatism, Education, Democracy' (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998 [1925]): 5–6.

38. John Dewey, ed., *Studies in Logical Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1903), 8.

39. John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, 1935, 46–47.

40. Beyond Pragmatism's insistence on 'consequences', I believe the emphasis on situations and the interactions from which they result is another reason why Pragmatism constitutes a fruitful source to think anew our political and moral engagements. For such an argument, see for instance: Emilie Hache, *Ce à Quoi Nous Tenons : Propositions Pour Une écologie Pragmatique*, (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de Penser en Rond, 2011) ; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010); or my own reading of these authors in a similar speculation as the one conducted here: Pauline Lefebvre, 'From Autonomy To Pragmatism: Objects Made Moral', *Architecture Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2016): 23–37.

41. Stan Allen, *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), xviii.

42. Stan Allen in *Things in the Making*.

Biography:

Pauline Lefebvre is an architect and architectural theorist born in Brussels. She graduated from La Cambre in 2010. After working as an architect for two years, she was granted a FRS–FNRS fellowship and obtained her PhD in architecture from the *Faculté d'Architecture de l'ULB* in 2016, with a dissertation entitled *Tracing Pragmatism in Architecture (1990–2010). Thinking Architects' Engagement Within the Real*. In 2011–12, she participated in the programme of experimentation in arts and politics directed by Bruno Latour and Valérie Pihet at Sciences Po Paris. In the wake of that experience, she started an independent research agency named Æ. She is now conducting post-doctoral research as a BAEF Fellow and visiting scholar at Columbia University (2016–17).