ON PRAGMATIC AND NON-PRAGMATIC CONCEPT OF EXPLANATION

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This paper attempts to analyze in detail the difference between a pragmatic and non-pragmatic approach to explanation Proponents of a pragmatic explanation analyze it by means of the concepts of context or audience. However, there could be various disguises of this type of approach It is possible to include pragmatic concepts into the characterization of the item to be explained or the item that explains. On the other hand, pragmatic approach may focus on the specific relation between the item to be explained or the item that explains and context or audience. Finally, the paper underlines that there is a distinction between a pragmatic approach to explanation and the pragmatics of explanation, which should not be ignored

> *The etymology of a word, we have frequently been told, often provides the key to the analysis of its meaning. The origins of 'to explain' and of its French cousin expliquer go back to expressions used to speak of making smooth by removing folds and wrinkles.*
> (Sylvain Bromberger, 'An Approach to Explanation', 34)

When one tries to comprehend a theory of explanation, it is crucial to realize whether it approaches this concept as pragmatic or non-pragmatic.[1] 'Traditional' accounts of explanation (namely Hempel's models) focus on the logic of the non-pragmatic explanation. One branch of the critics of these models (e.g. M. Scriven, W. Dray, etc.) is convinced that explanation is in fact a pragmatic concept. That is why, it is claimed, the covering law model (CLM) cannot provide us with a relevant analysis of explanation. It allegedly misses the point by explicating incorrect type of concept. But what is the difference between pragmatic and non-pragmatic concept of explanation? And what does it mean to deal with the pragmatics of explanation? Is it the same thing as to present an analysis of the pragmatic concept of explanation? I shall consider these issues throughout the text. Although I cannot promise to provide exact definitions of these concepts I shall, at least, try to outline some useful distinctions and clarify them ten-

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[1] It is important since the absence of such a consideration may result in an inappropriate assessment or criticism of the theory under scrutiny

tatively. I shall not make attempt to propose, argue for, asses or even criti-
cize a concrete approach to explanation. The aim of this paper is solely to
analyze differing approaches to explanation.

1. Non-pragmatic approach to explanation

I shall turn to the ideas of C. G. Hempel, K. R. Popper and W. C. Salmon to
give an introductory flavor of a *non-pragmatic approach to explanation*. All of
them make efforts to separate scientific explanation[2] from the concept of
familiarization and similar concepts. At least two of them explicitly reject
to relate it in an essential way to any kind of psychological effect. And all
of them avoid explicating the concept of explanation in terms of recipient's
feelings. In Popper's case, I shall later make a distinction between relating
to and explicating in terms of a psychological effect.

Hempel claims that "scientific explanation and understanding are not
simply a reduction to the familiar: otherwise, science would not seek to
explain familiar phenomena at all" (Hempel (1965), 329). It means that
familiarity is not sufficient for an explanation, because familiar things
are in need of explanation, as well. Moreover, it is not a necessary condi-
tion, because we sometimes achieve scientific explanation by knowledge
of "some quite unfamiliar kinds of objects or processes which cannot be
directly observed, and which sometimes are endowed with strange and
even seemingly paradoxical characteristics" (Hempel (1965), 329). Ac-
cording to Hempel, not emphatic, but scientific understanding is crucial.
It is achieved by showing that phenomenon is an instance of some gen-
eral regularity, i.e. phenomenon fits into one of the covering-law models
of explanation. Psychological understanding, conceived as a feeling of
emphatic familiarity, is irrelevant for scientific explanation. "Besides, the
extent to which an idea will be considered as familiar varies from person
to person and from time to time, and a psychological factor of this kind
certainly cannot serve as a standard in assessing the worth of a proposed
explanation" (Hempel – Oppenheim (1965), 258). This assertion of Hem-
pel points to the roots of his refusal to employ psychological factors in
explication of the concept of scientific explanation. *He doesn't want to deal
with a relative/pragmatic concept of explanation*. His aim is to characterize a
non-pragmatic concept, which is independent of such contextual factors

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[2] I shall not stick slavishly to the distinction between scientific explanation and explana-
tion in this text

as time and recipient. He believes that there is some entity that is a finished explanation of something else and that does not depend on to whom or when it is presented. If it satisfies certain clear-cut requirements it is a complete explanation.

Although Salmon is in general a vocal critic of the CLM, his approach to explanation resembles that of Hempel at least in one respect. Like Hempel, Salmon refuses to take psychological effect into consideration. More precisely, he doesn't believe that psychological comfort is an essential feature of a scientific explanation. He writes: "Scientific explanations must be based on well-established scientific theory and fact; psychological comfort is not at issue" (Salmon (1998), 2). According to Salmon, we cite causes to explain phenomena. And this may result in an intuitively and psychologically paradoxical situation. In an indeterministic universe we allegedly employ the same cause to explain its high-probability effect E and also its low-probability outcome non-E. For instance, heterozygous brown-eyed parents explain the fact that their child has brown eyes, but also that he/she has non-brown eyes (e.g. blue eyes), if the latter is the case. It doesn't matter that the probability of the latter is very low (Salmon (1984), 300). It might be psychologically discomforting to use the same cause to explain two opposing phenomena. Nevertheless, according to Salmon, we should ignore it and conceive of scientific explanation as independent from such marginal features.

Popper's approach is very similar. His explication of the notion of explanation disregards such items as context and psychological effect. However, there seems to be one difference in comparison to Hempel's and Salmon's ideas. Popper claims that explanation is not a reduction of unfamiliar to familiar, but conversely a reduction of familiar to unfamiliar (Popper (1963), 63). By this he means that from ordinary life familiar phenomena are usually explained by the use of unfamiliar general laws. Therefore, one may interpret his view as *relating* explanation to a certain kind of psychological effect, namely unfamiliarity. But he certainly does not use this notion for the purpose of *explicating* explanation. In his classical section 12 of (Popper (1959)) he deals basically with the non-pragmatic concept, like the above mentioned authors do.

2. Pragmatic approach to explanation

One of the earliest criticisms of the CLM points out that this model incorrectly excludes the pragmatic aspects from its analysis of explanation. And this is very unfortunate, the critics claim, because it creates a gap between a technical non-pragmatic concept of explanation allegedly used in some branches of science and everyday pragmatic understanding of this concept. Why should one prefer a pragmatic concept? William Dray writes: "Taking account of the pragmatic dimension of explanation brings the analysis of the concept more into line with the way word is used in the ordinary course of affairs" (Dray (1957), 75). The main argument for a pragmatic account states that it captures our intuitions and follows the widespread usage, not only, in everyday life, but, also in such fields as history. Non-pragmatic models purportedly distance themselves from ordinary practice and fall prey to their pointless technicalities.

According to some authors, satisfactory analysis of explanation has to take into account such concepts as understanding and context (Scriven (1988), 67). Michael Scriven claims explanation is, in fact, a certain kind of *right* description "which fills in a particular gap in the understanding of the person or people to whom the explanation is directed" (Scriven (1988), 53). Explanation should provide the information required by the recipient to deepen his/her understanding. To express a similar idea some authors talk, instead, about the reduction of unfamiliar to familiar, elimination of the puzzlement or rendering things intelligible.

The important point is how the defenders of pragmatic approach characterize the concept of understanding (or familiarity or intelligibility). Usually they *link it to a recipient or a context.* Dray openly admits that the items used for explaining "must be *acceptable* to some person, investigator, craft, audience, &c. They must themselves raise no further demand for explanation in that particular context" (Dray (1957), 69). So the pragmatic character of explanation is the result of relating explanation to a recipient or context. Explanation in this sense does not only make things understandable, intelligible or familiar, but it makes them understandable, intelligible or familiar to somebody or in some situation.

Therefore, some critics of a non-pragmatic approach emphasize, it is a mistake to speak of a universal character of explanation. There is no explanation as such, no explanation for everybody and in every context. All explanations, even those in science, are purportedly relativized. Universal appearance of a scientific explanation should not be attributed to its non-pragmatic character, but to the fact that its wording does not

openly mention that it is addressed to the special audience – a particular group of scientists (see e.g. Matthews (1993), 356).

3. Non-pragmatic and pragmatic explanation in detail[3]

So far, I have briefly sketched how some authors abandon familiarity and other psychological effects and others claim they are essential for an explanation. Let me turn now to the core of a non-pragmatic and pragmatic concept of explanation in detail. I shall attempt to elucidate in what sense a certain account of explanation is *non-pragmatic (or pragmatic)*, i.e. when it deals with a non-pragmatic (or pragmatic) concept of explanation.[4] Only later shall I relate this analysis to what has been said by non-pragmatists about familiarity in the first section.

Let me approach the issue by using the sentence form:

(*) *I* explains *E*.

I may stand either for a linguistic entity (e.g. a text) or an extralinguistic entity (e.g. an event). *E* as well may stand either for a linguistic explanandum-sentence or an extralinguistic explanandum-event. Proponents of different models choose different options. If sentences of the form (*) are to be true, certain conditions must be fulfilled. Depending on what kinds of conditions are stipulated one may distinguish between a pragmatic and non-pragmatic account of explanation.

Non-pragmatists usually characterize *I* and *E* and consequently they focus on the nature of their relation. It is the link between *I* and *E* that is crucial for the decision whether an instance of (*) is true or not. If *I* and *E* stand in the relation required by the given model, it means that *I* explains *E*. It is possible to depict this case as follows:

$$I \text{———} E$$
Figure 1

The CLM may serve as an illustration. Briefly; according to conditions of adequacy of the deductive-nomological (D-N) model, item *I* consists of universal hypotheses and statements describing initial conditions

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[3] This analysis has been partly inspired by and some observations are derived from (Achinstein (1993)) It doesn't mean, however, my conclusions concur with those of Achinstein

[4] I shall use 'a non-pragmatic account of explanation' and 'an account of a non-pragmatic concept of explanation' interchangeably. The same holds also for 'a pragmatic account of explanation' and 'an account of a pragmatic concept of explanation'

of the event to be explained. Explanandum-sentence describes the event to be explained and the relation between item I and explanandum-sentence is that of logical entailment. Explanation is accomplished if item I logically entails explanandum-sentence.

One may try to interpret some of the historical explanations via D-N model. Alan Wood examines the origins of the Russian revolution in 1917. When trying to explain why tsarism collapsed he writes:

> ...it was neither the high command nor the Duma politicians, still less the revolutionary parties, which finally brought about the downfall of 'Bloody Nicholas'. It was caused by the spontaneous upsurge of the politically radi-calised masses. (Wood (1993), 41)

An advocate of the CLM might say that this explanation is provided by means of an elliptic D-N argument. If the argument was stated explicitly, the item I would contain also the universal statement 'Whenever masses are radicalized to such an extent that they upsurge, the old regime collapses'. Then, the statements comprised in item I logically entail the statement about the collapse of the tsarism. This might be a concrete example of an explanation based on a non-pragmatic model.

Obviously, I and E may be linked not only to each other, but also to some other, 'external thing'. One may require that I and/or E (except their own mutual relation) must be somehow related to the pragmatic factors like an audience/recipient and/or context. What would such an additional relation look like? For instance, it could be stipulated that I must be *comprehensible for* a certain type of audience (let me call this *type* of relation to audience R_a) or that E must *evoke some kind of strangeness in* a certain type of context (let me call this *type* of relation to context R_c).[5] By focusing on R_a and R_c a theoretician brings into his/her account some pragmatic considerations. If conditions about the relation of I and/or E to audience and/or context constitute a part of the general requirements imposed upon explanation, a theoretician is clearly dealing with a pragmatic concept of explanation. This paragraph can be summarized by stating the following feature of a pragmatic account of explanation: a_p) *it deals with the relation of I and/or E to audience and/or context.*

Is there no other way how pragmatic influences could get into an account of explanation? Is it sufficient to characterize I, E, their link and to ignore other possible relations to pragmatic features to avoid getting the

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[5] Of course, similarly I may be related to context and E to audience

label 'pragmatic account of explanation'? It seems to me that audience and context could creep into an account of explanation also via characterization of I or E. One's analysis may refuse to acknowledge relations of the type R_a and R_c explicitly, nevertheless, it may make use of the concepts of audience and context when circumscribing the relata of an explanation. For instance, it is possible to create a pragmatic version of the D-N model. Imagine that besides its usual conditions of adequacy, there is an extra requirement stating that statements included in I must possess a property *to be understandable in a certain type of context*. Or within a causal approach to explanation, it could be required that I consists of causes that are *comprehensible for a certain type of audience*.[6] But this resembles what I have already labeled as a type of relation R_a. There is only a minor difference based on the fact that this relation may be openly formulated as holding between I (or E) and a pragmatic factor or it may be secretly included into a characterization of I (or E). In the first case one characterizes I and afterwards relates it to a pragmatic factor. In the second case one uses the pragmatic feature itself to define the character of I or its component(s) and does not outline its relation in addition to I's characterization. Thus, another indicator of a pragmatic nature of an account of explanation is: b_p) *it makes use of the concepts of audience and/or context for a characterization of explanation's relata or their components*.
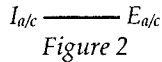
$$I_{a/c} \text{——————} E_{a/c}$$
Figure 2

($I_{a/c}$ means that I is characterized by a property referring to a(*udience*) *or* c(*ontext*).)

By analogy, I can articulate two characteristics of a non-pragmatic account of explanation: *a) it disregards relation of I and E to audience and context; b) it doesn't make use of the concepts of audience and context for a characterization of explanation's relata and their components*.[7]

This probably isn't a comprehensive analysis of all instances when a certain model deals with a pragmatic or non-pragmatic concept of explanation. In each case I have presented only two examples about what to look for to determine the character of the analyzed explanation. These instructions – a), b), a_p), b_p) – may be used as an ultra-short manual for

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[6] This could be viewed as a property; however, it may be also divided into a relation and a relatum

[7] These might be conceived as the necessary conditions for a non-pragmatic explanation

a simple and quick differentiation between two different types of approaches to explanation. Somebody may propose to reduce *a)* and *b)* to one basic feature of a non-pragmatic account: *c) it does not use the concepts of audience and context,* or to reduce $a_p)$ and $b_p)$ to one basic feature of a pragmatic account: $c_p)$ *it does use the concepts of audience and context.* I believe, however, that mainly $a_p)$ and $b_p)$ are more helpful separately. Not only do they identify the core of the issue, but they also uncover two common disguises of the pragmatic accounts.

4. Relations in a pragmatic explanation

To clarify the nature of relations in a pragmatic account of explanation I shall examine instances of $a_p)$ more closely. Clearly, sentence form (*) is usually viewed as non-pragmatic. Advocates of a pragmatic explanation face two options concerning their attitude to (*). They may *either* dismiss it as misleading, because it implies the explanation is the matter of only two (non-pragmatic) entities and their relation *or* they may claim it is *the elliptic version of the proper pragmatic one.* In the case of $a_p)$ complete pragmatic sentence forms would look as follows:

(P$_1$*) Item *I* is related$_a$ to audience *A* and item *I* is related to explanandum *E*;

(P$_2$*) Item *I* is related$_c$ to context *C* and item *I* is related to explanandum *E*;

(P$_3$*) *I* is related$_a$ to *A* and *I* is related to *E* and *E* is related$_a$ to *A*;

(P$_4$*) *I* is related$_c$ to *C* and *I* is related to *E* and *E* is related$_a$ to *A*; etc.

Where 'is related$_a$ to', 'is related$_c$ to' and 'is related to' express different relations. The first one is a type of relation to audience; the second one to context and the third one is any other suitable type of relation. In the case of a pragmatic modification of the D-N model the third one would be obviously the relation of logical entailment and the second one could be relation$_c$ between *I* and *C*, for instance *I is understandable in C.* (P$_1$*), (P$_2$*), etc. could be formulated even more schematically. Using R_a in place of 'is related$_a$ to', R_c in place of 'is related$_c$ to' and R in place of 'is related to' we get:

(P$_1$*) $R_a(I, A)$ & $R(I, E)$;

(P$_3$*) $R_a(I, A)$ & $R(I, E)$ & $R_a(E, A)$; etc.

The above schemes may be conceived as miscellaneous explicitly pragmatic variants of the sentence form (*). In my opinion, these are the

schemes that capture the form of the pragmatic instances I have analyzed in the paragraph that resulted in stating a_p).
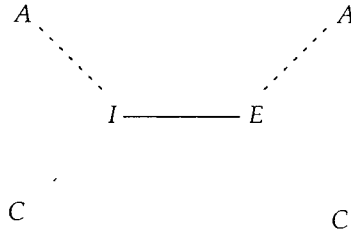
$$A \qquad\qquad\qquad A$$
$$I \text{———} E$$
$$C \qquad\qquad\qquad C$$

Figure 3

Hayden White is a narrativist philosopher of history. Some of his claims permit to derive a sketch of a *pragmatic* model of narrative explanation, namely of the (P_1^*) type. White's narrative explanation consists of a narrative (item I) and a part of the past (explanandum E), which are related in such a way that I *represents* E.[8] The crucial pragmatic feature is that the recipient of the narrative has to be *familiar with* the *form* or the *type* of narrative. (According to White, narrative may have a *form* of tragedy, comedy, romance or farce.) It means that recipient A is another relatum and item I should be in a certain relation to A. This interpretation links his narrative explanation to (P_1^*). If I is familiar to A (in other words A is familiar with I) and I represents E, narrative explanation is completed. Another reading of White's narrative explanation along the lines of b_p) is possible as well. According to this interpretation the narrative explanation consists of two relata, i.e. narrative and explanandum, and their relation. However, this account is still pragmatic, because the form of narrative (item I) is characterized by a property *to be familiar to a recipient*. This makes for the pragmatic character even of a narrative explanation that is analyzed only via two relata and their relation.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Karl Marx tells a story of *coup d'etat* in 19th century France. His narrative might be viewed as a historical explanation of that period. It has the form of a farce:

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[8] Details of this relation of representation should not concern us here. For White's views on narrative explanation see White (1978) and White (1973) The crucial quote· "And when he [the reader] has perceived the class or type to which the story that he is reading belongs, he experiences the effect of having the events in the story explained to him" (White (1978), 86)

In August the Constituent Assembly had decided to dissolve only after it had worked out and promulgated a whole series of organic laws that were to supplement the Constitution .. Not only the ministry, with Odilon Barrot at its head, but all the royalist members of the National Assembly told it in bullying accents then that its dissolution was necessary for the restoration of credit, for the consolidation of order, for putting an end to the indefinite provisional arrangements and for establishing a definitive state of affairs; that it hampered the productivity of the new government and sought to prolong its existence merely out of malice; that the country was tired of it. Bonaparte took note of all this invective against the legislative power, learnt it by heart and proved to the parliamentary royalists, on December 2, 1851, that he had learnt from them. He reiterated their own catchwords against them. (Marx (1967), 38)

One may say that the farcical form accounts for the explanatory power of the narrative, but only on the condition that the recipient is familiar with this form or type of narrative. Following White's model of narrative explanation Marx could be viewed as providing a historical explanation of a pragmatic type. It is an explanation for the reader familiar with the farcical form of narrative.

In addition to what have been said above, there is yet another pragmatic version of (*). In P. Achinstein's wording it reads (Achinstein (1993), 327):

(1)   Account *A* explains fact *X* to person *P*.

Let me compare (1) cast into my own terminology as (1') 'Item *I* explains explanandum *E* to audience *A*' with the first of the proper sentence forms (P_1^*) 'Item *I* is related$_a$ to audience *A* and item *I* is related to explanandum *E*'. What is the difference between (1') and (P_1^*)? It seems to me that (1') captures the occurrence of *one relation* with three relata – '*x* explains *y* to *z*', whereas (P_1^*) informs us about *two relations* holding between the same types of relata – '*x* is related$_a$ to *z*' and '*x* is related to *y*'. Expression '...explains ...to ...' in (1') is a three-place predicate expressing a triadic relation, whereas in (P_1^*) there are two two-place predicates expressing dyadic relations. I suspect that these expressions signify different relations; and therefore, the former should not be replaced by the latter two.[9]

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[9] The form of (1') is similar to 'John *throws* his ball to David' and (P_1^*) to a rather clumsy sentence 'John related to (e g. taller than) David *throws* his ball'. I believe it's easy to see now that there are different relations expressed by 'throws'.

In fact the last claim needs elaboration. I assume that those who formulate a theory of explanation do not take explanation as a primitive, i.e. automatically clear concept. Since they analyze it, they analyze it in terms of something else that might be helpful in clarifying explanation. In other words, they try to explicate it in terms of or reduce it to something else. Bearing this assumption in mind we should look at (1') once more. The predicate '...explains ...to ...' in (1') should be viewed as something analyzable in terms of something else. In my opinion, advocates of pragmatic approach might say (1') is analyzable for instance in terms of (1'') 'Item I makes explanandum E understandable for audience A'. In that case, I should have compared 'x makes y understandable for z' with 'x is related$_a$ to z' and 'x is related to y' in the previous paragraph. Even if 'is related$_a$ to' stands for 'is understandable for' there is, besides other differences, additional relation between I and E unaccounted for in (1''). Therefore, on this interpretation (1') cannot be replaced by (P_1^*).[10]

I have argued that a pragmatic approach to explanation focuses not only on a relation between I and E, but also on a *further relation* of any of these relata to a pragmatic factor. (P_1^*) is an example of this idea. Although I dismiss (1') as an appropriate sentence form to represent this case I do not claim that it cannot articulate the gist of any kind of pragmatic concept of explanation whatsoever. (1') successfully captures *a different disguise of a pragmatic approach*. It gives the form to another idea behind a pragmatic theory that postulates I, E and *a relation*. But this is not a relation holding only between two, but between three or four relata. It relates not only I and E, but in addition it relates to them also one or both of the pragmatic factors A and C. The proper representations of these instances are provided by 'I explains E to audience A', 'I explains E in context C' and 'I explains E in context C to audience A'. (Where '...explains ...to ...' is in a particular model analyzed in terms of something else, e.g. in terms of '...makes ...understandable for ...'.)

$$I - - - E - - - C - - - A$$
Figure 4

This implies that the first feature of a pragmatic approach to explanation can be made more exact. In fact, the general idea behind ambiguous articulation in a_p) may be divided into two more precise characteristics of two types of cases:

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[10] In fact, on a different reading, (1') might be taken as an elliptic expression of (P_1^*) In my opinion, however, it would be an awkward interpretation

$a_{p1})$ *it (a pragmatic account) deals with a separate relation holding between I and A and/or C and/or another one holding between E and A and/or C.*

$a_{p2})$ *it deals with a triadic or tetradic relation holding between I, E and A and/or C.*

By analogy, similar amendments are possible also for the features of a non-pragmatic approach to explanation.

Thus, $a_{p1})$, $a_{p2})$ and $b_p)$ characterize various types of a pragmatic concept of explanation. It is important to underline, however, that in an account of explanation pragmatic concepts like audience or context need not be used overtly. Sometimes these concepts are hidden behind the others. Typically, they are the concepts of familiarity, understanding, comprehension, etc. Only these latter are usually defined using the concepts of audience and context. On the other hand, if one presents an explication of familiarity, etc. without making use of the pragmatic concepts, his/her account doesn't have to be necessarily pragmatic. This illuminates and gives a more accurate meaning to an idea that Hempel, Salmon and Popper are interested in a non-pragmatic concept of explanation, because they ignore the concepts of familiarity, etc. This assertion holds if familiarity is analyzed as a psychological effect on a recipient. If, however, one provides unequivocal and non-pragmatic explication of familiarity one can use this concept and at the same time account for a non-pragmatic concept of explanation. This point can be illustrated by Hempel's view. He admits that scientific explanation provides understanding, but purely *scientific*. And this type of understanding is not based on the relation of explanans to audience or to context. Thus, to put it succinctly *non-pragmatic approach ignores* (not necessarily concepts of familiarity, etc., but) *concepts of audience, context and those that are explicated via these two.*

5. A few words on the pragmatics of explanation

The expression 'pragmatics of explanation' is not always understood in the same way. Bas van Fraassen uses it as the title for his chapter on explanation in his *The Scientific Image*. But when Salmon is discussing van Fraassen's view he usually refers to it as to a 'pragmatic theory/account' of explanation (Salmon (1989), 144 – 145). To add to one's confusion, Peter Achinstein claims van Fraassen does not present a pragmatic theory of explanation (Achinstein (1993), 333). How should one interpret these

remarks? I shall briefly point out what could be a genuine distinction between pragmatics of explanation and a pragmatic account of explanation, which, in my opinion, should not be overlooked.[11]

Generally, pragmatics is a study of "expressions' uses in social contexts" (Lycan (2000), 164). But context might be discussed also in a pragmatic account of explanation. Does it follow that there is no salient difference between *the pragmatics of* and *pragmatic approach to* explanation? One thing has to be spelled out to prevent a future possible misunderstanding. In case of a pragmatic approach contextual factors are used to characterize or explicate *the concept of explanation itself*. The pragmatics, on the other hand, focuses on the uses of expressions (these may fulfill conditions stated by a certain pragmatic or non-pragmatic account of explanation) in various contexts. The pragmatics outline conditions for a successful performance of such *acts as explanation*.[12] Let me clarify it. *I* explains *E*. Therefore, according to one view, *I* and *E* constitute an explanation, i.e. a certain unit *U*. Now, assume it doesn't make any difference whether this unit *U* satisfies criteria of a pragmatic or non-pragmatic theory of explanation. It is simply an accomplished explanation, because it fulfills requirements of a certain model of explanation.[13] Although it is an explanation in itself, in the framework of pragmatics following problem may arise: 'Does the utterance of *U* perform an act of explanation in context *C*?' Assume that *C* is characterized by a person who does not believe that *E* is true. While *E de facto* might be true, in *C* there is no need for an act of explanation. (If I don't believe storks migrate in the autumn, there is no need to provide an act of explanation of why they migrate by uttering certain sentences!) Although *U* is a proper *explanation in itself*, the utterance of *U* fails to perform *an act of explanation in C*. Thus, one may conclude that should the utterance of *U* present a successful act of explanation, it must be performed in a context where one beliefs that *E* holds.

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[11] I shall not discuss whether van Fraassen presents in fact the pragmatics of explanation or a pragmatic account of explanation For the discussion of his account, see for instance Kitcher - Salmon (1987) and Hanzel (2003).

[12] It is the view of R. Stalnaker that pragmatics states necessary and sufficient conditions for a successful performance of act types like promises, counterfactuals and explanations (Stalnaker (1972)).

[13] This is a controversial claim. Some might maintain there is no accomplished explanation without an act of explanation or explaining episode

The pragmatics of explanation is interested in similar types of situation. It analyzes them and states conditions for a successful performance of *acts of explanation*. Therefore, pragmatics should not be confused with a pragmatic account of explanation, which tries to analyze *the concept of explanation itself*. Bromberger's distinction between a *performance* sense and *text* sense of 'explanation' might be helpful. 'Explanation' in the first sense "refers to a certain type of didactic performance, and instances of it", while in the second sense this term "refers to something more abstract, to something that constitutes the cognitive substance of such performances" (Bromberger (1992), 50). The pragmatics is interested in the performance sense of this term. That is why those who are dealing with the pragmatics of explanation prefer to speak of *explaining* (Matthews (1993)), *explaining episodes* (Bromberger (1992)), *explaining acts* (Achinstein (1988)) and they emphasize the importance of *communicative strategies* and *the rhetoric* of explanation (Faye (1999), 62).

6. Conclusion

I admit that my treatment of the pragmatics is very sketchy and it neglects many interesting questions (e.g. 'Can the pragmatics of explanation tell us everything important about explanation?'). The main thing I wanted to do in the previous section is to point out very briefly that there is a difference between a pragmatic approach to explanation and the pragmatics of explanation. The focus of my paper was, however, on the difference between a non-pragmatic and pragmatic concept of explanation. I have tried to clarify this distinction and to state three features that can be used to distinguish between an account analyzing the former and the latter type of concept.

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