

Preface

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE LAST CENTURY, American philosophy yielded three unusually influential, heterodox, more or less lopsidedly doctrinaire texts that caught up the subterranean intuitions of an otherwise undistinguished academy and now count as the vanguard of its greatest surge of influence to date within the whole of Eurocentric philosophy. Their convergence is also clear, though it seemed like scatter when each book appeared in turn, and their shared instruction and promise came into focus only by reviewing the drift of Western philosophy against the piecemeal manifestos each favored in its time. All three authors are now gone, though they were marvelously alive when I began to put the present story together. I've benefited from knowing them somewhat, possibly because I came to see that each was much more intuitive than deliberate, in spite of seeming evidence to the contrary, and that none of them was entirely clear about the fuller meaning of the exclusionary direction each chose to champion. Moreover, their optimisms were eccentrically off the mark, yet they were always close to the center of the energy that, at the end of the century, began to take explicit form—or so it seems to me.

They were on their way, it's now clear, to offering pragmatism new options of an unexpected kind, though they had cast themselves initially as opponents of successful orthodoxies. Looking back, most discussants would now accept their being characterized as pragmatists of a new kind, or conceptual cousins at least. In fact, Richard Rorty explicitly claimed that when, early in the second half of the twentieth century, American philosophy took "the linguistic turn," pragmatism's career seemed no longer

relevant. A few decades later, pragmatism began to coopt the linguistic turn itself and thereupon began to reclaim and penetrate the work of the best-known analytic champions—on meaning and truth and reference and allied topics—who were often determined opponents of pragmatism’s supposed laxity. There is now a sizeable company of admired analysts who are clearly pragmatists of the newer breed (sometimes self-identified as such), and as a result, the work of the original pragmatists now seems made of sterner stuff than the analysts’ appraisals in the early decades of the century originally supposed.

I’ve come to see the future of Western philosophy in terms of the many strands of what is now identified—loosely, it must be said—as pragmatism, analytic philosophy, and continental philosophy. The serendipity of their convergence has led me to imagine an entirely fabulous creature, the pragmatist of the future! Such a creature could easily be the agent of a genuine rapprochement among the different movements of Eurocentric philosophy. He may not come our way. But I draw together in his name the largest promise of our philosophical age captured, obliquely, by three emblematic American texts of the second half of the twentieth century: W. V. Quine’s *Word and Object* (1960), T. S. Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962, 1970), and Richard Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979).

All three authors, I would say, were pragmatists of a dawning sort: none of them could have been easily reconciled with the main thrust of pragmatism’s classic period. But then, when “official” pragmatism seriously declined in the 1940s, there was no reason to believe the movement would ever revive again. Nor was there reason to believe the vigorous analytic philosophies of the 1930s and 1940s would ever revive (those associated with the scientism of the positivists and the unity of science movement) or, more baffling still, the triumphal, altogether different inquiries associated with the spectacular influence of Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl on the Continent.

The whole of Western philosophy was, I think, becalmed, traumatically affected by the Second World War and the cold war; and by and large, almost nothing got through the conceptual haze that was not a recycling of the seemingly successful inquiries of the first half of the century. What *would have been* novel for the future of the second half of the last century *was*, however, already inchoate in the three texts mentioned. In making this explicit, I admit I am recommending the reinvention (more than the

extension) of pragmatism along the lines of what is still inadequately perceived in the new beginnings tendered by the three texts noted. Because, of course, although they may all be judged to have taken the linguistic turn, the “turn” itself proved to require a richer enculturing and historicized setting than the analysts were prepared to admit: to have taken the “turn” in Rorty’s sense seemed to threaten (for instance, among the champions of the unity of science program) to reintroduce without a struggle the dubious logic and semantics the analysts had fought so hard to disallow. But if that is indeed the mark of analytic purity, then almost no important figure among the American analysts could possibly ensure his bona fides.

Quine’s and Rorty’s new starts are, finally, failures, I would say, but they unmistakably confirm the need to think in new directions that they themselves obliquely introduce. Kuhn’s new start I deem the best of the three, a genuinely fresh beginning; but it was also the most savagely rejected of the lot—only grudgingly reclaimed at the end of the century, in a way unperceived even by Kuhn, who found it difficult to accept his own findings and even to explain them in terms of the philosophical canon centered in Immanuel Kant and G. W. F. Hegel. I’ve published my reading of all of this in two previous books: *Reinventing Pragmatism* (2002), centered on the abortive revival of pragmatism due to what really proved to be a minor skirmish between Rorty and Hilary Putnam; and *The Unraveling of Scientism* (2003), regarding the wider failing of analytic philosophy’s best-known inquiries.

The volume now before you ventures, well beyond the Anglo-American limits of both pragmatism and analytic philosophy, to explain the three-legged promise of the Eurocentric world in terms of the new alignment glimpsed in the “pragmatisms” of my specimen texts but read through confrontations between American pragmatism and the leading currents of continental philosophy, as well as with the more familiar themes of analytic philosophy. Predictably, the upshot is that the “pragmatism” that now makes itself felt is no longer merely or even distinctly American. It requires the reclamation of the once-radical themes of historicity and enculturation, inexplicably neglected or diminished by the classic pragmatists themselves but already brought to center stage in the interval that belongs to Kant, the German idealists, and Hegel especially, whom the British analysts (Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore) hoped, at the very start of the last century, to erase completely (or at least to supersede) and whom the American pragmatists largely failed to champion adequately.

What follows, then, is a lean but hopeful narrative of philosophically linked arguments that threads its way through false starts, deflections, retrograde currents, excessive zeal, and blindness on all sides and that emerges, wiser and chastened, with a thoroughly justified sense of having recovered the principal strengths of what it should never have lost—what I call “pragmatism’s advantage”—which now lies as much outside pragmatism in the narrow sense as it does outside analytic and continental philosophy.

I don’t mind spelling out the saving themes I’ve collected. I’m convinced that the pragmatists were right to reinterpret Hegel’s critique of Kant along naturalistic and (largely) Darwinian lines and to attenuate as far as possible the idealist extravagances with which a constructivist realism might be defended. I also endorse their good sense in favoring the flux of history over fixity, invariance, substantive necessities, universalisms of every sort, cognitive privilege, abstract truths drawn from facultative powers: that is, favoring what, effectively, is the culturally artifactual, second-natured “nature” of a society of human selves—impossible to account for in terms of biological sources alone.

The age of “Kantian” conceptual closure is over, and its replacement by a “Hegelian” policy that holds fast to the view that there can be no disjunction between our would-be conceptual truths and our empirical truths now seems assured. Pragmatism has begun again with renewed conviction—and decidedly less baggage than before. Furthermore, to come to findings such as these is, perhaps, no more than a preliminary effort at rationalizing our entire history on the edge of an even larger encounter of a global sort. There you have the motivation of my tale, if not the argument. But the argument *is* the principal thing, as I very much hope you will confirm by reading on.

I can put my intuition a little more provocatively. If you read the master theme of Hegel’s *Lectures on Fine Art*, the claim that “art is higher than nature,” as signifying that *Geist*’s role in the arts and in the forms of human intelligence that make art (and language and encultured action and history) possible is “higher” than the linkage that holds between physical and biological nature and *Geist*, you touch (no more than touch) on the intriguing possibility that Hegel has glimpsed the thread of an argument that would in time enable us to construe the evolution of language and culture as a *sui generis* process that depends on biological evolution (in the Darwinian sense) but that cannot be explained solely or primar-

ily or in its most important innovations in Darwinian or neo-Darwinian terms. Add to this the evidence that Charles Peirce, who held conflicting opinions regarding Hegel's achievement but who also acknowledged the undeniable fact that his own evolutionary conception of reality came to respect the import of a growing convergence between his own version of "post-Kantian idealism" and Hegel's synoptic vision, was very strongly attracted (for instance, in his reviews in the American journal the *Nation*) to the double theme of "Darwinizing Hegel" and "Hegelianizing Darwin," it dawns on you that the classic phase of American pragmatism was ineluctably drawn to a theme (one among a good many) that never really flowered in the strong form that now beckons. I reclaim these themes in the name of "pragmatism's advantage," and I take note of the fact that not altogether dissimilar temptations have begun to be applied to the reading of Husserl and Heidegger. I concede at once that these temptations are distinctly heterodox. But then I myself am in the business of changing philosophy (if I can), not in any merely textual explication, although I'm also unwilling to deny that the new themes I have in mind were already budding in their original sources.

A final caveat, then. I have no interest in a mere rereading of the overall history of "modern" modern philosophy from, say, Kant and the idealists to the beginning of our new century. I have no reason to think that that would not be a worthwhile labor, but it's not mine! Some readers (of early drafts of the book now before you) find it much too easy a slide to go from the inquiry I intend to the one just mentioned—apparently a better choice (in their view) than the one I favor. But I see no point to any such undertaking if it's not motivated by arguments of the sort I mean to provide. Furthermore, *if* my own argument is at all convincing, then the economies I intend will lead us to see that a very large part of Kantian, post-Kantian idealist, and, more pointedly, Hegelian work will have been exposed as rhetorically and philosophically extravagant (excessively so), too purple for words (though perfectly unavoidable), open to radical interpretation (if worth preserving at all), important more in persuading us to abandon (at long last) some of philosophy's most egregious mistakes than in collecting once again those encyclopedic histories that avoid harsh economies.

That's a heterodox notion, I don't deny. But on my own account, it cannot be separated from the true import of classic pragmatism stretched a little beyond its accustomed practice—that catches up as well the main threads of existentialism, Marxism, hermeneutics, late phenomenology,

Lebensphilosophie, *Weltanschauungsphilosophie*, poststructuralism, postmodernism, and similarly motivated innovations. If that's conceded, then from my own point of view, to favor history over philosophy is to put the cart before the horse. Also, it's perfectly clear that the way in which competing arguments would have to be weighted would be very different if we gave priority to the historical narrative over the philosophical argument—though I would never deny that “doing” the history of philosophy *is* a way of “doing” philosophy and that philosophy makes no sense unless it incorporates the evolving history of philosophy as the narrative form of its own evolving lessons.

Thus, for example, the great theme of Reason (*Vernunft*: finally inseparable from *Verstand*, but not a form of higher knowledge) is absolutely central to the history of philosophy spanning Kant and Hegel (the beginnings of “modern” modern philosophy); but it is also the principal source of conceptual disorder when viewed from the vantage of the story I'm about to tell. In short, the history of philosophy without philosophy is pointless, and philosophy without the history of philosophy is impoverished and arbitrary.

Furthermore, if you allow a conceptual leap in advance of my story, I confess I also hold that Hegel without Darwin is conceptually wild, and Darwin without Hegel is very nearly philosophically irrelevant. The double lesson that I draw (which the account that follows is meant to support) maintains, first, that the human being we call a “self” or “person” is an artifact of cultural history made possible by late biological evolution but not explained primarily by biological means; and second, that the Darwinian discovery (not any theoretical doctrine we might call “Darwinism”) makes it clear that *both* the reductionisms of analytic scientism and the extravagant efforts of continental philosophy to elude the constraints of naturalism (as the continentals see the world) are stalemated at a stroke by the first part of the lesson I tender. That needs to be spelled out, of course; but it *is* the essential clue to what I am calling “pragmatism's advantage.”

The trouble is that the original pragmatists somehow sold us short with regard to both historicity and enculturation *and* with regard to the artifactuality of the self favored by a naturalistic reading of Hegel along lines made possible by Darwin's innovation but not confined to any sort of biologism. The philosophical simplifications achieved by construing the self as the formation of a new kind of being, “a natural artifact,” so to say, are quite extraordinary. They show all three movements to be vulnerable

in a way they'd never seriously considered before—but show them now to be open to a genuine rapprochement and a stronger future. There's the tale that remains to be told.

The account that follows traces a philosophical history meant to make the intended “advantage” palpably familiar, agreeably accessible, and plainly worth conjuring with. I mean the idea that the human self (or person, subject, agent, ego, *ich*, *yo*, I) is not a natural-kind kind at all but a “natural artifact” engendered as a regularly emergent transform of the primate offspring of *Homo sapiens* through its ability to internalize the mastery of a natural language (and its enabled and enabling culture), a self thereby *gebildet* (instructed, reared) among the apt members of its own encompassing society. I track the nerve of the argument in favor of this “advantaged” doctrine largely by tracing the false turns and developing rapprochement of the pertinent history of Eurocentric philosophy: I sketch the philosophical argument in favor of the artifactual self only in terms of its general orientation and likeliest resources. It will need a sustained account of its own, a fresh beginning, bits of which I admit I've already broached in earlier inquiries.

The present narrative (the third of three linked studies) serves to bring to a close a larger history of the philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century viewed from the vantage of American pragmatism within the ambit of the whole of Eurocentric philosophy and focused jointly on the stalemate of the principal currents of the period and the glimpsed promise of a strong breakthrough that lies—has lain for a long time—essentially unclaimed, ignored, somewhat dismembered, not entirely inchoate, but definitely in need of a recovery capable of rejoining the best forces of the now-dysfunctional divisions of pragmatism, analytic philosophy, and continental philosophy so that the envisioned achievement might actually bring the larger history of modern philosophy, possibly even the history of the whole of Western philosophy, to at least one convincing resolution of a conserving and firmly simplified sort.

It would have to give up the parochial divisions that still plague Western philosophy but now show signs of being judged tiresome and perceptibly unnecessary. The sense of the doctrine's “advantage” is the main issue, however. I find its potential gains decidedly grand. For instance, I take it to afford a plausible replacement for the various reductionisms of the unity of science program that have remained in play since the dissolution of positivism. That is, the new conception might adopt as its principle

of scientific unity the premise that all the sciences are human sciences (that all depend on the same resources of human inquiry) and that the natural sciences are, therefore, deliberately shaped as an efficient abstraction within the enabling resources of the cultural world—say, along the lines of predictability and technological control more than mere loyalty to the ideologies of reductionism and extensionalism.

The thesis of the artifactual self would greatly facilitate the Darwinizing of both Kant and Hegel, the abandonment of biologism and teleologism in nature at large, the very prospect of interpreting the main lines of Western philosophy naturalistically and without disallowing the unique powers of the human mode of being. As already remarked, it would also facilitate strong gains in the direction of a rapprochement of the whole of Western philosophy, without insisting on any uniquely valid doctrine: it would, for instance, reopen the possibility of drawing on conceptual strategies developed from largely disallowed sources (analytic from continental, continental from analytic) that might then overcome the self-impoverishing tendencies of so much of recent philosophy. (This is no longer a remote concern.)

It would fit very well with the scruple of a constructivist form of realism, without yielding to any of the extravagances of idealism that are all too easily favored in attempts to incorporate the seminal lessons drawn from Kant and Hegel. Constructivism in epistemology, which the post-Kantian tradition has made all but unavoidable, need not yield to idealism in the metaphysical sense; but it cannot fail to ensure the profound contingency of the norms of truth and knowledge and moral and other forms of worth. These are simply some of the anticipated benefits of supporting the artifactuality of the self and the corollary economies of the leanest possible rapprochement among the best resources of pragmatism and analytic and continental philosophy.

The story that follows lays a proper ground for a genuinely recuperative philosophy but sketches its main lines no more than glancingly. I have my own inkling of how the argument should go, but I see no point in keeping it hostage to my personal convictions. I read the recovery as a sort of larger pragmatism fulfilling the promise of its classic beginnings. But even here it has eclipsed its beginnings by turning to a deeper analysis of the meaning of the transcendental and posttranscendental turn in philosophy during the fifty-plus years from about the last quarter of the eighteenth century to a little more than the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth.

I take that interval to mark the true beginnings of “modern” modern philosophy: the joint rise of constructivism and historicism and the developing need to reinterpret its inflated claims in finite, a posteriori, naturalistic, epistemically unprivileged, existentially adequate but transient terms that were variously first provided by Marxist, existentialist, Darwinist, and pragmatist conjectures.

Now, near the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the picture has become reasonably clear. My own suggestion rests entirely with the guess that the Darwinizing of Hegel and Kant and the Kantian/Hegelian absorption of Darwin—which I find most clearly manifested (though hardly deliberately) in the somewhat convergent philosophies of Charles Peirce and Ernst Cassirer—provides the best clue regarding the importance of the doctrine of the artifactual self. In any case, it’s the best clue to what my own philosophical labors are committed to.

I must add a word of thanks to Ruth Brooks, who manages my scatter better than I can; and to two young friends, Robert Main and Aili Bresnahan, who have helped with various chores the manuscript’s preparation required. (Main, I should add, introduced me to Peirce’s reviews in the *Nation*.)

J. M.
February 2009