

## Replies

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# Replies

Joseph Margolis

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- 1 My general impression, reading my commentators reading *Pragmatism Ascendent*, is that, however generous and patient they may be, they would like to have a clear statement of my sense of my own standing as a pragmatist vis-à-vis Kant and Hegel. Rosa Calcaterra has caught the book's essential thrust – the last of a series on pragmatism's second life, that were never intended to run on as a single study – that begin, opportunistically, with the rather inconclusive dispute between Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam, the most prominent self-styled pragmatists of their day, debating aimlessly in a philosophical desert from about the late 70s to the end of the century. The books remain alert, however, to the developing “exclusion [as Calcaterra reports] of pragmatism from the higher levels of philosophical debate,” a subliminal policy of sorts already underway quite early in the 20th century; they then acknowledge (as they must) the decline and near demise of pragmatism itself from the late 40s through the 70s, a kind of self-imposed retreat beginning close to the end of John Dewey's life; they go on to record a completely gratuitous reprieve and a suddenly robust second life, deprived of the least sign of fresh undertakings forceful enough to explain that improbability; and then, at last, something of a possible opening appears in the new millennium encouraging a new beginning, cast in terms of a rereading of pragmatism's Kantian/Hegelian inspiration (which others have also sensed) that might be prophetically directed to a larger future, the true sense of which I've glimpsed, eccentrically, in a chance motto drafted by Peirce himself, which I trust *Pragmatism Ascendent* will help to explicate: that is, 'Darwinizing Hegel and Hegelianizing Darwin.' I don't believe the most promising reading of the motto is likely to be easily guessed at the moment. That is, the sense of the motto. Not the sense Peirce might have favored, though a sense entirely congruent (I would say) with the promise of Peirce's own contribution suitably reinterpreted. I should also add to Calcaterra's recollection the plain truth that any attempt to redeem pragmatism in terms restricted to the achievements of its classic figures would only hasten the movement's end. The record spanning the late 40's to the 70's provides the evidence.
- 2 The theme that seems to have puzzled my commentators most concerns a heterodox reading of the treatment of realism and idealism, read back as a solution of certain

stalemates within the Kantian/Hegelian setting, drawn chiefly from Peirce's distinctive speculations. It is indeed the key to the novelty of the reorientation I have in mind. Roberto Gronda is distinctly wary about my notion of the 'indissoluble union of realism and idealism.' So I must make its meaning clear. Gronda favors, if I read him correctly, Kant's joint advocacy of 'transcendental idealism and empirical realism' – that is, two separate accounts of the same state of affairs – which I fear, taken in Kant's sense, proves incoherent. Gronda also has doubts about my use of the terms 'transcendental' and 'a priori' and my heterodox reading of 'constructivism' intended to service the (indissoluble) realism/Idealism thesis – according to which, 'transcendental' is not to be read as 'transcendentalist' or 'apriorist,' as in Kant's usage. (A barbarous invention!) I won't pretend that I haven't taken liberties with Kant's conceptions. Of course I have. But, Hegel had already found it impossible to support Kant's transcendentalism in the very process of co-opting his transcendental questions under the transformative conditions of evolving history.

- 3 More to the point, I take Kant to have equivocated on the concept of an 'object' –and to be unable to provide a criterial distinction between two very different concepts (both of which he means), as well as a rule by the use of which to pass reliably from the one to the other: that is, first, regarding 'objects' conceived to be sensibly intuited as unifying some manifold of intuited qualities (a use Gronda emphasizes, drawn from the first *Critique*); the other, regarding 'objects' conceived in the first sense but now able to count as well (somehow) as independent things, things not confined to our own minds (which play an important role, for instance, in the proposed refutation of idealism). Think here of Macbeth's 'seeing' a dagger before him.
- 4 Gronda is aware of the two uses, of course; but he apparently believes (in accord with Kant's idealism), that the first use is sufficient to accommodate the second. (He admits that Kant failed to formulate a 'consistent idealism.') But I honestly don't find that he addresses the seeming difficulty that the first use speaks of objects confined subject-ively to the mind and the second (still mysteriously) permits us to speak of objects no longer thus confined, though still within the terms of an idealism presumably freed of Kant's inconsistent formulation. (I don't believe it can be done.) There's the fatal weakness of Kant's dual idiom of transcendental idealism and empirical realism; the intended advantage of my heterodox replacement (realism/Idealism); and the essential charge of Hegel's original critique of Kant. It's entirely possible, of course, that I've misread Gronda.
- 5 Sami Pihlström, I venture to say, requires a fuller statement of my treatment of realism and idealism. He clearly sees that I reject what Kant rejects, what Kant calls 'transcendental realism,' as well as what Putnam calls 'metaphysical realism,' all the while I favor a constructivist form of realism that "accepts the idea that there is [...] a reality independent of us," viewed solely from human perspectives. Pihlström is cautiously open to my preferring Hegel to Kant, though I believe he takes me to have misread Kant's resources in the first *Critique*: he signals (so it seems) that I might have secured my own claims within the bounds of Kant's vision. (On my view, Kant's transcendental idealism ultimately requires what he names transcendental realism.) He also chides me mildly for having 'neglected' James's contribution to 'the development of the pragmatic method' and its distinctive application to the realism issue.
- 6 I, however, am quite persuaded that Kant, committed to his 'transcendental idealism,' found it impossible to pass from subjective (or mental) appearances to empirically real things without investing (fatally, I would say) in some form of 'transcendental realism,'

which was surely a doctrine he strenuously opposed. But the charge regarding James is entirely just: James's 'temperament' is always attractive; but I confess he foils my every effort to read what he says, wherever I look for a pertinently sustained argument on the realism issue – for instance, in *Radical Empiricism* and *A Pluralistic Universe*.

- 7 Kant, I daresay, never met his deepest worries successfully, the most decisive ones, for instance, that he shared with Marcus Herz before the publication of the first *Critique*: the reason lies, it seems to me, with his unnecessary insistence on the complete passivity of what is 'given' as the 'effects' of unknown external factors, on which all empirical knowledge (which should rightly read: all knowledge) depends. Kant thereby entrenches a stubborn dualism that he cannot overcome 'this side' of the subject-ive/object-ive divide. He cannot, I think (as Hegel clearly signals, in his lectures on the history of philosophy), extend the resources of his "transcendental idealism" to cover our knowledge of objective, independent things, without yielding to the (unacceptably) privileged claims of 'transcendental realism,' which he means to defeat utterly. Had he favored the thrust of Hegel's critique, he would have had to construe his categories in terms of the joint play of object-ive as well as subject-ive elements. Kant never completes the argument he envisages. He couldn't have, without displacing the entire *Critique*. (Think of the 'refutation of idealism.')
- 8 Hegel's contribution, which, as I say, I read genealogically, construes 'appearings' as 'appearances-of-things-present-in-experience' (*Erscheinungen*): what, therefore, is 'given' in (active) experience and perception, presuppositionlessly, however qualified by reason's (or the mind's) engagement in the middle of our reflections, without privilege of any kind (without strict necessities or universalities), invites (in fact, requires) the continual redefinition as what to count as an ampler picture of the 'objects' of our experience, as we review as much of our evolving thought and experience as we grasp.
- 9 I regard Hegel's method as marking a profound revision (and recovery) of the essential point of Kant's transcendental question, shorn of Kant's transcendentalism, under the condition of historied experience, well on its way (by strategies potentially superior to the fiddling of both Peirce and Cassirer) toward a naturalistic rendering of the 'transcendental' (or its surrogates), addressed to the infinite openness of inquiries of every kind governed or guided by considerations of truth and reality. (An anticipation, in effect, of fallibilism.) Peirce's phenomenology (or phaneroscopy) is itself a pragmatist variant of what Hegel intended by the phenomenologically 'given.' The 'given,' which is given presuppositionlessly, may be continually reinterpreted or reconstructed, in the search for an adequate account of what is real – a thoroughly meaningful world, we may say; but what we abstract as the merely physical need not be said to be itself constructed in the process. With the reconstruction of our 'pictures' of the world, we may consistently construct an account of 'that world's' independent existence. I see no fatal dualism there – and nothing lost. Realism is meant to be a picture of reality, not reality itself. It's for this reason that I dwell on Peirce's fallibilism more than on Dewey's theorizing economies (possibly more useful, finally, than Peirce's strenuous story); James has nothing to say about Hegel's critique of Kant. But once we're clear about the genealogy, there's no particular reason we can't allow this part of Peirce's theory (and Cassirer's neo-Kantian mate) to yield up its control of pragmatism's center stage.
- 10 Western philosophy (particularly what I call 'Eurocentric philosophy' – 'modern modern' philosophy) begins with Kant's efforts to defeat continental rationalism and dogmatism and 'transcendental realism.' The trouble is, Kant was always in danger of being

recaptured by the metaphysical ‘realists,’ in meeting the dawning needs of his own transcendental idealism. I say he fails in this; and (of course) Hegel ‘warns’ him much too late to be of any help. What I believe I’ve come to appreciate in Peirce’s fallibilism is *his* invention of a viable form of realism/Idealism that bridges, seemingly for the first time, the excessive economies of the empiricists and the extravagances of the transcendentalist Kant. This is the burden of Peirce’s grand intuitions regarding ‘abductive Hope,’ which I read in Hegelian terms, though it remains unclear what Peirce’s debt to Hegel finally is. Nevertheless, once we gain this lesson, we see that there cannot be any facultative division between sensory perception and experience and thought or reason. The pragmatists have the additional advantage of their viewing the human animal along Darwinian (more precisely: *post-Darwinian*) lines. There’s a very good reason, there, for refusing the fantastic extravagances of transcendental idealism, particularly where it is tempted to borrow – what it cannot legitimately reach from its own resources – from those of transcendental realism.

- 10 Let me say straight out that I’ve read the figures I principally discuss, as advocates of particular doctrines that confront my own commitments in important ways; but I don’t report their views in order to make the best case for any standard reading of *their* views. I read them, rather, as congenial or uncongenial to a defense of a viable pragmatism for our time, consistently (as far as possible) with the main thrust of their actual texts. I regard my readings of Kant, Hegel, and Peirce (chiefly) as a sort of genealogy skewed (not unfairly, I hope) for the sake of a strengthened and redirected pragmatism for the present future. Hence, I make the best case for challenging the realist reading of Peirce; and I try to show how the inherent bafflements of Kant’s transcendentalism are unproductive, unnecessary, and distinctly inhospitable to pragmatist concerns.
- 11 My Hegelian reading of Kant is meant to show how historicizing the transcendental question, while abandoning transcendentalism altogether, would relieve Kant of an impossible task and enable him to ‘anticipate’ Hegel, Peirce, and Cassirer (in different ways) and even our present needs and undertakings. I’m quite willing to concede that Cassirer’s variant of the endless run of inquiry in the sciences is far leaner and more apt in methodologically explicit ways than Peirce’s fallibilism (as I’ve tried to demonstrate). Yet it remains Peirce who is the best champion of a constructivist realism within an Idealist (*not* an idealist or subjectivist) account of inquiry concerned with truth-claims. In short, I take realism/Idealism as an improvement over Kant’s conjunction of empirical realism and transcendental Idealism: Kant cannot quite secure his realism, and the idealism is already (or is on its way to being) a form of transcendentalism.
- 12 Nevertheless, I do oppose the ‘separability thesis’ (in the sense of P. F. Strawson’s *The Bounds of Sense* and in the views of strong commentators like Paul Guyer, who yields to Strawson): ‘transcendental idealism,’ though a form of transcendentalism, cannot be excised from the first *Critique* without dismembering it completely. (Henry Allison is certainly right about that.) For similar reasons, we must accept the ‘discursivity thesis’ (in Kant’s account of cognition and in our own: that is, that the analysis of cognition requires, as Allison affirms, ‘both concepts and (sensible) intuitions.’ (I believe Allison coined both terms.) Similarly, if the *a priori* is construed (say) as the science of what is ‘transcendentally necessary,’ then it is already ‘apriorist’ or ‘transcendentalist’ – and, thus, incompatible with pragmatism. Otherwise, the ‘a priori’ may be treated in an *a posteriori* way, as a conjecture about the conditions of possibility of this or that sort of inquiry: hence, as resting on what may be contingently projected from perceptual and

experiential sources that our enabling concepts and categories themselves rely on (but cannot and need not be confined to). The key problem concerns the source of ‘concepts’ and ‘categories.’ Allison may not be entirely consistent here.

- 13 Kant never succeeds (never could) in ‘converting’ appearances into independent things; if he had, he would (on my reading) have had to adopt a form of ‘transcendental realism,’ which would have violated (as well) his insistence that space and time are never more than subject-ive forms of human perception and experience. (I don’t see how *that* notion could possibly be a synthetic *a priori* truth.) Kant never provides an adequate distinction between noumena and things “independent of the mind” (though not noumena). Accordingly, he has no way to distinguish between representations and what representations represent *in the external world*. (The subject-ive version is either redundant or confines knowledge to a constructed reality of its own invention.) Still, in favoring Hegel over Kant, it may be entirely fair to say that it’s only when Hegel’s own argument is rendered in naturalistic terms that *its* distinctive rigor and advantage may be rightly grasped.
- 14 Furthermore, if (as I believe) it’s best to adopt some form of the realist/Idealist option (though not for apriorist reasons), then it’s a simple matter to *deny* that the ‘external world’ we claim to know is itself constructed when *we* conjecture, by constructivist hypotheses, whatever we take to be the true nature of the world (that ‘part’ of the world). The external world is not a noumenal world, though it is a world whose nature we surmise we know through our hypotheses (or ‘pictures’), which (according to our lights) we count, however provisionally, as true or false. Here, again, Peirce’s ‘long run’ explains why there is no redundancy or dualism or fatal form of representationalism to be excised.
- 15 However, it is true, and my commentators are entirely justified in noting, that I have not sought to explain (here) the linkage between normative considerations (truth and rationality as well as moral and aesthetic value) – or culturally enlanguaged meaning and significance – *and* the realist/Idealist thesis I explore primarily with an eye to laying a proper ground for objective claims about the ‘external world.’ I’ve tried my hand, in numerous settings, at resolving some of the largest puzzles of that enormous issue. I have no intention of ignoring any of that. But if I may say so, I take the complaint to be a sort of compliment – a kindly impatience to get on with the rest of the story! So many discussants have fallen short in these matters that I must take care to shape the argument correctly. May I say that, in my own view, the answer rests with the analysis of the hybrid, natural artifactuality of the human self. There’s the essential theme of the continuing inquiry that I hope, in time, to share with you.
- 16 There are, also, deeper infelicities confronting Kant’s system that I hope to avoid. The very distinctions between empirical and transcendental concepts (candidates for what, on Kant’s view, would be regarded as transcendently necessary) seems to be no more than a promissory note that Kant can never completely redeem. Think, here, of the uncertainty of ever discerning any demonstrably invariant concept of causality or nomologicality or even of what may be supposed to be ‘an independent object,’ or the completely adequate form of a ‘rule’ by which judgment serves the essential function of the understanding.
- 17 Answers to any of these ‘transcendental questions’ I take to be provisional conjectures – thoroughly rational in their way but impossible to confirm in the strong form Kant claims for them. They remain defeasible, but not (perhaps) by dint of rigorous argument. Indeed, I take them to be cousins of Peirce’s abductive Hope. Philosophy trails off here into

something deeper and more informal – and, I believe, caught up with larger currents of changing cultural conviction. I cannot do justice to the issue that’s a-dawning here, and I haven’t got this part of my speculation sufficiently worked out. But for what it’s worth, reading Kant, Hegel, Peirce, Dewey, and Cassirer with an eye to pragmatism’s ‘recovery,’ I find Wittgenstein (or my reading of Peirce’s fallibilism in Wittgensteinian terms) particularly convincing: our medium-sized philosophical arguments begin to be judged more and more in terms of their accord with the deepest abductive instincts of our *Lebensform*. It’s in some such sense that I believe Peirce’s extravagant version of fallibilism may reasonably yield to something closer to Cassirer’s less encumbered vision, and Hegel’s decisive critique of Kant may, once secured, encourage us to shed Hegel’s unmanageable language for a leaner pragmatist idiom. That’s what I mean by reading philosophical sources ‘genealogically’: ineluctably, we recast the philosophical gains we claim to have clinched (for instance, the need to replace Kant’s realism and idealism, as argued) in accord with the somewhat inchoate ‘rational instinct’ of our form of life – what I sometimes call our ‘metaphilosophical culture,’ from which, inventively, we draw evolving arguments. ‘Genealogy’ is the name I give to this effort to bridge philosophy’s history, ‘meta’-philosophically. I foresee the need to eclipse the classic pragmatists in the same sense in which we are in the process of eclipsing Kant and Hegel.

- 18 Here, Mathias Girel has anticipated me. He requires a more straightforward answer to my intended use of what I call Peirce’s chance motto: “Darwinizing Hegel and Hegelianizing Darwin.” I suppose I should say that I intend the motto to be read genealogically (in my own labile way). In fact, *Pragmatism Ascendent* is no more than a first step in the attempt to ‘recover’ (or ‘reinvent’) pragmatism, in and for our time, within the genealogical space spanned by an inspiration drawn from Kant and Hegel and Darwin that, in retrospect, a dozen years into the 21st century, must turn back to consider what it can now afford to shed or transform. There’s the point of my realism/Idealism proposal: it cannot be more than a genealogical argument: it’s a fresh construction, a proposal: *post-Kant*, *post-Hegel*, *post-Darwin*, and, I imagine, *post-Peirce* (and *post-Cassirer*). Minimally, as Girel remarks, the motto must signal my guess that pragmatism’s best prospects (also, those of analytic philosophy, if you allow the distinction) lie in the direction of intertwining “biological naturalism and the post-Kantian emphasis on history and culture.” I mean that much at least; though, having completed the book before you, I don’t at all wish to rely on the potential infelicities of Peirce’s doubts about either Hegel or Darwin. Girel has in a way forced my hand. I’ve settled, at least in part, my account of Hegel, culminating in the realism/Idealism proposal. I see no gain in a Hegelian account of (biological) evolution; though once the problematic fit of human evolution within the Darwinian account becomes clear, the *hybrid* form of human evolution cannot be gainsaid. I’ve deliberately left all but untouched the Darwinian issue itself, except to flag “my radical thesis” (which Girel cites), “that the self is a hybrid artifact of biological and cultural evolution that makes possible the entire run on the uniquely enlanguaged forms of human intelligence...” and so on. But that’s my prophecy.
- 19 The topic is still too huge to take on in the present context: it’s part of what I hope will be the start of a new undertaking, centered on the human self. The novel intertwining of the Hegelian and the Darwinian is anticipated there: in the analysis of culture and history along *post-Hegelian* lines, explicated in terms of the advantages of the realist/Idealist proposal, which suggests (to my mind) a new way of construing the ‘unity of the sciences’; also, then, in the analysis of the formation and functioning of the self itself, explicated in

terms of the advantages of the artifactuality thesis, pursued along *post-Darwinian* line. Actually, Darwin has rather little to contribute to the argument directly; my genealogical sources here have more in common with the work of the philosophical anthropologists (who can be wild in their own way) and with the paleoanthrology and paleontology of *Homo sapiens* within the genus. So I may have misled Girel. At any rate, that's the reason I don't attempt to recover Peirce's meaning. The book ends in a promissory note, but this intent makes sense only if we do not return to the separate strands of Hegelian and Darwinian thought textually anchored in Hegel and Darwin. I have yet to explain what that entails.

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