

Prologue

THIS IS THE FOURTH of a trio of books I planned as an overview of pragmatism and American philosophy in the second half of the twentieth century. It sounds a little odd to say, but it's true enough. Its topics became too insistent in the process of writing the earlier trio to be turned away now. This book violates my original constraints in two agreeable ways: for one, it reaches back to the middle of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, to the entirely new speculative direction afforded by Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in order to provide a sense of how pragmatism took form as an unusual variant of the radical turn in European philosophy due to Kant's and Hegel's innovations; and, for the other, it ventures to guess at the future of pragmatism and the whole of Eurocentric philosophy—by which I mean “modern” modern philosophy focused by Kant and Hegel on what we now understand to be acceptable transforms of transcendental questions and the demands of historicity. That is to say: it guesses, now, at the best of philosophy's future from the vantage of a correct guess at philosophy's future at the turn into the nineteenth century. If we add an appreciation of the influence of Charles Darwin's discoveries as well, which first appear in 1859, the year of John Dewey's birth, we have in hand the largest sources of the scatter and continuity of the entire trajectory of American philosophy from a period beginning shortly after the American Civil War and coursing down to the present—legible enough to venture a prophecy for the whole of Western philosophy. The sheer prospect of such a vision proved too much of a temptation to resist. The result is the book before you now.

The extraordinary thing is this: the same themes that were influential but distinctly scanted in the earliest phase of pragmatism have surfaced once again, in some respects rather little altered, from the 1970s and 1980s to the end of the first decade of our new century. These themes, largely led by the strong presence of W. V. Quine's careful selection of the still-viable undertakings of somewhat more than the previous half-century's collection of analytic philosophy's most daring initiatives, became increasingly distant (nearly invisible) with the sudden rise to prominence of the American wing of analytic philosophy in the 1950s.

About 150 years have passed since Charles Peirce published his first papers in 1868, toward the end of his twenties. Some readers find the abiding thread of the spectacular, still rather little-known huge heap of papers already shaped in those first few pieces. Peirce, who entered into the debates of post-Kantian Europe in a commanding way that we are still not entirely able to assess correctly, was surely the first of the new voices of American philosophy to have survived in force down to our own day. But the need for some such account has grown more insistent with pragmatism's quite sudden, unanticipated revival toward the end of the twentieth century, against the scattered failure of analytic and so-called continental philosophies to match its challenge. Western philosophy has been in disarray, I believe, since at least World War II and its aftermath, despite its admittedly brilliant figures, nearly all of whom seem to have been infected with an essentially nostalgic weakness for the most privileged enthusiasms of the first half of the twentieth century, which they knew in their hearts could never be successfully revived, though they nonetheless were willing to commit themselves to living out the reprise of one or another important first failure—or to spending their best energies in exposing the practice in others. The first tendency is perfectly illustrated by the hegemony of analytic scientism in America following the collapse of the strong programs of the logical positivists and the unity of science movement; the second is perhaps best illustrated by the enormous industry of what has come to be known as French poststructuralism.

My thought is that pragmatism recovered its standing, almost unscathed, by way of its relatively inexplicit adherence to what in the leanest way it was able to respect and preserve from its Kantian/Hegelian influences—in its explicit adherence to the flux of experience, to various forms of naturalism without foundations or privilege, to its Darwinian lessons, to its sense of the primacy of practical and societal life, to historicity (how-

ever inchoate or weakly developed), and to its political application. It's been given a free pass for a second (or a third) beginning.

I think the whole of Western philosophy, spent by the false (recycled, diminished) starts of the late twentieth century, is curious to learn what pragmatism will make of its unearned invitation to begin once again. But now, pragmatism is no longer a merely American territory. Its revival is manifest almost everywhere in Europe: in Poland and Slovakia as much as in Italy and Spain—and in Germany and France and Britain, and (I might add) in Brazil and China. It's on its way to becoming something of a philosophical lingua franca, a modest shadow cast perhaps by the spread of the English language itself—and, also, by the empiricism and liberalism embedded in its Kantian/Hegelian sources. But it will have to earn its reprieve if it is to survive a closer, more global scrutiny.

It's become naggingly clear to me that all of my previous efforts to understand the new impulses of what still remains inchoate in pragmatism risk a serious charge of mere idiosyncrasy, philosophical dabbling, inert nostalgia if I (or others pursuing similar intuitions) fail to provide a suitable "genealogy" of (our) present (pragmatist) efforts. This is because nearly everyone puzzled and impressed by the recent turn in pragmatism's fortunes finds himself or herself all but speechless with wonder. Yet, there's a danger in such inaction, of course: it looks too much like the continuation of the near-fatal, self-deceptive complacency of American pragmatism in the first decades following the end of World War II. I'm persuaded that there's a genuinely worthwhile answer to be given: we must overcome our own disarray.

The book you hold is an abbreviated stab at that answer—perhaps, then, a preamble to the answer: a prophecy, as I say. In the sense in which it's a genealogy, I mean it to venture beyond anything like Michel Foucault's well-known specimen genealogies, in the direction of actual legitimation—hence (if I understand Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche rightly), not beyond Nietzsche's original sense of the notion, however now more prosaically cast. In that sense, genealogy begins to assimilate the function of Hegel's historied critique of Kant's own transcendental turn.

I don't expect that these last remarks will be entirely clear until you agree to read the first chapter of what follows. But if the opening chapter is credible at all, you will begin to see that I believe that philosophical genealogy and prophecy go hand in hand as a replacement for or attenuation of the transcendental turn, which, I take it, rightly introduces what I've come

to call “modern” modern, or Eurocentric, philosophy—which, of course, begins with Kant and Hegel.

Genealogy, in Foucault’s hands, is largely used to confirm the sheer diversity of the relatively disjunctive forms of life of different parts of the Western tradition that follow one another in historical time. For Foucault, they are no more than brute presence: they do not wait on legitimation. Foucault waves his hand at the “transcendental” unity that lies behind this scatter, but he makes no effort to recover the meaning of the human presence that informs the diversity he collects. To my mind, this is the inverse of the weakness one finds in the ingenuities of figures such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, in spite of their seeming efforts to ensure the reassuring presence of the universal human within the threat of radical historicity, which, in its own ambiguous way, rightly challenges the problematic unities of the analytic scientisms of the same period (prepared to risk the disappearance of the human altogether in their efforts to secure an impossible form of objectivity). I say “ambiguous” because the “continentals” inevitably hold on to a more robust sense of the a priori or transcendental than they are prepared to admit (which they apply to the human self), whereas the “analysts” have never relinquished their own adherence to the most attenuated versions of the Kantian search for universality (naturalized to disallow the *sui generis* distinction of the human, attenuated distinctly enough to make the transcendental seem no longer relevant).

It’s there that I find the new promise of pragmatism and the other principal movements of Western philosophy, which now seem to me capable of a worthwhile rapprochement; and it’s there that genealogy/prophecy affords a historied legitimation of what, formerly, might have been characterized as a transcendental argument. I have no a priori argument of my own. What I offer instead, I daresay, is a descendent strategy argumentatively (or genealogically) derived from the transcendental turn turned pragmatist by refusing to concede any strong disjunction between broadly “empirical” first-order inquiries and broadly “rational” second-order speculations about the legitimacy of both the first *and* the second. Philosophy has and requires no uniquely distinctive domain to plunder. But it needs the “genealogies” it constructs ad hoc, which I take to be akin to Nietzsche’s contribution. That’s in part due to the companion truth that the sciences themselves can no longer be thought to function as sciences in their own right if they are not also thoroughly engaged in what, in a simpler world,

was once thought to be a separate discipline (philosophy). You have only to think of relativity and quantum physics to realize that there cannot be a disjunctive difference between science and philosophy—not merely epistemology and metaphysics (in the old sense) but, as Peirce, Dewey, William James, and George Herbert Mead were perfectly aware, moral theory (in the same old sense) as well. The intelligibility of the world and of our role in it is an indissolubly single target.

That is Kant's theme, of course, and the theme Hegel gladly accepts in his critique of Kant, the theme analytic scientism rejects in the same breath in which it endorses, in deliberately impoverished terms, the entire sweep of human understanding. By contrast, the pragmatist variant of our own future-present, which seems to me to catch up in the most perspicuous and promising way the strongest directives of the Eurocentric trajectory, converges (in my opinion) on the sense of a motto and manifesto that I take from one of Peirce's book reviews published in the *Nation* at the end of the nineteenth century: "Darwinizing Hegel and Hegelianizing Darwin."

We can't be sure what Peirce intended by that banner: it was an early pronouncement. But now, more than one hundred years later, there can be no doubt that it returns us to the theory of the human self or person, which, in the eighteenth century, neither David Hume nor Kant was able, finally, to define in any philosophically acceptable way. I believe their failure threatens in the most mortal sense the adequacy of their own best work: in precisely the same sense in which Plato's elenctic Dialogues and Aristotle's tracts fail (however gloriously) to bridge their age and ours. I mean, the sense in which the analysis of biology and culture must be seen to be very differently conceived but inseparably joined, following the eighteenth-century discoveries of figures such as Giambattista Vico and Johann Gottfried von Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt and the sequel that takes form in Hegel and the post-Hegelian (Eurocentric) world, *and* the decisive new lessons drawn from Darwin and post-Darwinian biology and paleoanthropology: namely, that the appearance of *Homo sapiens sapiens* is datable among the hominid species, as are also the appearance of true language and the transformation of hominid primates into selves, by essentially cultural means.

I collect these themes in the name of a future pragmatism no longer parochially bound to its American provenance but unwilling to deny its genealogical engine, committed to the naturalism of the motto (and manifesto) just mentioned and, if I may now add, committed to the radical

thesis that the self is a hybrid artifact of biological and cultural evolution that makes possible the entire run of the uniquely enlanguaged forms of human intelligence, thought, understanding, reason, feeling, experience, activity, conduct, creation, and knowledge that marks our race for what it is. There's the prophecy in a single line—but not the inquiries that it makes possible. I promise those as well, to the best of my ability. But they will require a fresh beginning.

Frankly, I see no incipient theme in Eurocentric or global thought that is philosophically more compelling or comprehensive. I bring the enabling narrative to the edge of its prophecy, and I bring the prophecy itself to its ready resources. That is to say, the argument that follows is the end of a long reflection. What ought to follow *that* is something entirely different.