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PRAGMATISTIC INFLUENCES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY FINNISH PHILOSOPHY: FROM PRE-ANALYTIC TO POST-ANALYTIC THOUGHT

1. INTRODUCTION: PRAGMATISM AND ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

Finland is sometimes regarded as the most “American” country in Europe, and Helsinki the most American capital city. There may be some truth in this slogan even with respect to philosophy. Finnish philosophers are well informed about American — mainly analytic — philosophy, which focuses on issues in epistemology and philosophy of science, often applying the tools of formal logic in explicating and solving philosophical problems. Most of the scholarly books we read (like most of the films, television series, etc. that we watch — and, more generally, most works of both high and popular culture that we consume) are produced in the United States.

It is unclear whether pragmatism, the tradition I shall discuss in this paper, should be regarded as a species of analytic philosophy. It is perhaps safe to say that pragmatism is an American philosophical movement today loosely associated with analytic philosophy, though a movement with pre-analytic origins. It has not been a major movement in Finland, but I shall show that we should not overlook certain interesting pragmatistic currents and influences in our picture of the history of twentieth century Finnish philosophy.

The development of pragmatism in Finland in our century is largely parallel to corresponding American developments. The tradition was originated by Charles S. Peirce and William James (and, to some extent, John Dewey) in a pre-

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1 This paper is to a large extent based on my book on pragmatistic influences in Finnish philosophy (Pihlström 2001). The topic of Section 3 is also discussed in my (1998c), ch. 9. I am grateful to Professor G. H. von Wright, Professor Juha Manninen, Professor Ilkka Niiniluoto, Professor Leila Haaparanta, Dr. Esa Saarinen, Dr. Mikko Salmela, Dr. Arto Siitonen, and Ms. Irma Levomäki for several helpful conversations and for their interest in my work.

2 For a brief outline of the history of Finnish philosophy, see Niiniluoto (1996). The contributions to this volume provide more detailed pictures.