

Introduction

In recent years the classical authors of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism have garnered a renewed importance in international philosophical circles. In the aftermath of the linguistic turn, philosophers such as Charles S. Peirce, William James, George H. Mead, Ferdinand C. S. Schiller, and John Dewey are being reread alongside, for example, recent postmodern and deconstructivist thought as alternatives to a traditional orientation toward the concerns of a representationalist epistemology. In the context of contemporary continental thought, the work of Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Gilles Deleuze comprises just a few examples of a culturewide assault on a metaphysical worldview premised on what Michel Foucault called the empirico-transcendental doublet, and presents a wealth of potential exchange with the pragmatist critique of representationalism. In both cases, aspects of pragmatist thought are being used to add flexibility to the conceptual tools of modern philosophy, in order to promote a style of philosophizing more apt to dealing with the problems of everyday life. The hope for a pragmatic “renewing of philosophy” (Putnam) evidenced in these trends has led to an analytic reexamination of some of the fundamental positions in modern continental thought as well, and to a recognition of previously unacknowledged or underappreciated pragmatic elements in thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein.

Within the current analytic discussions, a wide spectrum of differing and at times completely heterogeneous forms of *neopragmatism* can be distinguished, which for heuristic purposes can be grouped into two general categories according to the type of discursive strategy employed. The first of these consists in a conscious *inflation* of the concept of pragmatism in order to establish it as widely as possible within the disciplinary discourse of philosophy. The second consists in a *deflationary* application of the concept, in order to distinguish it from the professional self-image of academic philosophy in a marked and even provocative way. What each variant has in

common is its tendency to criticize as “representationalist” the debate between realism and antirealism.

At the center of this debate, which has left its imprint on twentieth-century thought, lies the problem of whether our mental representations should be understood realistically, as pictures of some externally existing reality, or antirealistically, as constructions of that realm. For the deflationists, this debate is seen as a case of fruitless bickering around the quasi-religious question of a sublime, metaphysical reality that—whether from the outside or from the inside—is believed to determine the contours of our speech and thought. Instead of searching ever further for this ultimate authority or foundation, the deflationists recommend that we view our knowledge as a collection of tools for the democratically-oriented transformation of reality, for which we alone are responsible (Rorty). In contrast to this political and humanistic critique, the inflationists formulate their critique of the debate between finding and making from a logical and analytic perspective. Their response to representationalism is an antirepresentationalist epistemology whose foundations are developed in such frameworks as normative pragmatics (Brandom), undogmatic empiricism (McDowell), or interpretational theories of truth (Davidson).

The contributions to *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy* explore how these various discursive strategies are related and what their pertinence is to the relationship between pragmatism and philosophy as a whole. Perhaps the primary importance of this collection, however, lies in its demonstration that, in light of the current reinvestment in pragmatic thinking, the fabled divisions between analytic and continental thought are being rapidly replaced by a transcontinental desire to work on common problems in a common idiom. Of course, much of the work of deconstructing the continental/analytic divide remains to be undertaken, and imposing obstacles remain. Idiom and style, to mention two, would seem to transcend categorization as merely external or secondary differences. Analytic philosophers tend to dismiss continental philosophers as being too literary, tend to fault their lack of rigor, of clarity, of precision. Continental thinkers, in turn, often ridicule analytic philosophy for its pretensions to scientificity and spurn it as positivistic, dry, irrelevant. Richard Rorty once characterized, in his inimitable way, the difference between continental and analytic philosophy as being little more than the difference between those philosophers who thought what was important was to read the history of philosophy and those who thought what was important was to read the last ten years of journal articles; and, indeed, in American departments of philosophy those who pay attention to thinkers of the continental tradition are referred to more often than not as historians.

What this volume puts forth is a potential ground for a meeting between these idioms, a common ground of concern and place for interaction. It is

our conviction that the century from which we have emerged has born witness to a sea change in philosophy, irrespective of on which side of the divide one stands. Recognized as such or not, a pragmatic philosophy has gained ascendancy over the traditional concerns of a representationalist epistemology that has determined much of the intellectual and cultural life of modernity; we believe that the philosophy of the next century will emerge from this recognition, and that the practice of this emergence is well underway. Moreover, in the age of globalization, an ecumenical philosophy represents an important contribution to the task of bringing together the autonomous disciplines into a transdisciplinary network of knowledge practices; perhaps a reenergized pragmatism will provide the philosophical support for this project.

In the first piece in this volume, "The Insistence on Futurity: Pragmatism's Temporal Structure," Ludwig Nagl focuses on the question of time and temporality that figures so centrally in the thought of William James. He begins by arguing that the pragmatist test of whether a theoretical question makes any practical difference does not primarily serve to abolish the big metaphysical questions, but rather serves to distinguish the concerns of a real and living humanity from the intellectualistic pseudoproblems of professional philosophy. James's pragmatic reflections on temporality should be thought of in this way: as breaking through the appearances of speculative reason in order to create a space for "the Will to Believe." Beyond physicalist ontologies and aprioristic intellectualizing, James stood for a temporalization of time whose realization would entail the opening up of a multiplicity of time-horizons. This becomes the basis for James to throw a pragmatically-selective light on old metaphysical controversies, such as those between materialism and spiritualism, or between free will and determinism. Nagl concludes by bringing James's pragmatic logic of hope to bear on current discussions in the philosophy of religion, specifically in the work of the French political historian Marcel Gauchet. For Gauchet, we are living in a postreligious age in which hope for the future has become a meaningless openness to whatever comes, totally lacking the stabilizing force of a utopian ideal. Nagl counters this notion with James's "insistence on futurity," which in no way leads to the leveling out of the ever-receding other of the future, but rather makes visible the borders of the kind of humanistic "inner transcendence" so important to the thought of writers like Habermas, Rorty, and Gauchet himself.

The pertinence of James to contemporary moral concerns continues to be at stake in Hilary Putnam's contribution, "Philosophy as a Reconstructive Activity: William James on Moral Philosophy." Putnam seeks to locate in the work of William James the basis for a pragmatic theory of morals that would try neither to assume a transcendental authoritative status nor to dissolve ethical questions into an empirical cultural anthropology. In an early

essay, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life,” James ties such metaphysical questions as the nature of “obligation,” of “good,” and of “ill” in a relativistic fashion back to the existence of sentient beings, while at the same time making clear that the truth of moral judgements presupposes a standard external to the subject. This standard, however, is by no means transcendent, because it is based on an intergenerational consensus and on an evolutionary reconciliation of ideals. The “metaphysics of morals” to be found in James’s work, therefore, is itself built on the grounds of a consensus-based “metaphysics of truth.” Putnam underscores, however, that James’s moral philosophy has much to offer even if we do not share the theory of truth that implicitly supports it, and he proceeds to highlight those aspects of James’s moral theory that are not dependent on the consensus theory of truth or that in fact contradict it, especially his emphasis on the standpoint of the agent. This last point leads Putnam back to the thesis, formulated by Albrecht Wellmer in the eighties, that an emphasis on the standpoint of the agent is incompatible with the idea (which he associates with both Habermas and James) that the last consensus is a necessary and adequate determination of truth. For Wellmer, whereas truth is entirely public, intersubjective consensus presupposes each particular subject’s individual recognition of truth. As a possible objection to Wellmer, Putnam reconstructs James’s argument that the recourse to the individual subject of action is only a condition for consensus insofar as I myself must be involved in the inquiry, in order to be able to judge whether it was correctly carried out. The last criterion of truth, then, remains a public inquiry carried out under ideal research conditions and guided by the most recent consensus. Putnam presents this Jamesian riposte to Wellmer with the cautionary note that the utopian idea of the last consensus is just as untenable as the theory of correspondence so rightly criticized by James, though this should not lead us to trivialize the philosophical thematic of truth, but rather to endeavor, with Frege and the late Wittgenstein, to achieve a philosophical clarification of *what we do* when we make mathematical, ethical, and other claims.

In her contribution, Antje Gimmler looks for a progenitor of pragmatism a century before James and on the other side of the Atlantic. She begins her examination of the “Pragmatic Aspects of Hegel’s Thought” by clarifying some of the differences between classical pragmatism and neopragmatism, and by noting the centrality of antirepresentationalism to both, which she in turn relates to the priority of praxis over theory. Following the work of Robert Brandom, she distinguishes between a normative and an instrumental pragmatism, but stresses that a neopragmatism worthy of its name would have to grant both orientations equal weight. Against this background, Gimmler argues that it was Hegel who set out the tasks for a pragmatic philosophy, which have to date only been partly undertaken by

neopragmatism. While Brandom has made explicit Hegel's theory of intersubjective recognition as a basis for a use-theory of meaning—according to which the constitution and application of concepts interweave with one another in the space of a normative practice of experience—his blind spot consists in the fact that he defines experience solely as the practice of recognition and not of appropriation. For Gimmler it is precisely the relationship between recognition and appropriation that forms the center point of Hegel's pragmatism, and in her concluding section she demonstrates the importance for Hegel's theory of self-consciousness of the instrumental-creative dimension of subjectivity produced by the transformative relation to things. In his critique of Kant, Hegel carries out a turn toward anti-representationalism, on the basis of which he develops a nonreductive notion of knowledge as tool, which he embeds in an interactive notion of experience exemplified in the relation between the master and the slave. Whereas the master has a contemplative and representational relationship to things, the slave carries out the movement of reconstructing the world of objects, and in this way may be taken as the paradigm for how, in Hegel's thought, self-consciousness is rooted in universality and transsubjectivity, not only through relations of recognition, but also and just as importantly through the practical interrelations of poesis.

According to the authors of the next four contributions' anti-representationalism, the roots of which Gimmler identifies in Hegel's critique of Kant, provides the theoretical keystone of neopragmatism. In "The Pragmatic Twist of the Linguistic Turn," Mike Sandbothe identifies another—pragmatic—turn toward antirepresentationalism in the twentieth century's "linguistic turn." This pragmatic turn is revealed in three ambivalences related to that turn: the first having to do with the status of the linguistic method; the second with the determination of its goals; and the third—and in Sandbothe's view preeminent—with the metaphilosophical presuppositions informing the desire for an autonomous philosophical method. This latter ambivalence provides the stage for a confrontation between a transformative pragmatism in Rorty's sense and the language-analysis projects of formal or normative pragmatics. If one takes this fundamental distinction to heart, authors like Quine, Sellars, and the (early and in some ways also the late) Wittgenstein appear as thinkers who contributed to the pragmatic turn without overcoming the dualistic signature of professional philosophy and the methodological understanding of the discipline that it supports. Donald Davidson, on the other hand, presents the possibility of another sort of philosophical activity, one no longer oriented toward the traditional, epistemological views of the discipline, but rather endeavoring to determine anew the task of philosophical thought in conjunction with the sciences. Nevertheless, according to Sandbothe, Davidson's program remains primarily

one of describing the specific truth theories of different natural languages, whereas Rorty's thought is focused on the possibilities of provoking a sociopolitically effective change in common sense.

In "The Debate about Truth: Pragmatism without Regulative Ideas," Albrecht Wellmer argues that the fundamental error of correspondence theories of truth consists of the attempt to think the idea of correspondence as independent of our justification practices. Instead, he argues, we should try to develop a theory of truth that starts out from the notion of an internal relationship between truth and justification, without thereby reducing truth to justification. Wellmer's contribution to the debate about truth consists of demonstrating how the internal relation of truth and justification must be thought together with the ineradicable grammatical difference between "true" and "justified." To this end Wellmer considers suggestions offered by Putnam, Habermas, and Apel. Against Apel's idea of an ideal communication-community's final consensus, Wellmer notes Derrida's objection that communication refers in a regulative way back to a metaphysical ideal that puts into question the material, finite, and temporal conditions of the possibility of communication itself. Wellmer does not want to draw from this the conclusion that truth ought to be understood in a disquotational-theoretical sense as a semantic concept rather than in a justification-theoretical sense as an epistemic concept, but rather argues in the paper's concluding section for the possibility of grounding a normative concept of truth without recourse to regulative ideas. He begins spelling out such a concept by arguing that a language-pragmatic version of Tarski's "convention T" presupposes taking into account "the difference between the perspective a first person (a speaker) has of him or herself and the first person's perspective on *another* speaker." Whereas I do not necessarily recognize as true the reasons that I attribute to the other's justification of his or her convictions, I will always recognize the reasons underlying my own justifications as true. This is so, according to Wellmer, precisely because I cannot imagine myself as myself outside my own convictions, reasons, and evidences. Consensus cannot therefore be the criterion for identifying reasons as good, because consensus for its part rests on the normative recognition of those reasons in discussion as good or true reasons only as recognized by the individual interlocutors. This makes clear that there is no need for the regulative idea of consensus as a standard for adequately describing our distinction between "true" and "justified."

From the notion of truth we move to that of objectivity, the central theme of Arthur Fine's "The Viewpoint of No-One in Particular." Fine's paper focuses on pragmatic aspects of the modern philosophy of science and represents a critical confrontation with the realist positions of Thomas Nagel and Bernard Williams. This realist position grants the natural sciences a special distinction in the pursuit of human knowledge, a privilege based on

the ostensible methodological neutrality and impartiality of their “view from nowhere.” On the basis of the democratic conception of the natural sciences developed by Paul Feyerabend in connection with the ideas of John Stuart Mill, Fine argues for a pragmatic testing of those conceptions coming out of concrete research that are held to be scientifically objective, a testing that leads him to distinguish between “objectivity as product” and “objectivity as process.” Whereas realists like Nagel and Williams tend to confound the difference between the process and the product, Fine argues that procedural objectivity is not a characteristic of the product, but of our attitude toward the product. Objectivity, in this view, turns out to lack the importance it has traditionally been granted in distinguishing the realm of the natural sciences, being neither reserved for them nor excluded as soon as we have to do with human or spiritual matters.

At the outset of his article “A Pragmatist View of Contemporary Analytic Philosophy,” Richard Rorty identifies a fundamental resonance between the arguments of Arthur Fine, whom he calls his favorite philosopher of science, and those of his “favorite philosophers of language,” Robert Brandom and Donald Davidson, a resonance he sees as “marking a breakthrough into a new philosophical world.” The agreement among these thinkers involves the obsolescence of the realism/antirealism debate and the conviction that we should no longer be thinking of how language or indeed how science works as having anything to do with the process of representing reality. In the second part of his essay, Rorty remarks on some of the metaphilosophical consequences he sees resulting from the pragmatic approach to science and language adopted by the above-mentioned thinkers. These consequences include, on the one hand, a tendency to stop thinking of reality as containing an essence that it is incumbent upon humans to grasp and to stop believing that the hard, natural sciences have an advantage over the soft, human sciences in this regard. On the other hand, such a pragmatic approach leads philosophers to stop thinking in terms of “recurrent philosophical problems”—a symptom of what Rorty considers the over-professionalization of philosophy—and to speak rather of “imaginative suggestions for redescription of the human situation.” Nevertheless, for Rorty, one’s choice of representationalism or antirepresentationalism remains based on “reasons of the heart,” for neither one provides a philosophical ground on which to disprove the arguments of the other.

Rorty’s position on several key topics of neopragmatism form the background for the last four pieces of the volume. Barry Allen’s contribution, “What Knowledge? What Hope? What New Pragmatism?”, takes the form of a polemic response to Rorty’s book *Philosophy and Social Hope*. To begin with, Allen argues that Rorty uses the term “philosophy” in a variety of ways that need to be distinguished. “Philosophy” stands for: first, metaphysics—the tradition of abstract absolutes inherited from Plato; second,

epistemology—philosophy as a theory of representation; third, therapy—deflating the notion that there is such a thing as a “philosophical problem”; and finally, poetry—philosophy as a process of imaginative redescription aimed at self-creation rather than self-knowledge. Clearly, when Rorty uses philosophy in the former two senses he means it disparagingly, whereas the latter two are terms of praise. In light of this classification, Allen challenges what he sees to be the principle argument of *Philosophy and Social Hope*: namely, that hope is more important, and more relevant, for a philosophy of the fourth—positive—kind, than is knowledge. For Allen, Rorty’s mistake lies in his tendency to *replace* the question of knowledge entirely with that of hope. For if “hope replaces knowledge, failure loses its disconfirming power.” This abandonment of the question of knowledge leads Rorty to a politics that shies away from a “reevaluation of tenacious presumptions,” such that, in the end, “Rorty forgets about imagination, diminishes the power of redescription, and dismisses the work of those who try to make serious alternatives seem urgent if not always hopeful.”

Wolfgang Welsch’s basic thesis in “Richard Rorty: Philosophy beyond Argument and Truth?” is that Rorty, in particular in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, transgresses his own restrictive thesis concerning the limits of philosophy, according to which typologically distinct conceptions of philosophy have nothing to say about each other’s truth claims. According to Welsch, Rorty demonstrates—through argumentation—that the representational model of knowledge rests on certain conceptual errors. The fundamental thesis of representationalism, whether it serves as the foundation for a realist or antirealist theory of knowledge, is that reality be thought of as something prior to, external to, and independent of our efforts to relate to it. The presupposition of such an “alpha-reality” is, however, contradictory, because it is itself a specific construal of reality, and therefore already interprets reality in a determined and hardly self-evident way—namely, as interpretation-independent—thereby bringing about a determination on the performative level that was negated at the level of content. Nevertheless, although Rorty is correct in maintaining that incommensurable foundational arguments are useless for the refutation of other foundational arguments, according to Welsch this does not mean that particular aspects or details of a conception of philosophy that share a certain transversal commonality with another, typologically distinct, conception may not be brought into conversation with them. It is precisely the challenge for a philosophical thought oriented toward problems of reason and truth to explore such transversal possibilities of communication.

In “Keeping Pragmatism Pure: Rorty with Lacan,” William Egginton argues that Rorty’s philosophy has succumbed to a temptation he has often warned others against, namely, the temptation of purity. According to Egginton, Rorty’s attraction to nominalism, and in particular to the conviction

that “nothing is better than a something about which nothing can be said,” has led him to dogmatically reject the meaningfulness of any notion of experience as distinct from language. Egginton argues that Rorty’s “pure” nominalism is a case of “using Occam’s razor to cut your own wrists,” for not only is the denial of lived, or first-person, experience absurd in its own right, it ultimately cripples pragmatism’s *raison d’être*, its focus on usefulness, because it deprives pragmatism of a conceptual tool needed to confront one of the most prevalent and relevant experiences of human beings: desire. Nothing is better than a something about which nothing can be said, unless, of course, there is something to be said about that “something about which nothing can be said.” As it turns out, the experience of not being able to say anything about something, ineffability, is not at all uncommon to human experience and is a central aspect of more than a few alternative conceptions of philosophy. Egginton then turns to ineffability’s place in French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s theory of desire as offering a useful corrective to a pragmatism purified of the ineffable.

In the volume’s closing piece, “Cartesian Realism and the Revival of Pragmatism,” Joseph Margolis argues that, under the cover of a pragmatist vocabulary, neopragmatists like Rorty, Putnam, and Davidson are in fact reproducing old Cartesian problems at the same time as they continuously checkmate each other over the issue of truth. Margolis criticizes Rorty’s ostensible dismissal of epistemological truth problems for overlooking the fact that a theory of truth can have value as an explanatory tool in discussions about knowledge. For Putnam, on the other hand, Rorty’s dismissal of truth slides into relativism, because Rorty throws out the consensus-based theories of truth developed by Peirce, James, and Dewey along with traditional theories. Putnam’s earlier adherence to such theories is in turn criticized by Rorty and Davidson for falling back into a Cartesian scientism. Putnam points out, furthermore, that neither Davidson’s causal nor Rorty’s sociological naturalism entails a philosophical foundation for the development of a normative and meaningful notion of truth, which is nevertheless needed in order to avoid a naturalistic reproduction of Cartesian problems. As an alternative to these options, Margolis suggests a third way, consisting of a return to a constructive realism. The foundations for this are to be found for the most part in the thought of “the original pragmatists,” which Margolis locates in the anti-Cartesian insights of continental European post-Kantians. His program of constructive realism consists in a revival of Hegel’s critique of Kant in the context of current philosophical discourse. From this revival the insight emerges, that the critique of representationalism à la Rorty and Davidson depends on a notion of *tertia*, or mediating terms between subjects and objects, as a kind of internal representations or “epistemic intermediaries.” Against this dismissal of all *tertia*, Margolis advances a notion of interpretive intermediaries “as historicized, variable, artifactual, and open to the puzzle of

reconciling realism and, say, relativism or incommensurabilism.” Such an understanding of *tertia*, Margolis concludes, saves a realism that is, not objectivist but constructivist through and through.



Putting together a volume such as this one is nothing short of a group effort. The editors would like to express their gratitude to all of those who contributed in any way to making this possible. To begin with, some of the essays included here first appeared in German, in *Die Renaissance des Pragmatismus* (ed. Mike Sandbothe, Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2001); we would like to thank those authors for allowing their work to be translated or, in some cases, for allowing us to publish the original versions. Thanks as well to those who wrote completely new essays for this volume. We are also grateful to those who translated or assisted in the translation of these pieces: Andrew Inkpin, Eric Little, Lowell Vizenor, and Bernadette Wegenstein; to the Julian Parks Fund of the University at Buffalo, for a grant supporting the translations; to Kevin Heller, for his proof-reading prowess; to Miguel Fernández Garrido, who spent a summer looking up quotations in their original languages; to Ana María Olagaray for creating the index; and finally to Henry Sussman, who directed us to SUNY Press, and to our editors Jane Bunker and Diane Ganeles, whose patience and care made this all possible. While credit is to be fully shared with them for anything edifying that may emerge from these pages, they cannot shield us from the inevitable opprobrium inspired by errors of fact, judgment, organization, or taste, all of which, lamentably, are our own.

Mike Sandbothe, William Egginton