In the last thirty years of the last century, American philosophy came to be focused, unpredictably, beyond any local presumption, on and through a running dispute between two of the best-known contemporary professionals, Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty. Their quarrel attracted an unprecedented readership, chiefly, I suggest, because everyone who followed their printed disagreements—often seemingly trivial—sensed a deeper contest that spread through the whole of twentieth-century English-language philosophy and, indeed, through a very large part of Western philosophy. The quarrel has not entirely subsided though it is obviously spent and though Putnam and Rorty seem diminished by their exchange: Putnam, by being bested (at least for the time being); Rorty, by a remarkable rise to pop fame, which has obliged all who were drawn to read and listen to judge for themselves what exactly Rorty meant to champion and what the quarrel yielded.

I try in what follows to place that quarrel in the setting in which, as a result of its sheer energy, American pragmatism was snatched from near oblivion, was granted the gift of a second life, and was thereby forced to answer whether the great labor of its “first” life, which spanned the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, warranted its “second.”

The account that follows is largely confined to the story of that second life. I touch from time to time on Dewey’s early Idealism and his successful effort to escape those traces that might otherwise adversely color his distinctive realism. It is Dewey’s realism, I am persuaded, that informs the best assessment, finally, of what Putnam and Rorty may be said to have accomplished as “pragmatists.” But I make no claim to have done justice to the classic figures. I read even Dewey’s achievement primarily in terms of the continuing promise of pragmatism even now. And I have certainly not sought to provide a full-bodied account of Dewey’s views. That would have taken me in an altogether different direction, one that may well have been difficult to present in a balanced way when so much of what Putnam and Rorty have written have almost nothing to say about Peirce, and what they
write about James is on the whole perfunctory. In fact, to have written about Dewey in the detailed way I do about Putnam and Rorty might well have required a very brief treatment of both of them or else a somewhat monotonous comparison. It would have made a very different book.

Both Putnam and Rorty profess to have been much influenced by Dewey, but they have worked in ways opposed to one another and, many would argue, in ways opposed to Dewey himself. It was surely Rorty’s dialectical skill and unorthodox analyses that catapulted a minor quarrel that began as a bit of gossip to philosophy’s front page. But apart from motives within the American academy (power-mongering, for instance), the quarrel actually does bare the nerve of Western philosophy and raises questions about its honest calling and supposed resources, which, once asked, cannot be ignored. It’s said that such questions sometimes make a golden age, and we are hardly “there,” of course. But if we could catch a bit of the quarrel’s original fire, we might contribute to a silver age. It’s not impossible, but it might require a “third” life.

I must, before I begin my tale, thank Raeshon Fils for having once again put a sprawling manuscript into final form—it always comes as a surprise; also, Roger Haydon of Cornell University Press for his very agreeable mix of advice and support; and two unnamed readers for Cornell University Press, whose advice and comments proved to be first-rate.

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Acknowledgments

Prologue: Reconstruction in Pragmatism

Pragmatism's history is at the very least improbable. It begins with the immense influence of Charles Sanders Peirce and the instant dissemination of further pragmatist work by William James, John Dewey, possibly Josiah Royce, and, at a remove, George Herbert Mead and F. C. S. Schiller. Now, more distantly, it includes Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty, and, by various peculiar acquisitions, the later Ludwig Wittgenstein, the pre-Kehre Martin Heidegger, the original Ralph Waldo Emerson, W. V. Quine (very marginally), and by dint of sympathy and assertion, Karl-Otto Apel, Jürgen Habermas, and other enthusiastic German philosophers and social theorists.

There could not have been a center to the pragmatist "movement" if there had not been a Peirce; however, Peirce himself was never the recognized center of the movement until it was largely spent, even in the eyes of those who drew (or who said they drew) their original pragmatist inspiration from him. The "center" of pragmatism has proved to be Dewey, and the center perceived very early in Europe (and the United States) was, for a time, James. Even now, at the turn into the new century, Peirce is honored chiefly by the unexplained departures that mark James's alleged usurpation of the pragmatist label for a theory of truth that Peirce found preposterous, as well as Dewey's insouciant eclipse of all of Peirce's painstaking alternatives to Kantian transcendental reason. It is more than plausible to say that both Peirce and Dewey are undoubted pragmatists. But it is exceedingly difficult to give a rounded account that commits them both (or James) to congruent doctrines or inquiries.

Only recently, in fact, did a knowledgeable commentator, Morris Dickstein, neatly twit the misleading impression of the "revival" of pragmatism while introducing the papers of a 1995 conference on the cultural impact of that revival: "If pragmatism began with James's strong misreading of Peirce," Dickstein declares, "it came to life again with Rorty's strong misreading of Dewey, whom [Rorty] described as a postmodernist before his time." In the same collection, Stanley Cavell reflects on the need for a more
disciplined resistance against the cannibalizing idea that “Emerson is to be understood as a protopragmatist and Wittgenstein as, let us say, a neopragmatist.”

I find a definite undercurrent of conceptual embarrassment in this hearty “revival,” which I think confirms the important fact that pragmatism never had a single doctrinal or even methodological center. It had an undisputed source of great originality and power (Peirce), which it largely ignored save for the pieties of acknowledging a thin (but definite) debt and an even thinner inspiration. It was its diverse and diversely centered originality, the obligatory recovery of Peirce as an ancestral voice (more cited than fathomed), and the remarkable influence and popularity of James and Dewey—first James, then Dewey—in their seemingly radical social, political, and educational views, that explain the initial frisson of promise in the recent “revival.”

There is, one must admit, a bit of self-advertisement that has started the ball rolling. But there is also a validity in its buccaneering spirit, which is to say, the plausible promotion of an American label for a second hegemonic spurt of a philosophical (cum moral/political) energy bent on coming to grips with the issues of our time and inclined to feature recent themes of analytic (and postmodern) thinking.

Pragmatism could not have taken hold again in its original terms. All the dearest themes would have been more than difficult to revive. Peirce could not have shared the muscular transformative energies Dewey and James proclaimed: if theirs is the paradigm, then Peirce surely held a suspect view, one in which human inquiry served a more distant and mysterious, even alien, telos; and if Dewey’s social and liberal values must be paramount, then we have surely waited too long to revive even Dewey’s philosophical charms.

No. The revival proceeds by a canny effort to redefine its force—promotionally, let us say—in a way that more than matches the innocent but still concocted collection of the original pragmatists. For the original label did mean “American” primarily, in the way of a first innovation of Eurocentric aspirations possessing all sorts of heterogeneous parts. That cannot be what is now meant by pragmatism’s revival, though it is true that the energies fueling its redefinition are very much “American” and reckless in the American way.

Had not Rorty and Putnam identified themselves as pragmatists in the process of reviewing and disputing the professional prospects of realism, relativism, knowledge under the condition of history, public and private responsibility and values, no one would have envisaged a “revival.” It is a genuine revival for all that, and it is succeeding largely because of that single contingency. Putnam and Rorty literally tell us how to read the pragmatists in order to count themselves as their closest progeny. Without their guidance, the connection might have been as unlikely as Cavell suggests it is with Emerson and Wittgenstein.

The curious thing is that once it was applied, even where it was reasonably disputed, the pragmatist epithet stuck and drew its crowds of enthusiasts pro and con. It’s the brute fact that counts, not any of the languid glosses of the academy. For good or bad—I’d say for good—pragmatism is now engaged in a number of important quarrels that it had never addressed in its original incarnation, but that, with a little ingenuity, can be plausibly reconciled with the older history.

The important point remains: the resolution of the now-principled quarrel—which I tag “the contest between pragmatism and naturalizing,” in effect, the turf contested between Putnam and Rorty (Rorty, partly as a spokesman for Donald Davidson)—should not be pursued “archivally,” as if the texts of the early pragmatists might decide the newer questions, for that simply cannot be. The game before us is a new one, whatever its geistlich or conceptual connection with pragmatism’s past. What, finally, Rorty has made possible is the industry of redefining pragmatism again and again—which, in the United States, has become the operative incantation for flagging the important philosophical contests of our day. In the absence of that small device, the revival would have collapsed without a murmur.

Putnam and Rorty are bound to fade, and are fading as I write! They have nearly completed their assumed tasks. They have, eccentrically, brought to our attention—in the context of discussing an army of analytic and continental voices—the single most important philosophical issue at the end of the twentieth century, namely, the conceptual adequacy or inadequacy of analytic “naturalism,” which is to say, the various policies and doctrines that have evolved from Quinean and Davidsonian “naturalizing.” In this sense, naturalism is the trimmed-down successor of all the grander analytic movements of the twentieth century—now more than a feasible contender despite its obvious taste for remarkably sparse conceptual resources, made strong in part by the lucky confluence of the exhaustion of European philosophy and the sheer animal vigor of the American academy.

Putnam and Rorty are, I believe, unable to fashion a viable thesis within the arena they have effectively defined: Putnam, because he has spent all his philosophical powder on a series of failed and increasingly inexplicit forms of realism; Rorty, because his postmodernist and naturalist allegiances are incapable of being reconciled or even separately strengthened without either project damaging its twin. His own enthusiasts tend to be straightfor-
ward epistemologists (even if they are not standard naturalizers). They are certainly not postmodernists, though the reversal is hardly remarked by anyone but Rorty himself.\(^4\)

Furthermore, each has invented his own fatal weakness: Putnam, by adhering to a would-be Grenzbegriff (limit-concept) under conditions of change and abandonment of privilege that simply disallow any robust form of realism of the gauge he favors;\(^5\) Rorty, because his naturalism is no more than a transient form of loyalty to Davidson's executive dicta, and because his postmodern advocacy of ethnocentric solidarity precludes legitimation and cannot ("in principle") be reconciled with naturalism.\(^6\)

Nevertheless, Putnam and Rorty contrive a better gift: first, by clarifying the lesson of their explicit opposition on a grand run of topics that promise to collect the best energies of our age; second, by abiding by their opposed interpretations of the "revived" pragmatism they share; third, by discovering, through their accumulating disputes (together with all those who have read along with them), that their local contests have somehow isolated the overarching question that informs their own best questions—and ours. At least for the time being!

The benefit is pure serendipity. The hegemony of analytic practice has been blunted by its own perceived deficiencies, and its late colonizing temperament has forced us to reconsider new ways of joining the better forces of Anglo-American and continental European thought. The intuitive appeal of a revival of pragmatism has always been subliminally colored by the wish to restore a full philosophical dialogue in the Eurocentric world. That seems now to be dawning, partly as a result of certain extreme "problematic situations:" Tames could hardly have reconciled his irrealist and championed that the others would have been automatically prepared to misleading, banal, equivocal, contradictory, and downright false.

The story is not altogether obvious, partly because the recent upsurge of interest in pragmatism has largely featured the liberal-democratic themes Dewey himself favored, which, however worthwhile, distract us from the decisive issues, and partly because the leading American naturalists of the day (the "naturalizers," in the sense of Quine's important paper "Epistemology
Naturalized**, either already admit their affinity for pragmatism (as Quine does, lightly) or are said to be pragmatists at heart. Rorty even says this of Davidson and himself, though Davidson is hardly keen to be so characterized. For instance, Davidson is unconditionally opposed to pragmatist views of truth and meaning.10

The simple truth is that what we understand by “naturalism” changes drastically when we move from the early pragmatists to the very different discipline practiced by Quine, Davidson, and Rorty. The transformation is absolutely fundamental to the history and future of American philosophy, so much so that “naturalizing” in Quine’s and Davidson’s sense (which are also different from one another) is demonstrably incompatible with the pragmatism of the classic figures. The truth is that the naturalism of the early pragmatists was philosophically innocent, never coupled in any strenuous way with tendentious claims of the sort the recent naturalizers prefer. It is for that reason exactly that the revival of pragmatism draws its energy from the other’s philosophical imperialism.

Rorty’s role in all this is a busy one. In one sustained stroke, he must (and does) abet Davidson’s naturalism; challenge conventional philosophy (including pragmatism) by way of postmodernist doubts about legitimation; reduce pragmatism to postmodernism; and then convey the gymnastic impression that the naturalizers have properly inherited the pragmatist mantle! Rorty achieves all this in his very smooth way,11 but all of it is doubtful; and, despite the best intentions, the would-be demonstration goes some distance toward identifying what is the true thread of philosophical pragmatism and why, at the end of the century, it must confront naturalism irreconcilably. Beyond the local narrative, the contest is a metonym for the deepest disputes of the Eurocentric tradition. That is hardly a negligible part of its appeal.

The difference between the two naturalisms depends on this: among the original pragmatists, naturalism is little more than a refusal to admit nonnatural or supernatural resources in the descriptive or explanatory discourse of any truth-bearing kind. In that sense, naturalism is a conceptual scruple that pragmatism shares with all sorts of heterogeneous doctrines: positivism and Marxism for instance. But naturalism in the now fashionable sense of “naturalizing” is a very carefully contrived philosophical program that supersedes pragmatism’s original scruple and advocates certain disputatious and exclusionary doctrines that the other could never accept.

Nearly all naturalists (that is, naturalizers) support the following doctrines: (1) truth-bearing explanation is ultimately causal; (2) causal expla-

nation is constrained by the “causal closure of the physical”;12 (3) all description, analysis, and explanation of mental and cultural phenomena are paraphrasable in accord with doctrines (1)–(2) if admissible at all, or else they conform with some version of supervenientism, that is, with the notion that there cannot be a determinate change at the mental (or cultural) level without a corresponding change at the physical level;13 and (4) pertinent inquiries, claims, and explanations that fail to meet the conditions of doctrines (1)–(3)—notably, epistemological “explanations”—are senseless or philosophically illegitimate.

Here you begin to glimpse how Rorty combines naturalism and postmodernism and how he supposes his own thesis may be drawn from Dewey and Wittgenstein.14 But if so, then you surely see how the adherents of a dampened Kantianism or Hegelianism or phenomenology or Marxism or Foucauldianism might consider uniting American and European forces in resisting the new hegemony of Anglo-American “naturalizing.” The idea is not impossible, but it is still too inchoate to be directly pursued. It is hard to imagine Dewey and Foucault, for instance, converging in any unforced way, or Dewey converging with Heidegger, for that matter (though Rorty suggests that Heidegger is a pragmatist of sorts).15

On the tally given, pragmatism and naturalism are simply irreconcilable, no matter what Rorty says. The counter-doctrine might propose instead that the real world was “natural” but never “naturalizable.” There you have the dawning sense of the most important and strategic doctrine the classic pragmatists implicitly supported but never had occasion to insist on. The reason may be no more than that the reductionisms and physicalisms and eliminativisms that now populate our landscape were hardly in control of the philosophical field when Peirce, James, and Dewey first shaped their principal contributions. “Natural but not naturalizable” may yet prove to be the best short statement of pragmatism’s late discovery of itself. In a fair sense, that is what Putnam and Rorty disputed—and what the entire Eurocentric world has, in modern times, always debated.

The irony is that the spread of naturalizing in English-language analytic philosophy—in metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of mind,16 as well as in the colonizing doctrine the naturalists are bent on exporting to a market not altogether aware of the conclusions and loyalties it means to exact—has now obliged the reviving pragmatists to discipline their own philosophical commitment in a more precise way than ever they cared to do or could have done. Too much, however, is now risked by a continuing nostalgia. So that those who are drawn to the pragmatists’ themes—pragma-
tists or not—owe a considerable debt to the new naturalists: for they would never have recognized themselves if they had not perceived what they now realize they must oppose.

If you scan the well-known overviews of the pragmatist movement, whether early or late, you will hardly find any explicit mention of the contest between pragmatism and naturalizing within the span of twentieth-century American philosophy. I take that to mean that the contest did not impress itself on the original pragmatists at the time of their most inventive work, because (as remarked) the turn toward what is now called naturalizing had not yet congealed in the salient way it has and because pragmatism’s promise, beyond its original novelty, could never have been reclaimed from a past that did not know the turn that might be needed.

The best, the most usual, the most reasonable reading of pragmatism in the classic sense—as you are bound to find by scanning such unequal accounts as those offered by Charles Morris, Israel Scheffler, John Smith, H. S. Thayer, R. W. Sleeper, Carl Hausman, Murray Murphey, Gerald Meyers, John P. Murphy, and H. O. Mounce17—converges on the perceived import of Peirce’s various formulations of the so-called “pragmatic maxim,” for instance:

that a conception can have no logical effect or import differing from that of a second conception except, so far as, taken in connection with other conceptions and intentions, it might conceivably modify our practical conduct differently from that second conception.18

But, as is well known, quite apart from the technical difficulties Peirce came to see would have to be resolved (for instance, to avoid verificationism and the confusion between the theory of meaning and the theory of truth, or to escape the paradoxes of subjunctive conditionals), this precise formula is peculiarly prone to the effect of something like a Gresham’s law of conceptual clarity: the formula has surely dwindled in our time, or given way to something like American solidarity or a respect for the democratic ethos.

I spare you the textual evidence bearing on the last option and urge you only to consider if that is what pragmatism comes to philosophically, it is already dead from the neck up.

In any case, recalling the maxim can be nothing but the barest beginning of a recovery, for pragmatism’s true center of gravity lies rather in the dialectical contest with naturalizing. (It is worth remarking, however, that Peirce’s maxim appears to be distinctly incompatible with Quine’s “indeterminacy of translation” thesis—reading both doctrines in broadly behavorial ways. The opposition counts as another piece of evidence of pragmatism’s heterogeneity.) Also, of course, Peirce’s actual formula is no more than the barest hint of a pragmatist analysis of what Peirce calls a conception—which would have to be more than a semantics. Peirce veered off increasingly in the direction of an infinitely extended inquiry that threatened to be no longer “pragmatist” (for that reason) or particularly concerned with the “here and now” of the original account.

We may, if we wish, treat pragmatism in a bifurcated way, featuring the “idealist” tendencies in Peirce or featuring Dewey’s tendency to focus rather on the management of the actual circumstances of life here and now. But the latter theme, which inevitably all but eliminated the vestiges of Dewey’s own early induction into the views of the German and British Idealists, now provides the minimal sense of the entire movement. Certainly, Peirce’s “long run” is a pragmatist invention that disallows any fixed telos or truth or rightness or any reliable invariances in the encountered world; but it is increasingly made to collect the best energies (and aspirations) of human societies in what cannot be secured here and now; and that, as we now understand these matters, is either not pragmatism at all or else an alternative utterly irreconcilable with it. That is, in fact, precisely what is meant finally by treating Peirce as a (displaced) German Idealist who glimpses the work of a larger Mind in nature, where Dewey is viewed as a pragmatist shedding as completely and as quickly as he can all vestiges of an early Idealist indoctrination.

Here you begin to fathom the extraordinary “cunning” of philosophical history, for the opportunism of redefining pragmatism beyond its original intuitions regarding the nature of meaning (which, after all, were understandably eclipsed with the collapse of the livelier prospects of positivism, and which, in an odd way, almost vindicated James’s misreading of Peirce) has actually prepared the ground for a proper recovery of the deeper unifying “temperament” of the original pragmatists, who were unable to foresee the full strength of their own unity. Their themes rightly centered on their opposition to what is common to Cartesian and Kantian (transcendental) strategies, which, as it happens, is quite similar to what they would have discovered in the naturalizing ventures they would have found impossible to endorse.

So it is that the local quarrels between Putnam and Rorty have, by an unlikely route, quickened pragmatism’s “recovery” by putting before us (and its would-be champions) a proper agon, a contest of greater importance than they could possibly have guessed. For the pragmatists rightly saw themselves as the beneficiaries of the post-Kantian tradition; and the confronta-
tion the new naturalism has introduced palpably ignores (or dismisses) the work of the entire pragmatist movement, in the return of the naturalizers to what (from a pragmatist perspective) can only count as the impoverished resources of the pre-Kantian age.

Pragmatism is nearly the only English language movement that did not, early in the twentieth century (for instance, under the direction of Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore), turn against the post-Kantians. Still, to say that the pragmatists did not dismiss the work of the post-Kantians is not to say that they were post-Kantians. Peirce may perhaps be fairly treated as a post-Kantian somehow transplanted to America. But Dewey, who favors Hegelian themes, may have more in common with the British Idealists than the post-Kantian German Idealists (apart from Hegel). The fact is that when Russell repudiated the Hegelians, he had the British Idealists more in mind than Hegel. Dewey's own effort was primarily directed toward exorcising any vestige of "Absolute Mind" in his own doctrine, whether of German or British pedigree.

The intent and perceived import of Peirce's maxim, particularly when viewed as common ground between Peirce and Dewey, pretty well comes to the following (though that is not clear from the maxim itself): (1) the rejection of Cartesian and Kantian intuitionism, apodicticity, transcendentalism, and necessitarianism; (2) the social embeddedness of beliefs, perceptions, and judgments in a continuum of similar elements and, hence, their contingent and benignly holist interdependence; (3) the methodological and practical linkage between thought and action, along with the effective determination of meaning and the assessment of truth in terms of distinctions (consequences) grounded in shared experience; and (4) the entirely open-ended, constructive, socially determined process of judging what to count as knowledge and intelligence. In a word, the maxim is a sketch of a meta-philosophical orientation regarding the philosophical analysis of inquiry and not an approximation of any sort to a criterion of meaning (or, bearing James in mind, of truth). That is precisely why the divergence between Peirce and Dewey is so significant.

I cannot deny that my having featured these four themes tends to favor Dewey over Peirce and James: against Peirce, against the former's unfinished synecchism (theory of continuity) and teleologism; against James, against the latter's insistence on nativist or necessary truths. I see nothing wrong, however, in constructing an idealized conception of such an obviously heterogeneous movement as pragmatism, provided that we acknowledge that it is a deliberate construction and that we justify it by what we find in it that appears to be philosophically defensible and serves the maxim in whatever disputes are bound to prevail in the twenty-first century.

The fact is—it is a little startling if you think about it—the maxim I've cited makes no mention of the problem of the relationship between the short run and the long run that bedeviled Peirce's version of fallibilism. (Peirce favored the "here and now" in his earliest formulation of pragmatism. In this sense, he favored the "short run." But when he speaks of the correction of belief for the sake of truth, he applies fallibilism to the "long run." Dewey and nearly all later pragmatists confine fallibilism to the short run, even though Peirce had put his finger on an unresolved puzzle.) But it is Peirce's, not Dewey's, version that I've cited, which suggests (I believe) a proper basis for going beyond both Peirce and Dewey, for seizing the new themes Rorty and Putnam put before us, and for going beyond them as well in terms of the "natural but not naturalizable." In any case, read this way, the maxim suggests the sense in which Peirce anticipates James (and Dewey) and the sense in which pragmatism need not be thought to have rejected Peirce's strong intuitions in yielding in Dewey's direction.

Nevertheless, on any reading of Peirce's various formulations of his maxim, the emphasis on grasping what a speaker means is grounded (in however informal a way) in the conceived consequences of what he pertinently believes here and now. That is the central force of Peirce's well-known objection to the abstractness of Descartes's "clear and distinct ideas." It is precisely the perception of that insistence that gives James's "misreading" of Peirce its importance in the history of pragmatism; and it is precisely Peirce's veering off beyond the "here and now" that, retrospectively, signifies his departure from pragmatism's main tendency. To endorse the judgment is more of a decision than a finding—but there are no simple findings here.

Whatever must be abandoned or reconsidered of the older corpus we may as well give up with a good grace: Dewey's reading of his Logic for instance, which is hopeless, although the original project was surely more than merely interesting (in a sense akin to Hegel's view of logic); Peirce's synecchism, which now seems like a longing to imitate and improve on Kant (despite his opposing Kant's a priori necessities); James's blunders (early and late) about the pragmatist conception of truth, as well as the separation of his pragmatism from his radical empiricism (which James himself conceded was justified).

None of this is really essential to the principal thrust of pragmatism as that must now be viewed in the new century: that is, after the intervening history of all thecontending currents that took form during the rise of prag-
matism or, even more significantly, after it had crested. That is why I make so much of pragmatism’s quarrel with naturalizing. The maxim is not entirely useless, but it is too slack; even more important, what it could be made to mean, what it perhaps does mean in a prescient way, cannot be recovered from the effects of the present debasement of its philosophical currency. To claim to see a genuinely promising way of recovering its original force is, I think, all that can be meant by anticipating or endorsing pragmatism’s revival against the new naturalizing.

There can be no serious point to a revival that does not take into account the half century of vigorous dispute that has, on any reading, eclipsed its older energies. The newer quarrels are now bound to spell out the promise of the original movement. Put another way: to “revive” pragmatism within the terms of nothing more recent than whatever Dewey wrote in his best moments is to confirm pragmatism’s demise, though I have the greatest regard for Dewey’s achievement; by contrast, to go beyond Dewey, to address the entire force of the analytic tradition that is best defined by Quine’s responses to Rudolf Carnap and Gottlob Frege is to make room for the intervening serendipity of Putnam’s and Rorty’s quarrels.

II

I have a suggestion (which I have more than hinted at) regarding how a reclaims pragmatism should conceive its altered project, and I offer a small legitimating narrative to go with it. I cannot tell you what the boundaries of Peirce’s maxim should be: I think it hardly matters, so long as our options oppose the tally favoring naturalizing and accord with the second tally offered in the maxim’s name. But I do claim that there is a decisive minimal reading of the maxim’s import that Peirce touches on (not always perspicuously), which the pragmatists never really pursued—until perhaps Putnam’s skirmishes with Rorty.

The key is still the rejection of Cartesianism, which, of course, is more than Descartes’s own philosophy. But you must bear in mind that Western philosophy, though it has indeed decisively solved Descartes’s problem—I mean the problem posed by Descartes’s realism, which, as the history spanning Kant and Hegel confirms, very few rightly grasp—entails the solution to Descartes’s dualism as well. The rejection of Cartesianism points to a double irony. For, first of all, all the classic pragmatists were explicitly focused on the defeat of Descartes’s impossible realism (on epistemological grounds) and were aware (however unequally) that this defeat entailed the repudiation of Descartes’s dualism (or at least the representationalism Descartes and Locke shared). In this way, they recovered in their own idiom the adequate solution buried in Hegel’s verbal excesses. But the lesson has never been so completely mastered that the Cartesian specter no longer haunts us. The lesson is almost embarrassingly simple: if we speak of the objective world as “absolutely” independent of our inquiries, then we must reject any realism that treats our epistemic competence in relational terms (cognizing subject to cognized object). To argue otherwise is to court Cartesian paradoxes in insoluble ways. That is indeed Hegel’s lesson (already Fichte’s), and that is what Dewey never abandoned in his interminable opposition to all sorts of dualism.

Hence—and this is the second irony—we are now just after the turn into the new century still as busy battling Cartesianism as ever, from the middle of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth. I do not mean this in a contrived way. The import of the divergence between the two forms of naturalism is simply that, when properly deciphered, the naturalizers’ version is an attenuated way of restoring Cartesianism itself. That is the point. Furthermore, by one of those marvels of intellectual history, these same connections are all but acknowledged—in their breach—in Hilary Putnam’s latest epiphany, his John Dewey Lectures, where he writes as a self-confessed pragmatist at the end of the century against the Cartesianism he now finds in his own philosophical bosom, which he had for years been fighting in others and thought he had successfully exorcised in himself.

You may treat Cartesianism as a term of art. (I return to it more pointedly in the next chapter: in particular, to its meaning in our own time.) But, on any serious reading, you can hardly deny that the essential philosophical questions that arise from the first appearance of Descartes’s principal tracts persist to the very end of the twentieth century. We are evidently still trapped by the two unavoidable paradoxes Descartes has bequeathed us: one, that of his realism, requires a radical disjunction between cognizing subjects and cognized world and pretends to reclaim an objective and neutral grasp of the way the world is apart from our inquiries, a world uncontaminated by the doubtful beliefs and appearances that occupy us in the process; the other, that of the conditions for resolving the first puzzle, if we are epistemically confined to inner thoughts and perceptions, even if we suppose them to represent (somehow) the independent world.

Now, certainly, the pragmatists—Peirce and Dewey, preeminently—are the beneficiaries of the solutions first adequately formulated by Hegel (in the Phenomenology). For his part, Putnam, who plainly regards himself as a pragmatist and is indeed a pragmatist (attracted in different ways to Peirce, Dewey, and James) confesses that he had unwittingly bought into Cartesian representationalism, though it violated an important lesson he had already
gained. It may even be that Putnam was in part seduced by James’s flirtation with Lockean representationalism, though James of course officially opposed the idea and Putnam now dissociates himself from James’s lapse.21

In any case, Putnam rejects his own well-known doctrine of “internal realism”—in the John Dewey Lectures—by which he means to repudiate at least the idea (offered in Reason, Truth and History) of construing reality as “mind dependent,” a notion he objects to in James, together with the Lockean theme of representationalism, which he somehow joins to internal realism. Here, Putnam relies on John McDowell’s escape from Cartesianism as formulated in the latter’s John Locke Lectures, which, indeed, offsets the double Cartesianism (the two Cartesian paradoxes) just sketched. But McDowell succeeds only in formal terms, that is, without any explicit account of the conditions of objective knowledge or the conceptual linkage between knowledge and reality.22

Pragmatism cannot fail to be suspicious of such a gain: it goes against the spirit of the original maxim. And Putnam has surely given up too much—more at least than he could rightly afford or defend—if indeed he means to maintain a pragmatist calling. In any event, once matters are put this way, it is plain enough that the entire quarrel between Putnam and Rorty revolves around the “Cartesian” question. Putnam’s defense proves to be untenable; but Rorty’s dismissal goes arbitrarily beyond any reasonable application of the conceptual evidence. Pragmatism, of course, is then seen to be revived and defended by a pair of defective maneuvers!

It’s not true that Putnam’s repudiating representationalism requires in any way repudiating his denial of a principled disjunction between the subjective and the objective. The original denial (“internalism”—which is best read as an epithet for accepting the post-Kantian lesson) does not implicate, ontically, the mind-dependence of the real world. That is a misreading, which puts Putnam at odds with the pragmatists he so much admires. (“Hegelian idealism, we may say, is not an idealism at all, if “idealism” signifies that the natural world is “mind-dependent” in the ontic sense.)

The denial of a principled disjunction between the subjective and the objective is, of course, the most memorable claim in Putnam’s Paul Carus Lectures, which Putnam links pretty clearly to the pragmatists’ “insistence on the supremacy of the agent point of view.”23 There would be little reason to trot out all these details if they were merely local features of James’s and Putnam’s idiosyncratic views. But they are much more than that: they are the compelling (and neglected) clues for understanding (now) the soundness and sanity of the pragmatists’ original program (properly drawn from Peirce and Dewey at least) and the effective advantage of pitting the pragmatists against the naturalizers—preeminently, Quine, Davidson, and even Rorty. Although they are all nominally opposed to Cartesianism, you cannot find a compelling explanation (or defense) of just how Putnam, Rorty, Davidson, and McDowell mean to turn the trick. (That is hard to believe.)

In any event, Putnam’s newly minted denial of his earlier denial of the subject/object disjunction (if that is indeed what he now denies) risks his joining forces with the Cartesian realists he opposes—hence, also, the naturalizers, whom he tries, quite improbably, to enlist as pragmatists. You must remember that the pragmatists can make common cause with the post-Kantian “Idealists” and other movements that cleave to the post-Kantian achievement only if they oppose the naturalists and only if doing so has nothing to do with adopting “idealism” as that is ordinarily understood. In short, to oppose idealism (both subjective idealism and post-Kantian Idealism) while remaining committed to the epistemological lesson Kant and Hegel share, we have only to distinguish between ontic and epistemic questions (without allowing them to be separated) and to hold that the inseparability of the subjective and the objective applies to the epistemic and not to the ontic aspects of realism. Inevitably, that changes what we should mean by “realism”—it cannot any longer be Cartesian realism; it must take a constructivist form. But that is what all post-Hegelian realisms must affirm.

Putnam affirms that it would be a “mistake” to suppose that the question “Which are the real objects [that constitute the world?]—in choosing between alternative ‘metaphysics’ answering to different interests]” is “a question that makes sense independently of our choice of concepts.” Furthermore, no sooner does he say this, than he tries to enlist Davidson, Goodman, and Quine among the friends of “the great pragmatists,” though they draw back on that account. Putnam urges that they be less reticent and discounts the evidence that Davidson and Quine are naturalizers, which is to say, effectively, Cartesian realists (though of a very much dampened kind); he goes on to ask: “What can giving up the spectator view in philosophy mean [Dewey’s familiar diatribe],24 which he himself supports in advocating ‘internal realism’ if we don’t extend the pragmatic approach to the most indispensable ‘versions’ of ourselves and our world that we possess?”25

You may glean here how the contest between the pragmatists and the latest naturalists should be construed. For, of course, Davidson and Quine are cleverly disguised Cartesians (Cartesian realists, that is), though you might not know it. The argument is worth a closer look. (I remind you again that the meaning of “Cartesianism” will depend to some extent on the discussion of the chapter that follows.) But you must bear in mind that Putnam explicitly makes the realist question hostage to our conceptual options—to what,
as we shall see, Rorty rejects as extraneous "tertia," what, thus far at least, agrees with Cartesianism and naturalizing.

I single out Putnam's views, as well as his philosophical difficulties, because Putnam is the end-of-century pragmatist who has most valiantly attempted to reconcile something close to the pragmatist maxim and a direct engagement with the naturalizers' programmatic turn. I concede that Putnam has blundered not only in linking the rejection of representationalism to rejecting the denial of a principled disjunction between the subjective and the objective, but also in supposing that the original denial entails the "mind-dependence" of the real world. I note also that the naturalizers are committed to opposing that denial and to construing it as tantamount to the idealism they themselves abhor. That is Cartesianism pure and simple, but it is also a non sequitur. It is, indeed, what Quine, Davidson, and Rorty expressly affirm (in their different ways): they all oppose Putnam, and he opposes all of them. We are the beneficiaries, because, in reviewing their implicit quarrel, we are led to see what, dialectically, is the only way pragmatism could proceed if it were to recover the force of its original orientation.

Putnam and Rorty are obviously aware of the quickening contest. They are its principal abettors. In fact, in his remarkable "Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth," Rorty explains the sense in which he conflates naturalizing and his own brand of postmodernism—and produces thereby a new "pragmatism." The union hardly succeeds, and it is not really argued for. Furthermore, neither Davidson nor Putnam nor Quine (who is also mentioned) would be willing to characterize his own view in Rorty's way: Davidson and Putnam have in fact publicly distanced themselves from Rorty's resumés. But that's hardly the point of featuring Rorty's maneuver. It's rather that, in noting the way in which the naturalizers turn the pragmatist program against itself, we learn how to redirect pragmatism's best intuitions against the naturalizers—and why. That's not what Rorty wishes to encourage and not what Putnam manages to salvage. But it's the principal lesson of recent Anglo-American philosophy, nevertheless.

I offer two remarks from Rorty's paper that betray the Cartesian and anti-pragmatist spirit of Davidson's naturalism (a fortiori, Rorty's naturalism). In Rorty's hands, they lead us to conclude that Putnam's internal realism actually violates the pragmatism Rorty finds in Davidson's naturalism! The reversal is a gymnastic wonder.

The essay begins this way: "Davidson has said [Rorty reports] that his theory of truth 'provides no entities with which to compare sentences', and thus is a 'correspondence' theory only in 'an unassuming sense.'" Rorty finds the doctrine "reminiscent of pragmatism, a movement which has special-

ized [as he says] in debunking dualisms and in dissolving traditional problems created by these dualisms. The close affiliations of Davidson's work to Quine's and of Quine's to Dewey's make it tempting to see Davidson as belonging to the American pragmatist tradition."26 This is one of the cleverest reversals of the facts that I can recall in the recent philosophical literature. I take my hat off to it. Rorty pays no attention to Davidson's own "dualism" between semantics and epistemology (in his [Davidson's] theory of truth) or between either (or both) of these and metaphysics (as in his supposed realism).

More to the point, Rorty focuses on the meaning of Davidson's "slogan" (Rorty's term), "correspondence without confrontation," which, by invoking Davidson's well-known attack on the "dualism of scheme and content," leads (on Davidson's view) to defeating "the idea that something like 'mind' or 'language' can bear some relation such as 'fitting' or 'organizing' to the world."27 We are shown a little later that Rorty's paper is directed in good part against Putnam: it queries a relational tertium quid (something Locke might have offered) that might be supposed to play an explanatory role in epistemic contexts.28

So we are alerted to a certain collection of facts: (1) Rorty and Davidson oppose, as naturalizers, Putnam's internal realism (which Putnam repudiates in his John Dewey Lectures), though it had originally seemed to be a bona fide instance of Deweyan anti-dualism; Putnam's "mistake" is now made to support Davidson's and Rorty's own dampened Cartesian realism (that is, "correspondence without confrontation"). (2) The naturalizers move to entrench the formal idiom of correspondence (without ontic or epistemic encumbrance) as a natural extension of pragmatism itself, although Davidson correctly believes that pragmatism is committed to truth's playing an explanatory role, possibly even in a proto-positivist sense.29 And (3) the naturalizers take it as evident that to treat the theory of truth as explanatory is to affirm an indissoluble ontic and epistemic relationship between cognizers and cognized, subjects and objects (hence, to risk affirming idealism): thus, on a pragmatist reading, mind or language does indeed "organize" the world in some constituting ("idealist") way.

Arguments of the third sort are specifically directed against Peirce and James and (more tactfully) Quine and Michael Dummett and, more pointedly, Putnam. Here, now, is the second remark I wished to cite from Rorty's paper, which very neatly brings the entire contest into full view:

If truth itself is to be an explanation of something, that explanation must be of something which can be caused by truth, but not
caused by the content of true beliefs. The function of the _tertia_
which Davidson wishes to banish was precisely to provide a mecha-
nism outside the causal order of the physical world, a mechanism
which could have or lack a quasi-causal property with which one
might identify truth.  

It is for this reason that Rorty draws attention to Putnam's insistence that truth _does_ have an _explanatory_ function (which we apparently fix by fixing the "assertibility conditions" under which true beliefs prove true).  

For, of course, _if_ truth has an explanatory function—or, better, if our accepting claims and statements as true on the basis of supporting evidence signifies that there must be _some_ epistemological explanation of that policy—then there must also be _non-causal_ (or, non-naturalizable causal) explanations (intentional explanations, say) included in our account of the way the world is and the way our knowledge of the world is said to fit the world. And if that is so, then naturalizing must be false and could never be tantamount to prag-
matism; and pragmatism itself would be rightly committed to insisting on the indissoluble relationship between the epistemic and the ontic—or, be-
tween subjects and objects—though not (or not necessarily) in the idealist's way. In any case, _if_ truth is a realist construction proposed in accord with one or another meta-philosophical policy, then it is clear that "truth" must have an explanatory function, without needing to reclaim any form of privi-
lege; and if that is so, then Rorty has simply misread the lesson of the his-
tory of epistemology—preeminently, Hegel's and Dewey's contribution.

IV  
I support the finding and, supporting it, see a strong directive for a strength-
ened pragmatism. I am not suggesting that we follow Putnam in any of his passing phases: say, in his Cartesian phase as a unity of science theorist or as an internal realist or as a "natural realist" (as he now calls himself, following McDowell's lead). Putnam has hardly settled on a viable realism of his own. But there is no question that, during his internal-realist period, he had his finger on the essential contest.

Bear with me. I have brought the quarrel between Putnam and Davidson and/or Rorty to bear on whether, with regard to the defense of realism, we require "_tertia_" (or interpretive intermediaries) or do not. Effectively, Put-
nam had said yes in his internal-realist phase, but he has now repudiated his answer. Therefore, though he does not agree with Davidson or Rorty, he ap-
ppears to have conceded their essential charge: the charge that the admission of a constitutive relationship between mind and language and world (often labeled "idealism," sometimes "anti-realism," but always such as to require a theory of truth in the explanatory mode) is fatally flawed at the point of ad-
mitting _tertia_. If you consider how far Putnam has retreated and how much he has put at risk, you see that his treatment of truth in terms of "assertibil-
ity conditions" (his pragmatism) now hangs in the balance.

Let me clarify matters a little in a terminological way. When Rorty rejects _tertia_ (in his own name and Davidson's), he rejects subjective representa-
tions ("ideas," in Locke's sense), at least those mediating between cognizing minds and cognized world. But _that_ has nothing to do with whether objective knowledge implicates one or another conceptual interpretation of the epistemic relationship between mind and world. (Putnam has championed both doctrines as if they were one and the same.) "_Tertia_" may also be in-
voked in the second sense, which is to say, as an inseparable (or, perhaps better, _adverbially_ qualifying) "third" affecting the epistemic relationship between mind and world, but not the world we posit as independent of our inquiries.

Put more simply, _tertia_ may be no more than the conceptual perspective and vantage of interest from which we identify and describe the world: it be-
ing the case that we can change our vantage but cannot escape speaking from one perspective or another. In a related sense, the view that _truth_ is an un-
analyzable surd is itself a corollary of a correspondentist reading of realism (a version of Cartesianism), that is, the mark of a successful correspondence that cannot be expressed by means of any determinate or standard concepts. For, if "truth" is a critical artifact, it cannot be a surd. Conversely, if truth is a surd (as Davidson insists), then it can only implicate an assured form of "direct" realism that need never be legitimated. If, then, correspondentism is repudiated, if the need for interpretive intermediaries is acknowledged, then causal and legitative questions cannot be conflated and cannot fail to be joined in epistemic contexts, and "truth" itself cannot fail to have an explanatory role. Which is precisely what James and Dewey concluded. But if so, then the naturalizing stance favored by Davidson and Rorty cannot rightly be tagged as a pragmatist position, unless Humpty-Dumpty was right after all. If Davidson and Rorty reject correspondentism in the epistemically operative sense, then how can they convincingly fall back to treat-
ing truth as epistemically unanalyzable? There's a paradox here that seems to be insuperable. (Their saying what they do hardly makes it true.)

As a Jamesian pragmatist, Putnam had originally claimed that

"Truth," in an internalist view, is some sort of (idealized) rational acceptability—some sort of ideal coherence of our beliefs with each
other and with our experiences as those experiences are themselves represented in our belief systems—and not correspondence with mind-independent or discourse-independent 'states of affairs'. There is [he affirms] no God's Eye point of view that we can know or usefully imagine. There are only the various points of view of actual persons reflecting various interests and purposes that their descriptions and theories subserv.\textsuperscript{34}

The commitment is still essential; but, now, Putnam can offer no suitable defense. Truth is not a correspondentist surd: Putnam means to escape Cartesianism. It marks, rather, the indissoluble link between mind and world that "makes" objective knowledge possible. How, the question nags, can Putnam ensure that role from the side of belief alone? Putnam fails us here. But Dewey does not.

Pragmatists, as the inheritors of the post-Kantian resolution of the Cartesian problem, cannot now fail to hold to something like an "internalist" view of truth (that is, by construing truth in terms of the epistemic assignment of truth-values); and Putnam, for his part, hardly tells us how to replace it in his new-found "natural realism." He had, as we have seen, judged himself to be an unwitting Cartesian or Lockean representationalist; and he has now decided (if, indeed, that is what he has decided) to repudiate (by a complete non sequitur, as it turns out) the denial of a principled demarcation between the subjective and the objective. Doing that, he has undercut his own pragmatism and (ironically) retreated to a deeper Cartesianism, or at least risked doing so. To put the point obliquely: to insist on the indissolubility of the subjective and objective aspects of the cognitive process is an entirely different matter from that of the ontic dependence of the world on some sort of constitution mind: the first is the great epistemological discovery of the post-Kantian tradition (Hegel, preeminently); the second is an expression of its attraction to some sort of panpsychism (Schelling, paradigmatically).

I venture to say that any pragmatist solution will concede: (1) conceptual "intermediaries" that are not relationally defined, as they are in representationalism, but only as conceptual or adverbial qualifications of our cognizing powers; (2) the continued rejection of a principled demarcation between the "subjective" and the "objective"; and (3) second-order epistemological explanations or legitimations that are not expressible in (that is, not restricted to) causal terms. A standard way of putting the point (against the naturalizers) simply says that legitimation requires normative resources and that such resources cannot be equated with whatever is merely causal. (That is exactly McDowell's reminder in \textit{Mind and World}. He's right, of course, but more is needed.)

There's the pivot of the emerging contest, because Davidson and Rorty willingly deny that truth has any explanatory role. Davidson concedes a semantic role, but then severs semantics from epistemology, which no "Hegelian" would willingly support. On the argument Davidson and Rorty offer, if truth had such a role, it would have to be a legitimating role that could not be naturalized; as a result, they imply, they would themselves be rightly accused of being Cartesianists of the worst kind: "There are no relations of 'being made true,' which hold between beliefs and the world."\textsuperscript{35} If that proved true, then tertia would be easily precluded. The fact remains—it is perfectly obvious—that we can save the idea of epistemological explanation that is not restricted to the causal and yet is not relational either (in the representationalist's sense). Davidson and Rorty have simply overlooked a perfectly plausible option: tertia need not be independent third "things" at all ("ideas," say); they may be no more than interpretive qualifications of our doxastic powers (our capacity to form beliefs) relative to the realist standing of our truth-claims. But that is constructivism.

Davidson concedes a role for evidence, so he is not a postmodernist in Rorty's sense; but he opposes Quine's verificationism for the same reason he opposes Putnam's internalism: it leads, he says, to "skepticism"—"for clearly a person's sensory stimulations could be just as they are and yet the world outside very different. (Remember the brain in the vat [he adds, that is, Putnam's thought-experiment].)"\textsuperscript{36} Davidson rests his entire case on a coherence theory of beliefs—not truth—which can be explained causally and consistently through affirming that "most of the beliefs in a total set of beliefs are true."\textsuperscript{37} Hence, coherence functions as a "test" of truth, without requiring a theory of truth of the offending sort (an epistemological tertium quid of Putnam's or Quine's sort). You may complain fairly enough that that provides no secure ground for supposing that this belief or the next is actually true: the argument looks like an instance of the fallacy of division, or a confusion between truth and abductive inference (that is, inference to the best explanation).\textsuperscript{38} And so it is.

But, more to the point, if, as Quine has obliquely noted (against Davidson), you grant the historical drift and transformation of our beliefs over time—preeminently, our science (without yet invoking Thomas Kuhn, as Davidson might suppose we would)—then Davidson's rejoinder must be seriously defective.\textsuperscript{39} If it is, then the pragmatist option (an option akin to Putnam's internalism, spared the latter's crudities) strikes the mind as hav-
Reinventing Pragmatism

You now have before you the scattered pieces of an argument that can completely reclaim the soundness of the pragmatist undertaking, that is, a fresh strategy dialectically pitted against the dominant naturalizing stance of analytic philosophy that (in Rorty's eyes) believes itself to have strengthened the original pragmatist cause. It remains to put the pieces in place.

I suggest that any reasonable solution will entail the following consistent triad: (1) the physical world is independent of mind, language, inquiry, and subjectivity; (2) whatever determinate entities belong in the ontic sense to the world according to (1) are not, or not for that reason, also epistemically independent of mind, language, inquiry, or subjectivity; and (3) metaphysics (or semantics) and epistemology are indissolubly linked, so that inquiries in the one implicate inquiries in the other. Pragmatism has always subscribed to something like this triad; naturalizing cannot and will not; and postmodernism pretends that philosophies that embrace (3) are not worth taking seriously.

This "new" solution, which the pragmatists share with the post-Kantians, disallows a dualism of subjects and objects, a dualism of the subjective and the objective, hence also a dualism between realism and idealism. But if that is so, then Putnam went much too far in rejecting his internal realism when he rejected his representationalism; and Davidson and Rorty go too far in construing arguments akin to the triad just mentioned as entailing the mind-dependent constitution of the independent world or the "relational" treatment of tertia. What this leads to, rather, is this: that there can be no viable realism that is not also a constructivism; that realism's ontic sense can never be detailed except by way of an indissoluble epistemic encumbrance; and that constructivism is not, or need not be, tantamount to idealism. Dialectically, its deeper implication is that what Davidson concedes by the formula "correspondence without confrontation" already implicates what has just been said in support of a constructive realism. (There is no escape.)

Constructivism means at the very least that questions of knowledge, objectivity, truth, confirmation, and legitimation are constructed in accord with our interpretive conceptual schemes—the interpretive qualification of the indissoluble relationship between cognizer and cognized; and that, though we do not construct the actual world, what we posit (constructively) as the independent world is epistemically dependent on our mediating conceptual schemes. It is but a step from there to historicizing the entire practice. Here is the clue that links pragmatism and the Hegelian vision.

This captures all that can be relevantly salvaged from Kant's solution of Descartes's problem, which is precisely what the post-Kantians and the pragmatists correctly inferred. It is also what (we may now suppose) twenty-first-century philosophies will finally acknowledge. There's more that can be said about pragmatism's prospects: for example, about the theme of history. But any such recovery would presuppose the effective and final defeat of Cartesian realism. The fact is, we are still struggling with the Cartesian project.
Richard Rorty is widely credited with having revived pragmatism's sagging fortunes. And so he has. But it is hardly clear whether what Rorty has revived, beginning with *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), is indeed the recovery of pragmatism proper. Certainly, he has earned the pragmatist badge through the sheer exuberance, drive, and inventive continuity that he has forged between his own views and that of the classic pragmatists; but the connection seems to owe as much to a kind of squatter's rights and the skillful use of the *obiter dictum* as to any compelling fresh version of a pragmatist argument or canon. Think, for instance, of Rorty's mistaken disjunction between the public and the private, offered as genuinely Deweyan,1 or Rorty's deliberate deformation of Dewey in Heidegger's direction and Heidegger in Dewey's,2 or, possibly even more puzzling, the flat-out reversal of the intent of William James's original theory of truth.

Rorty says straight out in the introduction to *Consequences of Pragmatism* that "the essays in this book are attempts to draw consequences from a pragmatist theory about truth. This theory says that truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about."3 Informed readers will protest: "Whatever you make of the misunderstanding between James and Peirce, James surely believed his theory of truth was the most important conceptual plank in the whole of pragmatism." One may also react to that reaction: "Well, Rorty never meant to dismiss James's theory, he hardly thought it was pointless or misguided; he meant rather to salvage its essential lesson!" But if you say that, you must ask yourself whether Rorty's theory about theories of truth, especially James's, is sufficiently like James's theory to count as an extension of it—hence, as an extension of pragmatism—or is no more than a clever subversion of James's doctrine. And then we'd be off to the races.

My own sense is that without Rorty's wide-ranging discussion of the classic pragmatists, Dewey chiefly, there would never have been a revival to speak of. After all, pragmatism was moribund by the end of the 1940s. Even so, the sense in which pragmatism has gained a second life may depend more on the free-wheeling dispute that arose between Rorty and Hilary Putnam that began in the 1970s before the publication of *Consequences*, than to any particular thesis of Rorty's. The energy of those running debates effectively defined the significance of the American revival—or, better, defined pragmatism's reinvention, which is now neither Rorty's nor Putnam's creation. Questions about what pragmatism now means cannot possibly be answered in textual terms, but neither are those questions pointless. Both Rorty and Putnam, I concede, exhibit pragmatist loyalties of a sort, but neither can be said to have recovered the force of any particular tenet favored by the original pragmatists.

Rorty and Putnam rather nicely feature (between them) a number of the essential quarrels of our time, which they designate (not altogether plausibly) as a debate about the nerve of pragmatism itself. They also define an opportunistic space in which additional options opposing their own contest and their own opposed doctrines suggest themselves and invite comparisons with pragmatism's past. In any case, the pragmatist revival is the invention of a substantially new confrontation drawn from the saliencies of our own time that claim a measure of congruity with pragmatism's original "spirit"—not, however, by adhering closely to any explicit pragmatist doctrine or program.

To see this is to see how little we may care to invest in terminological quarrels. But it would be a blunder to ignore altogether the question of what now to count as the essential pragmatist issue. There's a great deal of power compressed in controlling the name and, as a consequence, a great deal of influence in affecting the perceived validity of opposing arguments. The trick is to find a strategy that can command a measure of attention collected at an unlikely point of entry that might force an honest reckoning. I suggest that we begin with Rorty's account of his own attempt to present Donald Davidson's theory of truth in a fair light, his candid report about Davidson's opposing his own summary view, and his interpretation of what Davidson's rebuff signifies. I doubt you will find a more perspicuous way of entering the heart of late American philosophy or late pragmatism.

The fact is that James's theory of truth, primitive and flawed though James's handling of the concept was, is of the greatest importance in defining the distinction of classic pragmatism. Rorty's deliberate reversal in Davidson's favor must count as one of the most bold-faced misrepresentations of the plain facts as any that Rorty has foisted onto the profession. One
cannot really say that Rorty is mistaken in his reading, since he would not have put the idea forward if he did not intend to disorganize thereby the entire conventional reading of the classic movement as a condition for advancing his own rather daring (and impossible) equivalence between Davidson’s naturalizing and his own postmodernism. The picture is complicated indeed. But the recovery of pragmatism “proper” cannot but rest on two extraordinary intuitions, neither of which was ever presented by their originators in an acceptably developed form: the first is surely Peirce’s intuition about the meaning of a concept, and the second is James’s intuition about the meaning of “truth.” In fact, merely to insist on these two constraints—though neither Peirce nor James would ever have accepted them in the sense the other required—would instantly block a good deal of the conceptual confusion Rorty has deliberately spawned as to what we should understand by the revival of pragmatism. It would also be fair to say that Davidson was both annoyed and (philosophically) nonplussed by Rorty’s reading of his own opposition to James and Putnam.

Here is part of what Rorty says about Davidson:

In an article on Donald Davidson [Rorty’s “Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth”4], I suggested that we interpret Davidson both as a sort of pragmatist and as a sort of minimalist—as someone who, like James, thought that there was less to say about truth than philosophers had believed [in effect, that both were “deflationists” about truth]... I interpreted Davidson as saying that the word “true” has no explanatory use, but merely a disquotational use, a commending use, and what I called a “cautionary” use... In an article of 1990,5 Davidson partially repudiated my interpretation. [Davidson] said [he was] neither a deflationist nor a disquotationalist... [He] concluded that “[t]he concept of truth has essential connections with the concepts of belief and meaning, but these connections are untouched by Tarski’s work.”6 which, if it comprised “all of truth’s essential features,” would be deflationist.

Davidson does indeed insist, contrary to what Rorty says, that truth has a distinct but dependent role in explanation. It’s also true, as Rorty correctly reports, that Davidson’s theory of the explanation of true belief remains thoroughly causal. The details need not concern us for the time being.7 But that hardly justifies Rorty’s concluding that “what Davidson adds to Tarski, when he displays the connections between the concept of truth and those of meaning and belief, has nothing whatever to do with the question of whether, or how, we can tell when a belief is true.”8 (This was meant to vindicate Rorty’s saying that Davidson has only “partially repudiated” his interpretation.)

All Davidson actually says is this: that, regarding “certain familiar attempts to characterize truth,” “[w]e should not say that truth is correspondence, coherence, warranted assertibility, ideally justified assertibility, what is accepted in the conversation of the right people, what science will end up maintaining, what explains the convergence on single theories in science, or the sources of our ordinary beliefs. To the extent that realism or anti-realism depend[s] on one or another of these views of truth we should [Davidson concludes] refuse to endorse either.”9 Very few would disagree with Davidson’s judgment here, but it hardly entails truth’s not having any explanatory power (if that is what Davidson means) or not having any conceptual bearing on explanations of the standing of cognitive claims (which is what Rorty means).

Roughly, then, what Davidson really has in mind is that truth read in the correspondentist sense (or in any more attenuated sense that approaches the correspondentist intent) is and must be a surd, that (in that sense) truth never plays a criterial or legitimating role of any kind. To insist that it does would be to endorse “Cartesianism.”

Davidson would have been right to oppose James’s theory if James had been a correspondentist in advancing his own conception. But that is precisely what James was not doing. The way to correct the impression is as follows: merely read James’s pragmatist formula as operative within the terms of a constructivism or constructive realism (as explained in the prologue). There is then no reason to deny truth an explanatory role affecting the standing of belief and truth-claim: we need only avoid all epistemic or criterial traffic with correspondentism! Nothing could be simpler.

In fact, Davidson himself uses a “correspondence” formula when speaking of truth, but he does not mean it in the correspondentist sense. No more does James. But James does believe that we decide what to count as true relative to our interests and involvement with (what we take to be) the way the world is. Hence, when James speaks of truth being “made,” he is not (in his best moments) speaking criterially. He is explaining the way in which the constructivist treatment of “true” answers to pragmatism’s metaphilosophical orientation regarding truth and reality. In that sense, James cannot avoid ascribing an explanatory role to truth. If you grant that much, then both Davidson’s and Rorty’s arguments collapse at a stroke. But all that has nothing to do with the nonsense of affirming that figures like Frege, Sel...
Certainly, it does not bear on James's distinctive claim (unless to reject it) or on what might be made of Davidson's claim read in James's way (which, of course, would violate Davidson's purely causal reading). Even Tarski's account, which Davidson claims to espouse, has more than merely "semantic" force: it's plainly committed to a strong extensionalism wherever it applies—hence, it applies in epistemic rather than merely causal terms. Or, wherever Davidson actually invokes Tarski's model without relying on Tarski's own extensional analysis preparatory to truth-value assignment, the appropriation comes to little more than a vacuous version of the correspondence doctrine Davidson opposes. Tarski, of course, made a point of acknowledging the recalcitrance of natural-language sentences vis-à-vis the fruitful application of his conditions of analysis: that cannot be confined to an exercise in formal semantics alone; it is already implicitly epistemological in import. Also, when Davidson adopts Tarski's account as an incomplete first step in providing an analysis of "true," he loses the extensional force of Tarski's "definition" of "true" because he takes "true" to be indefinable, to be absurd.

But, of course, that puts the connection between the "pragmatist" side of Davidson's account of truth and Tarski's strongly extensionalist account at insuperable risk. There is nothing left to salvage.

As far as I can see—as far as Davidson succeeds in defending his view—we ought not support any of the doctrines mentioned if they are thought to function criterially or in some cognitive or evidentiary way apt for justifying (and therefore explaining) why this or that belief about the ("independent") world is true. Davidson says nothing against the legitimacy of explaining why we take this or that belief to be true (on, say, a causal theory of belief and meaning and the conditions for assigning "true" and "false" in cognitive contexts): he "merely" opposes building an indubitably realist or anti-realist force into the ordinary use of "true." I say (again) that Davidson means to oppose what, in accord with his own view, is untenable in Cartesianism and skepticism; but he does so from a vantage that is still palpably Cartesian. (You may rely, here, on your intuitions about "Cartesian" as a term of art. I shall return to define it more explicitly shortly. It is meant as a convenience and an economy and a constant reminder of a compressed history spanning nearly four hundred years.)

On the substantive issue, this is what Davidson intends: we can, by way of the causal theory of belief, explain why we treat particular beliefs as true. But doing that has no legislatively force. I am not convinced that a causal theory of truth could ever work; it would always require an epistemic stand-

ing that it could never capture. But certainly it goes beyond what Rorty reports Davidson as holding. Hence, when Rorty suggests that we should treat Davidson as a "pragmatist"—in the same way in which he (Rorty) treats James as a pragmatist—he gets both of them wildly wrong. I draw your attention to the improbable fact that, in recent writings, Rorty simply announces the following: "As I shall be using the term 'pragmatism', the paradigmatic pragmatists are John Dewey and Donald Davidson." Dewey, of course, shared (in fact, improved) the main theme of James's theory of truth. There is no other explicit thread in Davidson's account of realism that could support Rorty's attribution, except his opposition to any criterial recovery of Cartesianism. But that would hardly distinguish Davidson from an army of philosophers who would not qualify as pragmatists.

If, intending to avoid any cognitivist reading of correspondentism and representationalism, James had offered his own pragmatist theory of truth to replace such views, he would still have intended to advance his theory in an explanatory way; but, if so, then anyone—Rorty, say—who offered an account of "true" in which truth had no explanatory function at all would have drastically distorted what we should rightly understand to be a revivified pragmatism. For, surely, if Rorty ever lost Davidson's support, he would have no grounds at all for insisting that "true" had no explanatory role to play—or for claiming that he himself was improving pragmatism's lot! At the very least, Rorty would have to explain the conceptual link between belief, meaning, and truth (which, of course, Davidson undertakes to do); whereas Rorty, speaking as a postmodernist, simply holds that there is nothing there to know.

In fact, nothing would remain of James's pragmatism if it were denied that James had advanced a theory of truth that was meant to identify the key considerations in virtue of which beliefs are judged to be true. The fact that James was an innocent in his attempt (in Pragmatism) to give suitable form to his intuitions about truth is neither here nor there. What is extraordinary is that James should have hit on a fundamental element in pragmatism's theory of inquiry that was plainly within Peirce's grasp, which simply eluded Peirce (the better theorist) because of the latter's more ambitious (post-Kantian) vision. But Rorty cannot dismantle James's theory without dismissing James's standing as a pragmatist or without explaining how his doing so affects his analysis of Dewey. He fails to address these concerns.

What Rorty says in summarizing Davidson is also murky: he equates pragmatism with "naturalism" and construes both in a very thin postmodernist (or "postphilosophical") way. But Davidson is unwilling to tag along, and it's a fair question to ask whether pragmatism can, or should, be viewed
as hospitable to the naturalist's claim. I think it should not, as I have argued in the preceding section. At times, the benefits of redefining pragmatism are stretched beyond all plausibility. The principal point of the quarrel about truth is this: to admit the vacuity of the correspondentist account of truth and the unacceptable paradox of the Cartesian account is to grasp how we are driven to a constructivist form of realism if we favor realism at all; to adopt such a view is to require an account of truth that explains (in the normative sense) why particular claims and beliefs are rightly counted as true; to agree to that is to eclipse any merely causal theory of belief, which cannot (causally) distinguish between true and false beliefs; but to admit all that is to defeat naturalizing hands down. Davidson is caught by his unwillingness to treat truth in completely deflationary terms: he is aware that, in resisting Rorty's helping hand, he risks the defeat of his own naturalized reading of realism. But there is no escape.

This odd piece of gossip, then, is philosophically worthwhile. It defines the most strategic question confronting American philosophy at the end of the twentieth century, hence also the best prospects for a redefinition of pragmatism, if it is to proceed along the lines Rorty favors: the question, namely, of what should we understand by the compatibility or incompatibility of pragmatism and naturalizing—and, further afield, between pragmatism or naturalism and Rorty's brand of postmodernism? As it turns out, the larger question is more than a local matter; rightly interpreted, it is the American version of the most pointed question that now confronts the whole of Western philosophy. The quarrel between Rorty and Putnam is, then, another tribute to the cunning of Reason.

There is a single reference to Rorty in Putnam's influential little book, *Reason, Truth and History*, which appeared a year before Rorty's *Consequences of Pragmatism* and which defined Putnam's "internal realism," now abandoned or put at risk in a way that is not yet entirely legible, 14 an "internal realism" that was, in effect, Putnam's candidate for adjusting pragmatism so that it might meet the most up-to-date puzzles of analytic philosophy. Putnam fastened very pointedly on what he took to be what was risked in the way of pragmatism, realism, analytic philosophy, philosophy in general, as a result of Rorty's postmodernism (which Putnam read as a form of relativism, hence as incoherent).

In the last two paragraphs of *Reason*, Putnam emphasizes that answers to questions about "a more rational conception of rationality or a better conception of morality" (or even a better conception of truth) cannot proceed solipsistically, that such questions invite us instead "to engage in a truly human dialogue; one which combines collectivity with individual responsibility." This may strike you as rather vague. I read it as indicating the sense in which both Putnam and Rorty favor very thin forms of the Hegelian theme that appears in Dewey and James and the later Wittgenstein; also, I read it as anticipating Putnam's acknowledged sympathy for Jürgen Habermas's "dialogic" theme. What the remark is meant to capture—it is the theme of the book’s last chapter—is the "entanglement" of questions of objective fact and objective value that lie at the heart of Putnam's pragmatism, in particular, his opposition to absolutism and Cartesianism, his attack on relativism, 17 and, of course, his resistance against naturalizing.

The deeper significance of this vagueness comes out in the final paragraph of the book, which Rorty picked up very promptly and which, as I say, defines the contest between their two interpretations of pragmatism and realism—defines the very revival of pragmatism. Here is what Putnam says:

Is there a true conception of rationality, a true morality [or only a "dialogue," as Rorty says]? ... But how does the assertion that "there is only the dialogue" differ from a self-refuting relativism ... ? The very fact that we speak of our different conceptions as different conceptions of rationality posits a Grenzbegriff, a limit-concept of the ideal truth. 18

This cannot be right and cannot even be defended on the grounds Putnam provides. It was entirely reasonable for Rorty to challenge Putnam’s remark about his own remark (“only the dialogue”) and Putnam’s preoccupation with his would-be Grenzbegriff. “I would suggest,” Rorty says, “that Putnam here, at the end of the day, slides back into the scientism he rightly condemns in others.” “[W]hat is such a post supposed to do, except to say that from God’s point of view the human race is heading in the right direction?” It is hard to make the case that if this kind of objection counts against Putnam, Davidson could possibly be less vulnerable. What is the philosophical rationale for holding that “most of the beliefs in a coherent total set of beliefs are true.” It cannot be a purely causal argument. In fact, by pressing his causal argument (his naturalizing), Davidson simply confuses a second-order argument meant to displace Cartesian certainty and Cartesian skepticism with a merely first-order empirical argument to the effect that “most of our beliefs ... are true.” (That is a mistake Davidson nowhere repairs.) 20

You see, of course, how these questions implicate Davidson’s rebuff of
Rorty’s postmodernism, also the warning’s application to Putnam. For Davidson’s resistance on the matter of truth entails the verdict that anything like a “limit-concept” would instantly generate Cartesian skepticism (a remark Putnam found puzzling). Putnam and Rorty’s running quarrel has become the very paradigm of the evolving effort to redefine pragmatism as well as the evidence that both Putnam and Rorty must fail. It has in fact become a sign of the need for a more plausible reading of pragmatism’s recovery.

The story runs as follows. Putnam believes that the loss of the Grenzbegriff of truth (or rationality), which would have followed from Rorty’s postmodernism (“only the dialogue”), leads directly to an incoherent relativism. Rorty believes that insisting on the Grenzbegriff constitutes a form of scientism (or Cartesianism), which Putnam himself had rightly inveighed against. Putnam’s objection does, indeed, betray his conflicting views and is ultimately self-defeating (as Rorty realized): “That rationality is defined by an ideal computer program [Putnam muses] is a scientific theory inspired by the exact sciences; that it is simply defined by the local cultural norms is a scientific theory inspired by anthropoplogy.” The first option answers to the extremes of positivism; the second, to the extremes of relativism. Yet, though he means to escape between these two horns, Putnam provides no third option accessible from his vantage. In fact, the only possible option would require giving up all Grenzbegriffe and adopting a constructive realism instead (which, I remind you, need not entail, as Davidson wrongly supposed, an unacceptable idealism). In any case, we cannot make sense of a regulative Grenzbegriff that has epistemic force that is not also constitutive of knowledge.

We must remind ourselves that Putnam’s insistence on his Grenzbegriff, whether with respect to science or morality, is palpably out of step with Dewey’s characteristic emphasis. Reason, Truth and History, which many think is Putnam’s most important book-length argument, was never quite a pragmatist manifesto, though Putnam drew his accumulating output more and more in the pragmatist direction very shortly after the book’s appearance. It represents, therefore, a divided allegiance from the very start: one essential theme presses in the direction of “internalism,” which could never countenance a Grenzbegriff, though Putnam insists on one; the other presses in the direction of “externalist” constraints of objectivity (which mean to avoid Cartesianism) by way of internalist resources, which (in terms of the latter) could never be sufficient to the task. Putnam is spread-eagled, therefore, between his older loyalty to Carnap (his scientism) and his newer loyalty to Dewey (his pragmatism). Rorty saw at once that Putnam’s Grenzbegriff could not but be an externalist intrusion in an internalist account. Ultimately, Putnam fails in both regards—and, in failing, fails to escape the relativist stigma he means to attach to Rorty.

I cannot be certain of Putnam’s train of thought. But I would be willing to bet that, after judging Habermas’s “pragmatized” version of Karl-Otto Apel’s Grenzbegriff to be congenial (in rational ethics) and reasonably in accord with the fact/value “entanglement,” Putnam was strengthened in his belief that there should be a pragmatized Grenzbegriff for truth, as well. That is hardly an argument, but it does explain Putnam’s having been strongly attracted to James. In fact, pragmatism could not possibly claim to have found a Grenzbegriff in practical or theoretical reasoning. It would oppose Grenzbegriffe in either context: consider Peirce! Apel and Habermas simply fail to grasp the point. Davidson seems to have believed that both Rorty’s thesis about truth and Putnam’s thesis about his Grenzbegriff would lead inexorably to skepticism: Rorty’s, because it gives up important parts of fundamental philosophy; Putnam’s, because it falls back into Cartesianism. Davidson has a point; though, for his part, Putnam is aware that Davidson slights the need to answer the epistemological question that realism poses.

I am not familiar with any sustained analysis of Davidson’s version of realism from Putnam’s point of view, except for brief remarks like those that appear in Putnam’s Pragmatism (or what may be inferred from what McDowell offers). But what Davidson says of his own position seems congruent with what Putnam says or might have said of it: “My form of realism [Davidson says] seems to be neither Hilary Putnam’s internal realism nor his metaphysical realism. It is not internal realism because internal realism makes truth relative to a scheme, and this is an idea I do not think is intelligible. . . . But my realism is certainly not Putnam’s metaphysical realism, for it is characterized by being ‘radically non-epistemic’, which implies that all our best researched and established thoughts and theories may be false.”

If I understand this correctly, then Putnam’s objection to Davidson (which I must reconstruct from scattered remarks) would go this way: (1) that, although Davidson’s realism has “epistemic” import, it lacks an “epistemological” rationale by which to legitimate true beliefs; and (2) that Davidson’s adherence to causal explanation entails his failure to admit anything like a Grenzbegriff and, as a result, his failure to obviate relativism or (for that matter) arbitrariness. I think thesis (1) is justified but not (2), because Davidson and Rorty are right in thinking that Putnam’s maneuver commits him to “Cartesianism” (hence, to skepticism). But if that is so, then
The only way to secure a realism without paradox must be by means of a frank constructivism (a constructivist realism), which of course neither Davidson nor Rorty would countenance.

There are a number of vexing difficulties Putnam raises against Davidson's realism. For one, the causal theory of belief, which, holistically, favors coherentist criteria of reliable belief, cannot help us with the determinate causes of particular true beliefs. (Think, for instance, of analogues of paranormal coherence.) Second, if holism is to be preserved as if by "an omniscient interpreter," then the legitimation problem will return with a vengeance and will require a Cartesian resolution, which Davidson means to avoid. (Think of Putnam's Grenzbegriff!) Finally, Putnam adds: "But the real worry is that sentences cannot be true or false of an external reality if there are no justificatory connections between things we say in language and any aspects of that reality whatsoever." All three objections are compelling—and the third is surely a reductio. Davidson is a Cartesian, malgré lui. The semantics of "true" is inseparable from epistemology.

The upshot of the entire exchange confirms that none of our three discussants—two who are self-styled pragmatists and one who is not a pragmatist at all—could possibly secure his own best doctrines against the objections of one or the other of the other two. Davidson clearly signals that Rorty probably misrepresents both James and Dewey (wılıo is close to James on the matter of truth) and that neither James nor Dewey gets the matter right. Putnam retreats to internal realism to overcome the threat of Cartesianism but is forced back to Cartesianism by way of his Grenzbegriff. Rorty abandons "objectivity" for "ethnocentric solidarity," believing he can secure as much of commonsense realism (and of Davidsonian naturalism) as he wants; but he ends up with an arbitrary and vacant postmodernism. And Davidson finds that, to avoid the untenable options of Cartesianism that keep surfacing at every turn, he must himself abandon the pretense of having secured a defensible realism. Behind the scenes the Jamesian advantage beckons. Pragmatism may yet gain its second inning.

III

Theorists like Davidson are too much wedded to the notion of an objective science that knows the "mind-independent" world more or less directly. They therefore repudiate in advance all alleged interpretive tertia, the supposed intervention of conceptual schemes between ourselves and the world, relative to which (they fear) realism might be legitimated at too high a price. They themselves pay a price for relying on the supposedly higher rigors of "naturalism," which Rorty promptly equates with pragmatism (and postmodernism). Davidson's formula seems straightforward: "Since we can't swear intermediaries to truthfulness, we should [he says] allow no intermediaries between our beliefs and their objects in the world. Of course there are causal intermediaries. What we must guard against are epistemic intermediaries.

Regarding the connection between realism and truth, a fortiori the question of knowledge, this simply means that "naturalism" is best served by causal explanation. Davidson does not actually affirm that naturalism avoids noncausal theories of any kind. Recall Tarski's theory of truth, in accounting for the realist standing of our sciences. Apart from advising us to avoid interpretive "intermediaries" (misleadingly: tertia, in Rorty's idiom), Davidson explicitly says that naturalism is constrained by the search for a "reason for supposing most of our beliefs are true that is not a form of evidence."

Davidson means this quite literally, that is, in the first-order sense that supposes that the central mass of our aggregated beliefs are (even must be) true—which is surely more than doubtful. He never considers, for instance, the consistency of holding that, in the second-order sense in accord with which we mean to displace Cartesianism, we cannot be "massively" wrong about the world and yet, aggregatively, in our first-order beliefs, we can indeed be wrong most of the time. The briefest, perhaps the best, clue regarding the second-order argument that Davidson needs (but never supplies) is Ludwig Wittgenstein's remark, in Philosophical Investigations: "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions [or meanings] but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments." Wittgenstein would, of course, deny that he was "doing" philosophy in the canonical way. But what he caught in his handful of words was the interlocking unity of linguistic fluency, which entails understanding meanings, knowing what one believes, and knowing much that is true about the world—which implicates something very close to the normative conception of rationality that Davidson requires but suppresses. It is also worth remarking that Wittgenstein's lesson accords very well with Dewey's distinctive realism, which I turn to in chapter 4.

The avoidance of "intermediaries" is supposed to preclude any taint of idealism or skepticism, but the argument is muddy. If, on the one hand, we are talking about a world we can actually know—an "intelligible" rather than a "noumenal" world—then merely coming to know the world cannot meaningfully entail the offending doctrine (idealism); for, of course, every realism would instantly become an idealism. In that case, "intermediaries"
would make no difference. On the other hand, if we are talking about knowing an “independent” world—a world that, though known, remains unaltered by the effects of its merely being known—then, unless we were entitled to claim privileged access to that world, we could never argue convincingly that “interpretive intermediaries” (or tertia) did not affect the realism that we actually espouse. In that case, “intermediaries” of some kind (not relationally interposed) would be unavoidable.

But, of course, it remains entirely possible to abandon epistemic intermediaries that either force us to conclude that the “real” world is somehow “constituted” by the mind (idealism) or is somehow known only through private mental states (representationalism) whose evidentiary standing entails their being externally related to whatever part of the independent world we claim to know. Davidson seems to be caught in a trap of his own devising. In short, even a causal explanation of realist beliefs would (if it worked) be an explanation of James’s sort! (I trust it will not confuse matters if I intrude here with the bare reminder that these corrections are little more than a summary of Hegel’s argument in the Phenomenology. They are also, of course, inevitably, variants of Dewey’s corrections.)

For his part, Rorty offers the following summary of what he means by “pragmatism,” what he takes Davidson to mean by “naturalism,” and why, as a consequence, he concludes that “Davidson and James are both pragmatists”:

1) “True” has no explanatory uses.
2) We understand all there is to know, about the relation of beliefs to the world when we understand their causal relations with the world; our knowledge of how to apply terms such as “about” and “true of” is fallout from a “naturalistic” account of linguistic behavior.
3) There are no relations of “being made true” which hold between beliefs and the world.
4) There is no point to debates between realism and anti-realism, for such debates presuppose the empty and misleading idea of beliefs “being made true.”

The most distinctive feature of Rorty’s account is its uncompromising commitment to doctrines more extreme than anything Davidson offers. Davidson himself corrects doctrine (1), you remember. Because of its unyielding assurance, doctrine (2) can hardly be read as anything but a Cartesian formulation. And doctrines (3) and (4) oppose tertia (not merely relationally identified representational “ideas” but interpretive intermediaries), because tertia violate the naturalizing rigors of (1) and (2). It is odd that, as a know-nothing champion of postmodernism, Rorty champions an unusually extreme form of naturalism. But, in doing that, he simply dismisses all the telling questions—as Putnam has shown. More than that, Rorty avoids (without the least effort at explanation or defense) any constructivist account of realism that would fit either Peirce’s or James’s constraint on meaning or on truth or both, which, together, are the minimal marks of classic pragmatism.

For his part, Putnam is flatly inconsistent: there’s no gainsaying that. In advancing his internal realism, he is aware that there cannot be “a point at which subjectivity ceases and Objectivity-with-a-capital-O begins.” Nevertheless, fearful of the self-refuting relativism he believes he finds in Rorty’s “ethnocentric solidarity,” he finds himself obliged to invoke his Grenzbegriff without explicit Cartesian assurances—which presents an even weaker case than the Cartesian claim. For in cognitive matters there cannot be a regulative norm that is not also constitutively grounded in our evidentiary powers. (That would amount to a privileged plea.) It is impossible, therefore, to validate Putnam’s realism any more effectively than Davidson’s or Rorty’s naturalizing. Alternatively put, Putnam’s theory is hopelessly inconsistent with his own “internal realism” and, of course, all three are open to the charge of scientism.

Putnam is searching for an assurance of objective knowledge about an “independent” world on grounds that are blind to the difference between the subjective and the objective, whereas Davidson is searching for an assurance of the objective truth of our beliefs about an “independent” world without regard to any evidentiary considerations applied to those beliefs. I take all three of our discussants to be Cartesian pawns despite their efforts to escape.

I remind you that these quarrels were aired at the end of the twentieth century! They belong by rights to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—with very slight adjustments. There is nothing in them that the pre-Kantians could not have envisaged. We have evidently not yet cast off the paralyzing assumptions of the Cartesian vision. In the Anglo-American world, it is of course the classic pragmatists who were the most promising opponents of Cartesianism running from the mid-nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth. Now, in their “revival,” what we find is a considerable muddle: effectively, a very large part of English-language philosophy, whether pragmatist or naturalist (or an amalgam of the two), turns out to be bent on pursuing various ways of converting pragmatism into the sparsest form of Cartesianism.
I owe you, therefore, an aside on the pointed use of the epithet “Cartesian.” I speak of “Cartesianism,” here, in a sense that is not intended to be textually bound to Descartes’s realism but inclines as well (by whatever means) toward its characteristic sense of an objective knowledge of reality. In the most conventional form, “Cartesian realism” is correspondentist in some criterially explicit regard, favors cognitive faculties reliably (even essentially) qualified to discern the actual features and structures of independent reality, is context-free and ahistorical, strongly separates human cognizers and cognized world, and is committed to one ideally valid description of the real world.

Any doctrine that favors the objectivist drift of this sort of realism, however it departs from one or another plank of Descartes’s original vision, possibly by some form of representationalism (Putnam), or by an undefended assertion of our knowledge of the independent world (Devitt), or the unearned assurance of the central core of our truth-bearing beliefs without facultative privilege (Davidson), or the invariant logic of our realist claims (Dummett), counts in my book as “Cartesian.” Kant is a Cartesian in this sense: both because he remains a representationalist and because he insists, in the context of realism, on transcendental privilege.

I take the original doctrine and its twentieth-century innovations to be utterly without defense, completely indifferent to the historical rebuttal offered by the post-Kantian tradition (apotheosized in Hegel), opposed (in American philosophy) to the strongest themes of classic pragmatism, and inherently incapable of resolving its own paradoxes. The epithet serves, therefore, to identify a philosophical defect often not acknowledged to be such. Needless to say, in the American setting, “Cartesianism” is not dualistic, is in fact usually materialistically inclined.

It is important to emphasize that the rejection of “Cartesian realism” is not tantamount to rejecting “realism” altogether, though realism does require redefinition. The minimal Cartesian dogma is that it is cognitively feasible to gain a true account of the way “the world is” apart from any presumed distortion exerted by human inquiry. Under that assumption, there is no room for alternative valid realisms, unless they are fragments of a single, inclusive, true account. Hence the plausibility of the disquotational theory of truth; hence, also, the plausibility of insisting on an exceptionless bivalence in the most responsible sciences.

The rejection of Cartesian realism, which reached an adequate and notably powerful form in Hegel, depends entirely on exposing Cartesianism’s insuperable paradoxes and disallowing all reference to an epistemically inaccessible world and to alleged distortions regarding its true nature. Those paradoxes cannot be resolved: they must be abandoned. Some, therefore, seeing that Hegel terms his alternative conception a “phenomenology,” are tempted to conclude that he must have abandoned realism. But it would be entirely fair to point out that Dewey’s Experience and Nature, which is plainly influenced by Hegel’s argument, demonstrates that the main themes of a Hegelian “phenomenology” (turned against Cartesianism) is quite capable of producing a convincing and robust but very different sense of realism. I am inclined to read Hegel as such a realist. It would have to be a constructive (or constructivist) realism, however.

The mark of that concession is the assignment of an explanatory role for truth. That is the essential connection between pragmatism and the post-Kantian tradition, no matter how thinly it may be stretched or how few of Hegel’s own formulations remain in play. But to admit constructivism (and truth’s explanatory role) is to disallow any disjunction of the classic realism/idealism sort, though it is also to disallow any entailment to the effect that the real world is a construction or an artifact of the mind. Hegel is not an “idealist” in the classic sense, and constructivism is not (need not be) idealism.

Ever since Fichte and Hegel, continental European philosophy has never entirely lost the master thread of its anti-Cartesian metaphysics and epistemology, though it is apparent that the new American naturalism is making substantial inroads into German and French philosophy against the lesson of that discipline. So it is reasonable to suppose the pragmatists’ original resolve might be strengthened by daring to experiment selectively with themes drawn from the Hegelian and post-Hegelian tradition: from Marx, say, from Nietzsche, from Dilthey, Heidegger, Horkheimer and Adorno, Gadamer, Wittgenstein, Foucault at least. There is a risk, of course: we must bear in mind that no recent self-styled American pragmatist is more adventurous than Rorty in claiming to join the analytic and the continental; and yet, none is more likely to convert such an effort into a stiffening of Cartesianism itself—or, into a complete postmodernist (“post-philosophical”) abdication of the essential philosophical motivation of both pragmatism and naturalism.

Earlier I mentioned one reason theorists working in the pragmatist or naturalist orbit regularly failed to fashion a viable realism that was not a form of Cartesianism: everyone who put his hand to the puzzle construed realism in Cartesian terms. (Witness both Davidson and Rorty.) Yet if the original pragmatists succeeded at anything, they succeeded in shaping realist and near-realist options that eluded any Cartesian weakness of the gauge we find in Putnam, Rorty, and Davidson.
So American philosophy has lost ground twice in its slim history: once, in failing to come to terms, at the end-of-century, with the full achievement of the post-Kantians, who first succeeded in exposing and overcoming all the Cartesian traps (meaning, by that, to span the work of Descartes and Kant, though Kant of course is the decisive, if equivocal, figure in the formation of modern philosophy's anti-Cartesian programs); and, again, in failing to hold fast, within pragmatism's "revival," to the original pragmatists' inventive simplification (almost invisible after Peirce) of the work of the post-Kantians themselves.

It is, of course, true that Cartesian foundationalism and representationalism, as in Locke and Kant, have been largely retired—not entirely and none too soon if, in the European tradition, we bear in mind such figures as Husserl and Apel, and closet Kantians like Heidegger, or, in the American tradition, figures like Roderick Chisholm and Wilfrid Sellars and, more surprisingly, Putnam, or even James and Peirce at times. The history is quite confused, you see: small wonder pragmatism has slipped in the Cartesian direction.

What is still more interesting is that recent American philosophy has produced new Cartesian puzzles of its own: witness our exemplars. There will surely be others to be tracked in the same way: predictably, perhaps more fashionably, those drawn to computationalism, supervenientism, reductionism, eliminativism, extensionalism, and the subtler varieties of the new naturalism. But it is surely a great gain to have discerned the intention of recent analytic philosophy to continue the Cartesian project as if it were the successor or continuator of pragmatism, particularly in the effort to reunite the strongest currents of Anglo-American and European philosophy closest to the post-Kantians.

I see no prospect of usefully recovering Cartesianism in any of its protean forms. It counts as a complete disaster in its effort to sustain a viable realism, the fatal first stroke at the beginning of the modern age that has deflected us for centuries from coherent alternatives to which we must still return.

With hindsight, one may imagine that the alternative to Cartesianism was already incipient in Descartes's day—in, say, Montaigne's skepticism (which was no skepticism at all); for Montaigne did indeed anticipate Descartes's hyperbolic doubt—noted it and rejected it—which must have stiffened Descartes's resolve to affirm his cogito. Montaigne is too weak a figure to rely on, of course, but his ruminations run in the right direction and cleave to the humanism of his century at least fifty years before Descartes's wind-fall.

Descartes's great contribution rests with having oriented the Western world to the primacy of epistemological questions in an effort to confirm an adequate scientific realism. But his own solutions, both the realism and the dualism (which are inseparable), have misled the entire genius of the era that culminates in Kant. So the double failing of late American philosophy takes on a grander meaning in its own thoroughly confused age.

There is only one conclusion to draw—the single most promising finding to be gained from four centuries of speculation. And that is this: (1) every viable realism must be a constructivism (a constructive realism), in the sense that there can be no principled disjunction between epistemological and metaphysical questions, no neutral analysis of the disjunctive contributions to our science drawn from cognizing subjects and cognized objects; (2) the admission of (1) precludes all necessities de re and de cogitatione; (3) the admission of (1) and (2) disallows any principled disjunction between realism and idealism, as these are defined in the Cartesian tradition—in effect, this confirms the unavoidability of interpretive intermediaries.

I explicitly spell out these consequences redundantly in order to avoid misunderstanding. But you must see that doctrine (1) already entails (2) and (3); for instance, it defeats Kantian constructivism hands-down (the constructivism of the First Critique) and provides a space for the constructivism and historicism of the post-Kantian movement (notably, in Hegel), without falling back to idealism. For the assignment of what is subjective and objective in realism is itself an artifact internal to reflection in accord with (1)–(3). The entailment does not supply any particular form of realism especially suited to our own temperament—witness Putnam's uneasiness with his own internalism. But that is why the classic pragmatists attract us, if they attract us at all, and that is where the latent Cartesianism of Davidson and company goes entirely astray.

I must, however, enter a caveat here. For though Hegel's constructivism functions in a social way, it is not explicitly a "social constructivism." It is not, for instance, collectivist in origin or import, as tradition and natural language are. It needs to be pressed to go another mile or two: Geist (spirit, mind), in Hegel's account, is constructed, interpreted, yet historically productive and influential, more like an artifact corresponding to Rousseau's volonté de tous (the will of all, aggregatively) than to his volonté générale (the general will). By the time of Marx's writing, the full collective option (which does not and need not entail collective agency) is plainly a ready choice. What is collective in this sense is not at all alien, of course, to Dewey's prag-
matism, but it is clearly muted there. The point is of some importance, because, of course, you cannot find a ramified account of the collective aspect of societal life (in the predictive sense) in such diverse figures as Putnam, Rorty, Searle, McDowell, and Brandom. But that means that these and similar figures are not likely to provide a more powerful recovery of either pragmatism or analytic philosophy than the pre-Kantian, Kantian, and the early post-Kantian traditions have already made provision for.

We are, therefore, empowered at the turn of the century to bring philosophy back to lines of speculation that are not self-defeating in the Cartesian way. That is reason enough to redefine pragmatism for our time. In American thought, pragmatism is nearly the only current that has resources enough to validate the philosophical "re-turn." The European tradition houses other currents closer to the original post-Kantian sources. But whether we will finally abandon the old delusion is hard to say, because false doctrines die hard. Furthermore, the charm of the American experiment lies with its promising the most focused version of the contest in promising to combat naturalism. That is no longer a parochial quarrel, but it cannot go forward without gaining a measure of rapprochement with the most congenial European movements (which have for a long time explored the historical and collective aspects of human cognition).

The foregoing may be put more compendiously. If Cartesian realism were valid—not merely about the "mind-independent" world but about assurances that our cognitive powers could discern that that was so—then the preservation of late American philosophy, that is, the naturalism Davidson and Rorty share and Putnam approaches only because he cleaves ambiguously to a more generic Cartesianism, might be honored as a valiant struggle against the bewitchment of the entire post-Kantian dénouement. But the fact remains that it was the post-Kantians, building on Kant's immense advance, who first completely exposed the paradoxes of the Cartesian vision and sketched the minima adequate for its correction.

Furthermore, both the pragmatists and the naturalists of our recent end-of-century draw back from the classic forms of Cartesianism. It seems hardly to have dawned on them that to give up the classic Cartesian resources was to give up the prospect of recovering any part of Cartesian realism: witness Davidson and Putnam. But that means that only a constructive realism could possibly be viable.

In a curious way (a way one might overlook), Putnam is aware that his rejecting any principled disjunction between the subjective and the objective makes provision for "constructive" choices within the bounds of realism. But (apparently) he does not see that realism itself must be constructivist all the way down. As we shall see, that is the element that is missing in Putnam's turn to (what he now calls) "natural realism," a fortiori what is missing in McDowell's realism, which Putnam now guides himself by. In Putnam, the constructivist theme leads only to a form of "pluralism" that brooks no chance for a relativist or incommensurabilist or historicist form of realism itself. (I shall come back to this before I end this chapter.)

I must take a moment to explain the multiple equivocations on the term "constructivism" (or "constructive realism"). Both Kant and Hegel are, of course, constructivists; Kant is a transcendental constructivist, Hegel is not. Minimally, constructivism signifies that there is no principled disjunction between metaphysics and epistemology or between cognizing subjects and cognized objects or between appearances (Erscheinungen) and the real world. (Call all these variant constructivisms forms of "symbiosis").

Kant, of course, believes that the "subjective" side of perception and belief can be exclusively assigned the pure intuitions of space and time and the categories of the understanding. In that sense, Kant is an idealist; for the objective world that we perceive is, on Kant's theory, actually formed, composed, constituted, "made," by the cognizing mind (the transcendental Ego: not human cognizers). But Hegel is no idealist; for, apart from whatever formative role is assigned history (which, in "internalist" terms, is said to affect our choice of concepts), constructivism is confined to the minima mentioned just above. Hegel defeats the strong division between the ontic and the epistemic in terms of which the older "idealism" accusation alone makes sense. But there is still a great gulf between the constructed perception of what is given in sensory experience and its historically evolving reinterpretation (according to the Phenomenology) and the historicized, collective formation of our perceptual powers in the first place. Without the additional innovation (at least incipient in Hegel), it would be all too easy to fall back into a Kantianized or (even) Platonized Hegel (such as, for instance, we find in John McDowell). If we rest there, we may find that we have not moved very far from the Cartesian options we thought to escape.

There is no reason to deny that there is an independent world, though that is not to say that everything that is real is uniformly "mind-independent": certainly, the things of the world of human culture, artworks and machines, for instance—and, I should say, selves—are fully real, exist robustly, but are hardly "mind-independent."38 Also, even if we admit the independent world, that is not to say (agreeing with Davidson) that we have evidence for this; nor is it to say (contrary to Davidson) that we have reason (rather than evidence) to affirm this, if, by that, we mean (as Davidson plainly does) to justify saying that "most of our beliefs are true." Surely, that is the old
Cartesianism under diminished auspices (possibly the obscure equivalent of epistemic tertia). If so, then appropriate answers to metaphysical questions about what exists in the independent world cannot be independent of our answers to the matched epistemological questions about our cognitive competence to know that—contrary to what Michael Devitt, for one, has tried to demonstrate.

There is no cognitive way to establish that our admitted cognitive powers (perception, for instance) ever discern what there is in the "independent" (noumenal) world. To say that we have "reason" to believe that we know the independent world by perceptual means, but have neither evidence nor reason for believing that this particular belief or that is true, is irrevocably vacuous; and to say, with Davidson, that, nevertheless, we do have reason to believe that "most of our beliefs are true" is to put the cart before the horse—to argue in a completely arbitrary way. Surely, only if we know to be true (or have reason to believe we know) a large number of determinate (true) beliefs, could we possibly venture to say that "most of our beliefs are true." That alone would hardly enlarge our knowledge of the world. But it would recover the true nerve of Hegel's criticism of Kant: we would be reclaiming two centuries of misplaced history. And we would be acknowledging constructivism's unavoidability—which Davidson manages to disregard.

Still, it is reasonable to hold that we know the independent world and know, as by exercising our perceptual powers, that a great many of our beliefs about the world are true! But the "reason" that supports us here is thoroughly "constructive," not a privileged reason, not a Kantian reason, not anything that might vindicate a form of Cartesian realism—or of naturalism. That is what Davidson misses. Remember: both Davidson and Rorty insist on eliminating "epistemic intermediaries" (tertia); they are prepared to give up the classic Cartesian position, but only because they wrongly suppose they can hold on to this part of Cartesianism—which they require—by other means. That is the proper lesson of Davidson's, Rorty's, and Putnam's diminished realisms. To speak in the constructivist way is to concede the inseparability of metaphysical and epistemological questions, but it is also to refuse any regulative principle of truth or knowledge. Davidson's and Putnam's theories are but the inseparable halves of the same failed undertaking.

Constructivism holds that the objectivity of our beliefs and claims about the world is itself a constructive posit that we impose holistically and without privilege of any kind. It proceeds dialectically as a faute de mieux maneuver. Nothing hangs on it "except" two very modest but all-important gains: (1) that we must (and may) put away every Cartesian longing; and (2) that, admitting (1), we must conclude that the appraisal of every logic, every semantics, every metaphysics and epistemology, proceeds only within the holism of our constructive posit: it never exits from it.

The supposed disjunction between realism and idealism (or between realism and anti-realism) is made completely pointless by our adopting the most modest version of post-Kantian symbiosis. Constructivism signifies that the realist standing of all our sciences is an artifact of our symbolized world; that alone subverts the naturalist's economy in disallowing "epistemic intermediaries."

I said a moment ago that I was repeating Hegel's criticism of Kant and the pre-Kantians. It's true enough but hard to discern in the prose of Hegel's *Phenomenology—and possibly not even adequately formed there. Let me risk a few lines from the *Phenomenology's introduction to confirm Hegel's mastery of the Cartesian aporia Descartes and Kant share and the purely verbal difficulty of matching what I have been saying and what Hegel himself says. I won't attempt an exegesis—but I am recovering Hegel's principal point, if we can find it in Hegel's problematic text:

One must [Hegel affirms] come to an understanding about cognition, what is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it. A certain uneasiness seems .. .bound to be transformed into the conviction that the whole project of securing for consciousness through cognition what exists in itself is absurd, .. . For, if cognition is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather sets out to reshape and alter it. If [however] cognition is not an instrument of our activity but a . . . passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists through and in this medium. 40

The bearing—on Descartes, Locke, and Kant, and even Davidson—of what Hegel says here may, I hope, be recovered without too much difficulty. Hegel implies that the entire Cartesian project is impossible sans phrase, but he does not say that it is therefore impossible to claim to speak of the independent world! That last is what constructivism secures. We cannot know the independent world as it is "absolutely" independent of cognitive conjecture, but we can construct a reasonable sense of what to characterize as the independent-world-as-it-is-known-(and knowable)-to-us. The correc-
tion of any particular belief will be an artifact internal to that same holism. We have never surpassed Hegel in this regard.

If you allow this small concession to history without yielding to Hegel's grandiose conceptions, you cannot fail to see that Rorty's Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature is quite literally a Hegelian critique of a large part of Western philosophy. Fine: that serves to remind us of an essential part of the pragmatists' original inheritance of the post-Kantian discoveries. But it also confirms the disastrous equivocation on interpretive tertia (or "intermediaries," in Davidson's idiom) that both Rorty and Davidson espouse. Regarding "intermediaries," Hegel featured and opposed any epistemic "instrument" or "medium" that operated relationally between cognitively separable consciousness and reality; whereas the "intermediaries" Davidson and Rorty oppose (pointedly, in Davidson's "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge") are any "epistemic intermediaries" at all. That now verges on incoherence. Nonetheless, Hegel does not go far enough.

Davidson and Rorty rule out all constructivist intermediaries, even those "intermediaries" that disallow any initial separation between consciousness and reality (the upshot of a symbiotized world). But that is Cartesianism without benefit of argument. Doubtless, Davidson's rationale trades on the fact that constructivism would defeat reductive physicalism and extensionalism at one blow, though it need never put at risk the usual rigor or achievement of any of our sciences. Put in the simplest terms, Rorty cannot support both Davidson and Hegel—or Davidson and the pragmatists or Davidson and the historicizing epistemologists.

The entire history now falls easily into place. Michael Devitt, for example, appears as a Cartesian innocent when he confesses at the start of the second edition of Realism and Truth: "There is something a little shameful about spending one's time defending something so apparently humdrum as the independent existence of the familiar world"—which he urges in accord with the maxim, "Settle the metaphysical issue before any epistemic or semantic issue." This "cannot" have been written later than the seventeenth or eighteenth century!

Similarly, though he is incomparably more interesting than Devitt, Michael Dummett, for all his "anti-realism" (which Devitt exploits against him), is hardly more than an abler Cartesian when he remarks:

Although we no longer regard the traditional questions of philosophy as pseudo-questions to which no meaningful answer can be given, we have not returned to the belief that a priori reasoning can afford us substantive knowledge of fundamental features of the world. Philosophy can take us no further than enabling us to command a clear view of the concepts by means of which we think about the world, and, by so doing, to attain a firmer grasp of the way we represent the world in our thought. It is for this reason and in this sense that philosophy is about the world. Frege said the laws of logic that they are not laws of nature but laws of the laws of nature... Reality cannot be said to obey a law of logic; it is our thinking about reality that obeys such a law or flouts it.

This, of course, is a kind of Fregean Kantianism—Cartesianism, in effect. Dummett somehow manages to separate (without explanation) semantics from epistemology—a fortiori, semantics from metaphysics—and to give priority to the semantic analysis of our concepts over epistemology and metaphysics. But what are our concepts, if they are not the constructed powers of human understanding abstracted from our actual cognitive engagements? To insist otherwise is to advance a kind of Fregean analogue of either Kantian or Husserlian apriorism. Certainly, it is to advance a form of Platonism. It's for this reason that Dummett believes he can afford to yield on excluded middle (but not on bivalence) and therefore gives cognitive priority to logic over metaphysics; whereas, on the constructivist account, logic (Dummett's sort of logic) is itself a form of metaphysics, a metaphysics "by other means."

I offer, finally, some remarks drawn from John McDowell's John Locke Lectures (1991), which may be the most promising of these contemporary variations on the Cartesian theme. They are important, beyond their explicit contribution, partly because of Putnam's reliance on McDowell's argument in abandoning his own "internal realism," partly because they suggest a way of bridging the gap between pragmatism and Cartesianism (by way of Kant), and partly because they do not venture far enough to specify a realism adequate on both metaphysical and epistemological grounds. Putnam believes McDowell's argument enables him to recover his pragmatism as a form of "natural realism" (as he now terms it), but the argument is not yet clear.

McDowell's avowed objective is "to consider... the way concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world," to which he adds at once: "Representational content cannot be dualistically set over against the conceptual." By these two sentences, McDowell allies himself (with important qualifications) with Kant (and Hegel) and against Davidson and that part of
Rorty that agrees with Davidson. 48 McDowell then draws the perfectly sensible inference: "That things are thus and so is the conceptual content of an experience, but if the subject of the experience is not misled, that very same thing, that things are thus and so, is also a perceptible fact, an aspect of the perceptible world." 49 This marks very clearly McDowell’s attraction to the pragmatist recovery of the main accomplishment of the post-Kantian movement, but hardly disallows a Cartesian recovery of that. There’s the puzzle of McDowell’s account.

McDowell opposes the disjunction between our perception and the semantics of our concepts: that certainly signals that he shares common ground with Kant and Hegel; though it obviously is not to share the same ground with Frege, Sellars, Dummett, Davidson, or Brandom. It is itself a purely formal solution of the Cartesian aporia; for, whatever McDowell’s epistemological intuitions, it requires only (and supplies no more than) a denial of the old separation of cognizer and cognized. (Nothing more is supplied in Mind and World that bears on cognitive disputes: for example, under alternative conceptual schemes, under historicized conditions, within epistemologically incommensurable theories, or the like.)

There is no way to gainsay the limitation. What is so astonishing about McDowell’s analysis—and Putnam’s interest in it—is that that single (abstract) theme is nearly the entire gist of what McDowell offers: the rest is more Cartesian than pragmatist. McDowell does draw attention to the deep equivocation on “intermediaries” that I’ve flagged in Davidson and Rorty; and, as I say, that much supports the judgment that McDowell aligns himself with Kant (sans Kant’s transcendentalism) as well as with Aristotle and Hegel (very, very lightly), both of whom he reads conformably. But that’s all! There’s nothing in the way of an epistemologically centered realism (say, “a realism worth fighting for,” in Devitt’s phrase); or, if there is, what there is is inexplicit and undefended regarding whatever differences separate pragmatism and Cartesianism.

McDowell may be a closet Cartesian of an extremely attenuated “Kantian” or even “Hegelian” sort. This much, however, is clear: if we adopt McDowell’s formulation, then the whole of Davidson’s objection to “epistemic intermediaries” instantly fails; it is, in fact, rendered irrelevant. That, I concede, is an enormous plus. But, in his defense of realism, McDowell seems to have found it sufficient to retrace that argument alone from Kant to Hegel, which is certainly not enough. That is, McDowell fails to consider all that is required of “intermediaries”—bearing on detailed questions of objectivity.

To have stopped where he does (in Mind and World) is to fail to distin-
stance in the Woodbridge Lectures (1997) or the papers on Wittgenstein, reason to modify my finding. In the Woodbridge Lectures, McDowell pretty well assimilates Hegel to Kant; and the excellent papers on Wittgenstein, being essentially explications, disclose very little that bears directly on a "constructivist" view of language and thought that might actually decide the matter between the Kantian (and Aristotelian) cast of Mind and World and a robustly historicized account (Hegelian, on my reading, though not entirely Hegel's) of our categories and concepts. It is, of course, the historicized treatment of social life that obliges us to consider certain strenuous epistemological and realist puzzles that never surface in Mind and World—relativism, incommensurabilism, and even historicism itself. Putnam and McDowell simply stop short of sketching the main lines of the "natural realism" they seem to share. Here, we begin to glimpse pragmatism's potential "third" life.

It is very difficult to elicit more from McDowell that bears on the fate and prospects of realism. McDowell wishes to avoid Kant's appeal to the "supersensible" (or transcendental), which claims a conceptual source completely "separable" from sensory "receptivity." (I have dubbed that a "Cartesian" feature in Kant, which, on McDowell's reading, correctly accounts for Kant's "idealism."[52]) McDowell is bent on securing a thoroughly "natural" (I would say, an Aristotelian) reading of "empirical thinking" that depends on man's acquiring a "second nature" as a result of Bildung (the original acquisition of cultural powers), which finds alternative treatments in Aristotle and Hegel but not in the original Kant.[53] Here, McDowell opposes epistemological dualisms and any reliance on the "supersensible": the transcendental, the supernatural, the "rampant Platonist."[54] He hardly ventures an account of what he finally means by our "natural" endowment; or, what he does offer is a Kantianized or Aristotelian Hegel.

So McDowell brings us to the very edge of the quarrel between a fresh pragmatist treatment of the realist issue and a "naturalistic" treatment. The following is nearly all McDowell says on the matter:

we can regard the culture a human being is initiated into as a going concern; there is no particular reason why we should need to uncover or speculate about its history, let alone the origins of culture as such. Human infants are mere animals, distinctive only in their potential, and nothing occult happens to a human being in ordinary upbringing. If we locate a variety of Platonisms in the context of an account of Bildung [that is, a "natural Platonism" like Aristotle's, a sense of natural, culturally featured predicative regularities] that in-

What McDowell says here is not unwelcome. McDowell positions himself in a no-man's land between pragmatism and a "natural Platonism," though he clearly favors the latter. In any case, he cannot reconcile the two. By "Platonism," McDowell means (I surmise) an accessible source of objective predicates that run true and more or less uniformly through the species; by "natural," I take him to mean that the conceptual competence answering to our predicative efforts belongs primarily to our biology but may, in some measure, manifest differences in saliency as a result of our encultured "second nature" (our Bildung). It's the open-ended and historically variable (constructed) nature of (what Rorty misleadingly calls) tertia that generates the contemporary realist quarrel between the naturalizers and the pragmatists. That is what McDowell fails to address. (And that is what we find in Dewey!)

I should add, here, that I find three very different treatments of tertia (or, better, intermediaries): the first, the one Davidson and Rorty dismiss (quite rightly), the one featured so disastrously in Putnam's "internal realism,"[56] which assigns "epistemic intermediaries" a relational (a Cartesian or Lockean) representationalist role; the second, the one McDowell favors in the passage just cited, which signifies that mind and world are indeed "mediated" (adverbially, as I suggest) by "concepts" that belong to our biological endowment but are selected or featured by our Bildung (our "ordinary upbringing"); and a third, the one I recommend (against McDowell's "Cartesian"—or Kantian or Aristotelian—protivities), which treats our interpretative intermediaries as both "adverbial" (rather than "relational") and as "hybrid" (rather than merely "natural" in the biological sense), that is, as historicized, variable, artifactual, and open to the puzzle of reconciling realism and, say, relativism or incommensurabilism. On my view, to admit conceptual tertia (or, better, adverbial intermediaries) is to make our realism constructivist from the start and throughout; there is no fallback objectivism to take for granted. I intend this, of course, as an up-to-date reading of Dewey. In the sense intended, it strengthens Hegel's account along constructivist lines that Hegel himself does not explicitly pursue.

McDowell begins Mind and World with too slim a project. "The overall topic I am going to consider in these lectures," he advises, "is the way concepts mediate the relation between minds and the world." He favors a Kantian complication at once and warns:
The more we play up the connection between reason and freedom
[which is to account for the accessibility of 'meaning', the natural
way in which our second-natured concepts are already engaged in
intelligible experience], the more we risk losing our grip on how ex-
cercises of concepts can constitute warranted judgments
about the world. What we wanted to conceive as exercises of concepts threaten
to degenerate into moves in a self-contained game.\textsuperscript{57}

Put thus, McDowell's effort is essentially a rearguard, but thoroughly recu-
perative, move. The telltale signs appear in his speaking of "warranted judg-
ments about the world" and of locating a "variety of [natural] Platonisms
in the context of ... Bildung."

The matter is important enough to press a little more insistently. Two
qualifications should serve. For one, when McDowell speaks of "second
nature" (which is how he brings Hegel and Aristotle together in reinter-
preting Kant), he speaks of the "acquisition of a second nature, which [he
says] involves responsiveness to meaning." That is what (that is all) he has
in mind in speaking of a "normal upbringing": it is meant to defeat (and
does defeat) any purely reductive naturalism ("bald naturalism") in which,
say, the autonomy and intelligence of a human agent can be explained en-
tirely in biological terms.\textsuperscript{58} That much is certainly fair: it's what McDowell
gains from Kant. But it does not quite touch on the metaphysics of our cog-
nitive powers vis-à-vis realism. Or, rather, it assumes the validity of a "nat-
uralistic" account of our conceptual sources and reconciles their mastery
with human freedom. Second, when he speaks of the distinction between
"sensory experience" and its being intelligible, McDowell is concerned to
avoid the empiricist option of the "non-conceptual" representationality of
mere sensation (along the lines developed by Gareth Evans). McDowell's en-
tirely sensible account runs as follows: "To say that an experience is not blind
is to say that it is intelligible to its subject as purporting to be awareness of
a feature of objective reality: as a seeming glimpse of the world."\textsuperscript{59} Yes, of
course. But that goes no further than the second sense of "tertia." Hegel him-
self is less than perspicuous here in his account in the \textit{Phenomenology}
of the relationship between sensation and perception in the process of reinter-
preting (with accumulating experience) what to understand as an objective
account of our \textit{Erscheinungen}.

It is in this sense that a pragmatism poised at the turn of the new centu-
ry could easily recover in a single stroke pragmatism's original promise and
"second" energy: by redefining realism in a way that could not have been
perceived in its first incarnation and by rereading with care the anti-Car-
ism from the admitted space of cultural relativity: the point is, there seems to be no way of admitting the latter (relativity) without conceding that the former (relativism) may be lurking there!

The reclamation of relativism, therefore, is likely to proceed persuasively if it begins with evidence drawn from the facts about relativity: to the effect that relativistic practices are not infrequently discovered in actual historical life, though usually they are quickly reinterpreted along bivalent lines, once the consensual pressures become sufficiently regular (as they do in making "paradigm shifts" in the sciences and in entrenching critical practices in the arts). Still, from time to time, we hear and glimpse the whirring machinery and we realize that, in just this way, relativism wins by "losing" and pragmatism accommodates whatever heterodox practices it finds congenial.

That is pragmatism's glory. Best, therefore, to resist the naturalizer's tricks and traps. If we mean to revive or reinvent pragmatism, we may as well endow it with as free a sense of conceptual possibility as can be defended against the entrenched canons. That, after all, was its original charge.

Last Word: A Touch of Prophecy

There you have the tale and the argument. But what does it mean? I find a peripety of sorts, the perceived exhaustion of rhetorical forces, the late correction of an unacknowledged wrong, confusion in high places yielding a measure of good sense that might never have been perceived, a minor skirmish expanding to include the entire trajectory of Western philosophy, an omen of a change resisting change, upstart energies that have misjudged their apparent triumph: all the ingredients of a regular Greek tragedy—or comedy.

There's a danger, of course, in trying to be too prophetic. But if you grasp the lesson for what it is, you have no choice but to understand it! Well then, let me start again. We are witnessing flux beginning to dominate over fixity, logical informality over false precision, animal sensibility over reasoned principle, contingent histories over necessary truths, make-shift conjecture over First Philosophy, concatenated bits of insight over cosmic order, encountered heterogeneity over a priori unity, horizoned speculation over reality's Plan, possibly penance over hubris.

The master thread is the contest between pragmatism and naturalizing, largely spent in grappling with what realism should now mean at the start of the new century. It's clear enough that the realism question was inherited from post-Kantian sources that were never rightly applied in their most effective form. To grasp the original lesson is to realize how little has changed over a span of nearly four hundred years. An appalling admission!

The naturalizers have come to sense, if not to admit, the misplaced daring of their original zeal. Their vision of a closed physics of the whole of nature, for instance, was stalemated even before it began its work. All their rationales have unraveled under the relentless but hardly perceived recovery of the Hegelian correction. The revivifying pragmatists learned that they had to be pirates, the brashest of opportunists, if ever they hoped to peddle their best themes under the banner of unifying the classic movement with the naturalizers. Of course, they failed; that is, they failed to mark the difference
between analytic rigor and naturalizing dogma. Still others, the postmodernists, spying sham all around, made a marvelous show of philosophical virtue by mastering all the contending techniques without risking a single commitment of their own; they claimed (and still claim) to have swept the stables clean as well as bare. But, you may ask, to what end? None that has shown its hand as yet.

The pragmatists, I would say, have by far the most inventive prospects in the tradition of the English language. But they must complete the recovery of the post-Kantian correction to claim their title. Viewed in the slimmest way, they will find that there is no essential difference between the recovery of history (the historicity of thought) and the exposé of the failed promises of reductionism. What remains is the master question we have all but lost: the analysis of the human condition itself, the meaning (in every sector of inquiry) of the relationship between nature and culture.

At the beginning of the new century, it is still true that the pragmatists are floundering. The naturalizers are still very much on the offensive. I foresee that a good part of our century will spend itself in the old _agon_, though among new champions. Three converging programs seem likely to dominate: neo-Darwinism viewed as the best reductive model of the cultural world; extreme Chomskyan economies of linguistic competence alleged to yield the sparsest model of human rationality; and the presumably adequate computational analysis of every form of human perception and intelligence. The pragmatists have little more than their original intuition to rely on, namely, that whatever is paradigmatic of the human in thought and action remains _sui generis_, however continuous it must be with the biological world from which (we concede) it must have emerged.

That is still the deepest meaning of the original _agon_—weakly noted, let it be said—that arose between Descartes and the “mechanists” of his day and, in an opposed direction, between Descartes and Montaigne. But to see the point of these continuities is to see in addition that the pragmatists must still make common cause with those forces of analytic philosophy that require the naturalizers to make their case explicit, as well as with the forces of continental philosophy closest to the post-Kantian temperament. Only if such a union is effected can we rightly expect, however late in the new century, to have changed philosophy’s direction in a fresh and productive way. But that would mean, perhaps reasonably enough, that a muddle almost four hundred years in the making would have been resolved in a period of less than three centuries. Platonism, of course, has already taken longer.

### Notes

#### Prologue


3. “Naturalizing” is a term of art drawn from Quine’s and Davidson’s usage, as in Quine’s influential paper “Epistemology Naturalized,” which I adopt in this chapter and in the rest of the book. I contrast the sense of “naturalism” favored by the classic pragmatists and that of “naturalizing” more or less shared by Quine, Davidson, and Rorty.

4. See, for instance, Robert B. Brandom, Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). Brandom’s entire effort, which pauses to acknowledge “my teacher, Richard Rorty” (p. 32), is an attempt to reclaim an “inferentialist” account of semantics (read: semantics-cum-epistemology) that begins with Gottlob Frege (as something of a pragmatist) and, on Brandom’s account, threads its way through Wilfrid Sellars (also a pragmatist) and Rorty, to recover a “hegelian” approach to “the realm of culture” (pp. 32–33) said to yield “a kind of conceptual [or linguistic] pragmatism” (p. 4), according to the following formula: “Cultural products and activities become explicit as such [inferentially] only by the use of normative vocabulary that is in principle not reducible to the vocabulary of the natural sciences (though of course the same phenomena under other descriptions are available in that vocabulary). Indeed the deployment of the vocabulary of the natural sciences (like that of any other vocabulary) is itself a cultural phenomenon, something that becomes intelligible only within the conceptual horizon provided by the Geisteswissenschaften. The study of nature itself has a history, and its own nature, if any, must be approached through the study of that history. This is a picture and an aspiration that we owe to Hegel” (p. 33). Without attempting an assessment of Brandom’s arguments, this is a thesis, offered in the name of Rorty’s innovations, of a transformed pragmatism. But it hardly suits Rorty’s own postmodernism. See the exchange between Brandom and Rorty in Rorty and His Critics, ed. Robert B. Brandom (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000). Indeed, Brandom turns the tables on Rorty’s endorsement of Davidson’s “naturalizing” by reinterpreting Davidson’s naturalism as fully in accord with the “hegelian” reversal just remarked. (Notice Brandom’s emphasis on the normative.) I leave the assessment of these gymnastic adjustments to the reader. See Donald Davidson, “A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge,” in Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson, ed. Ernest Lapore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); also, Richard Rorty, “Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth,” in the same volume.


7. I must enter an important caveat here, though I am not prepared to bank on it without more explicit evidence. Dewey wrote a lengthy analysis (in 1897) of Hegel's entire system, with a temperate sense of Hegel's view of history, which he reads in the spirit of his own evolving vision. The essay is unpublished and Dewey never put his hand to writing a pragmatist recovery of Hegel's theory. But he treats Hegel as the "great optimist" who emphasizes (against the usual readings) that Hegel always featured extensive history in a manner pragmatism might have championed; he opposes (in Hegel's favor) any reading of "absolute" history that would assign history a closed and inclusive telos of its own or a finished geistlich or horizontal structure of any kind; and he opposes any reading of Hegel that would have supported later attempts to interpret Hegel's political and historical writings as the work of a nationalist ideologue.

These latter concerns may explain in some measure Dewey's otherwise curious avoidance of a detailed analysis of the problem of history. But the existence of the essay lends support to efforts to reconstruct (from Dewey's voluminous writings) what might be a"historical" account of Hegel and (so-called) British Idealism. Good actually favors the view that Dewey became "the consummate historicist" (p. 143), after separating his historicist reading of Hegel from his own earlier ("Hegelian") belief (so characterized) in the inseparability of the "individual self" from "the absolute self... an ahistorical reality": on this reading, time and history are themselves internal to "absolute self-consciousness," which must be "atemporal." These extravagances confirm the marvel of Dewey's having extricated himself from the wild speculations of the "idealists" and British Idealism. But there remains, of course, the sense in which the overcoming of the a priori of Kantian and pre-Kantian philosophy required Dewey to salvage what could not be responsibly ignored in the best work of the German and British traditions. Good's account proceeds, to a large extent, by interpreting Dewey as salvaging Hegel (against the "Hegelians") by pragmatist means, as by offering a "functionalist" theory of the self against all "transcendental absolutes." That is a question contemporary analytic philosophy has not adequately addressed. But see, further, John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). When, as we proceed, I take it for granted that Dewey is a "Hegelian" of sorts, I mean it in the spirit of the themes just mentioned. But I think it is overly sanguine to call Dewey a "historician."


10. See Rorty, *Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth."

11. I believe this is a fair account of the unity of Rorty's philosophical work. The single most important paper in this regard remains his "Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth." See, particularly, Jaegwon Kim, *Supervenience and Mind: Selected Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).


20. See William James, chap. 28 in *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). James appears as a nativist here, also as a thinker whom Edmund Husserl took to be more than sympathetic with phenomenology, but above all as a naturalist.


22. See McDowell, *Mind and World*.


28. In Davidson's hands, in his influential paper "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," the question of "interpreting intermediaries"—tact—Rorty's idiom, though the restriction of "tact" is misleading—is applied most famously to Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend, though it makes perfect sense to claim that Quine's penchant for "analytical hypotheses" in resolving the "indeterminacy of translation" puzzle makes Quine's Davidson's most important target. I shall return to the issue, lightly. See Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).
Chapter 1. Cartesian Realism and the Revival of Pragmatism


2. See Richard Rorty, "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey," in Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972–1986) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986). When I say that Rorty deforms both Dewey and Heidegger, I have in mind Rorty's neglecting, in Being and Time, Heidegger's use of what he calls existentialia in our understanding of Dasein. The important point is that existentialia are not "natural" or "naturalistic" categories, hence, that all of Heidegger's allusions to the "instrumental" role of theory in practice (Rorty mentions paragraphs 31–33 of Being and Time, which Mark Orent has relied on) are not pragmatist in any sense but are quasi-transcendental in the precise sense in which existentialia replace or supersede Kantian transcendental categories. I am afraid it's not unusual for Rorty to isolate a sentence or two from its obvious context, and then make a plausible comparison with sentences that, in their context, would have an entirely different significance than what we are encouraged to think is their proper sense. I resist attributing the practice directly to postmodernism. But I must admit that by the end of chapter 2 it may seem quite reasonable to accept the judgment. See, further, Mark Orent, Heidegger's Pragmatism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).


10. This is indeed the source of an incautious impression conveyed in Robert B. Brandom, Articulating Reasons: An Introduction in Inferentialism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). See, particularly, the introduction and chapter 1, for Brandon's handling of Frege as a kind of pragmatist. The ironies are palpable. For Brandom is himself relying on Rorty's extreme revision of what pragmatism means in order to reintroduce the validity of epistemological inquiry (under the label of "inferentialism"), against Rorty's own postmodernism. The application of the Peircean and Jamesian constraints would have put an instant stop to the "pragmatist" recovery of Frege. Brandom himself says, in passing, "The later Wittgenstein, Quine, and Sellars (as well as Dummett and Davidson) are linguistic pragmatists, whose strategy of coming to the meaning of expressions by considering their use provides a countervalue to the Frege-Russell-Carnap-Tarski platonicist model-theoretic approach to meaning" (pp. 6–7). At the very least, this is to confer the obvious meaning of "pragmatist" so that the word has no philosophical spine; though to say that is not to oppose the interesting contrast Brandon puts before us. Yet, in saying all that, Brandon does not wish to deny that for Frege is a "pragmatist"—though, as you see, he is apparently also a "platonist" (that is, not a pragmatist). This reading of Frege is very much of a piece with Rorty's reading of Heidegger.


20. See Donald Davidson, "A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge." Note, however, that "coherence" is not the same as "consensus" in a Lockean sense. The more recent "consensus" account is less successful.


1990. For a close reading of Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel's treatment of criteria of "rationality," see Joseph Margolis, "Vicissitudes of Transcendental Reason," in Habermas and Pragmatism, ed. Mitchell Aboulaifi, Myra Bookman, and Kathy Kemp (London: Routledge, 2002). On Habermas's view of rational consensus, see Nicholas Rescher, Pluralism: Against the Demand of Consensus (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993). I note here as well that Putnam, who was, by his own admission, very much attracted to William James's philosophical intuitions, found a version of the Grenzgebierfieb theme (and the actual use of the term) in James's famous essay, "The Will to Believe" in The Will to Believe (New York: Longman's, 1897). James is actually more plausible than Putnam, since he speaks of "a mere aspiration or Grenzgebierfieb, marking the infinitely remote ideal of our thinking life"—which has obvious affinities with Charles Peirce's notion of the infinite "long run" (itself a formula regarding rational hope rather than any rational norms constraining the truth of actual beliefs).


30. The essential texts for their respective views in this regard appear in Davidson, A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge, and Rorty, Pragmatism, Davidson and Truth.


36. I daresay this is the common thread that joins the very different (even opposed) philosophies of Brandom and McDowell: the one, "Hegelian" in a way that does not seem to challenge: the epistemological confidence of the "Cartesians" at all, unless at some extremely abstract epistemological level never brought to bear on the processing of truth-claims the other, "Kantian" (with a very much dampened "Hegelian" modification) that is entirely satisfied with a purely formal (not epistemological) resolution of the Cartesian paradox. Brandom and McDowell are worth bearing in mind in this regard, because—for reasons that have more to do with the alignment of competing forces in the American academy at the present time than with the obvious options that spring from the post-Kantians and the classic pragmatists themselves (not to mention the largely neglected options offered by the entire modern European tradition)—the alternatives Brandom and MacDowell feature are at least specimens of the principal directions American philosophy (epistemology—carn—metaphysics—carn—semantics—carn—philosophy—of—mind) are bound to take if not forcefully confronted by stronger lines of reasoning. See McDowell, Mind and World; and Brandom, Articulating Reasons.


38. Here I agree with John Searle's finding, but not with his reasoning, which favors the reverse of Hegel's thinking. See John R. Searle, The Construction of Social Reality (New York: Free Press, 1985). I explore the case for cultural realism (that is, a realism that cannot be reduced to the realism of physical nature but is implicated in the admission of the latter) in Selves and Other Texts: The Case for Cultural Realism (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). The point of entry here—by way of artworks, selves, and history—is only obliquely linked with the arguments being advanced here.


43. Devitt, Realism and Truth, p. vii.


45. Ibid., pp. 198–199.

46. See ibid., pp. 9–15.


52. McDowell, Mind and World, pp. 41–44.

53. Ibid., pp. 83–84.

54. Ibid., p. 92.

55. Ibid., p. 163.


57. McDowell, Mind and World, p. 3.5.

58. Ibid., p. 124; also see pp. 87–90.

59. Ibid., p. 54. See the rest of lecture 3 and chap. 5–9 in Gareth Evans, The Varieties of Reference, ed. John McDowell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982).

Chapter 2. Richard Rorty: Philosophy by Other Means


4. It is difficult not to see in the recent reprinting (as a separate book) of Sellars's essay, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" (by Harvard University Press, 1997)—introduced by Rorty and bound together with a study guide provided by Robert Brandom—a deliberate bid to install Sellars as an assured bridge figure between pragmatism and analytic philosophy, by which to facilitate the deformation of pragmatism itself in the general direction of Davidson's naturalism. At the same time, it is meant to draw the new union in the direction of Rorty's postmodernism. (The re-issue, by the way, uses as its title the title of the original essay.) This is quite a complicated affair. If that is what its purpose was, then things did not go quite as planned, though one hears Sellars dutifully named a pragmatist. For Rorty's "postmodernism" or "post-philosophy" has not really gained adherents among the strongest analysts, though Rorty's ingenuity continues to attract debaters; for his part, Brandom seems to have struck out along more conventional analytic lines, content to take advantage of Rorty's free play with the use of the epithet
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