

Pragmatic Spirit Beyond Relativism and Objectivism¹

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¹ This interview took place at Richard J. Bernstein's home in the Adirondacks in the summer of 2003. The transcription of the interview was compiled by Nikulin and approved by Bernstein.

Dmitri Nikulin: Let me begin our conversation with Pragmatism that has been so important in your writing and thinking. Your book on John Dewey was published in 1960; what defined your interest in Dewey, and why is the American pragmatic tradition so important for you?

Richard Bernstein: My interest in John Dewey began at a time when interest in pragmatism, and Dewey in particular, had reached an all-time low in American philosophy. I had recently been trained at the University of Chicago, and at Chicago under the presidency of Hutchins there was a great skepticism towards Dewey, even though Dewey had taught there. Although I also spent a short time at Columbia, there was mainly a doctrinaire approach to Dewey; I was not interested in Dewey at that time. But when I went to Yale, there was a young assistant professor by the name of John E. Smith, who was a student of American philosophy. He organized a small reading group dealing with Dewey's book *Experience and Nature*. I think it was the first time I really read Dewey closely, and reading that book was a revelation. I discovered that many of the prejudices and many of the notions about Dewey that had been prevalent even in America, and many of what I call the "myths"—for example, that somehow pragmatism was really a form of proto-positivism—were indeed myths. So I wrote my dissertation in the 1950s on John Dewey's metaphysics of experience, and it was on the basis of my dissertation that I wrote a small book on John Dewey, and did a collection of essays on his writings. It's at that point that I date the serious interest that I had in John Dewey and the pragmatic tradition.

DN: So how do you evaluate the whole development of pragmatism since that time, and who do you think are the most important representatives of pragmatism? In particular, I would like to ask your opinion about Rorty's work and his interpretation of pragmatism.

RB: There, of course, I have to tell a story. We have to refer to the classical pragmatists, and here I would include as the main figures Peirce, James, Dewey, and

Mead; and also a figure whose work sometimes does not receive sufficient attention, the work of the later Josiah Royce, who was very much influenced by Peirce. That really defines the classical period of the pragmatists (including their students). Now, I think it's important to realize what was happening, at least in America, in the period of the late '30s to the Second World War and just after it. This is the period when you had the tremendous influence of the émigré philosophers; that is, the philosophers who were forced to leave Europe and who came to America, primarily those who had been associated with logical positivism and the Vienna Circle—thinkers like Carnap and Feigl. I also think it's important to realize that in the period just around the Second World War there was a quiet but dramatic revolution taking place in American professional philosophy. It is from then that you begin to get the almost complete takeover of what's now called analytic philosophy by the work of the logical empiricists, or positivists, and its influence. It was primarily at this point that logic and philosophy of science became major disciplines. In addition, there was the influence of another strand, that is, the type of work that was going on primarily in Oxford, sometimes at that time called "ordinary language" philosophy or "conceptual analysis."

So by the 1950s, although America has always been somewhat pluralistic, the dominant professional attitude in philosophy was that this was a *new way* of doing philosophy. With very few exceptions (one exception was Yale University), American philosophy and pragmatism were completely marginalized. (Although there has been a tremendous resurgence, it is still the case, and we should not underestimate this, that in most graduate philosophy departments today, the vast majority of students do not really study, and some have not even read, the classical American pragmatists).

Now that's the background. There was always a group of people who were seriously interested in the pragmatists and pragmatic philosophy even at this time, and they really tried to keep the tradition alive. So you had a group of scholars who were concerned with Dewey, with Peirce, to some extent with James and Mead, etc.; but they did not have a significant influence on philosophy in America. Here, Dick Rorty played a major role, because he was known as a person who had done distinguished work in analytic philosophy. It came as a shock to many people when he published his book *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and said in the introduction

that the three most important philosophers of the twentieth century were Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Dewey. From that time on, Rorty has increasingly identified himself with the pragmatic tradition, and he refers to himself as a pragmatist. On the positive side, many people started taking pragmatism seriously because a person as prominent and as important as Rorty took it seriously and identified himself as a pragmatist. It is also the case that Rorty's version of pragmatism is very idiosyncratic; indeed, many people have criticized him for distorting or betraying the classical pragmatic tradition. Over the years, even I (I've known Rorty for fifty years) have had a number of debates with him, public and private, about the pragmatic tradition and the ways in which it is to be developed.

DN: In one of your recent papers you quoted a reference Hilary Putnam makes to the pragmatic tradition, where he tries to identify the main themes of pragmatism. He identifies the following themes: first, anti-skepticism, which means the pragmatists hold that doubt requires justification just as much as belief. Second, fallibilism; namely, that pragmatists hold that there is never any metaphysical guarantee to be had that such-and-such a belief will never need revision. Third, the thesis that there is no fundamental dichotomy between facts and values. Finally, fourth, the thesis that in certain circumstances, practice is primary in philosophy. Do you share Putnam's view that these are essentially pragmatic theses which characterize the whole tradition and approach and do you think anything else might be added to them?

RB: I basically agree with Putnam that all four of those theses have been characteristic of the pragmatic thinkers. I also agree with him about something else that is very important to understand: anyone who is a close student of the pragmatists will see that they do not all agree on fundamental issues, even the classical pragmatists. I think pragmatism is understood in a more interesting way if you look at it as an ongoing debate or conversation. There are contradictory claims that, say, Peirce will make vis-à-vis James, etc. So I think you cannot portray it as monolithic. It is more a way of thinking than a set of doctrines. I would certainly say, however, that all the themes Putnam mentions are shared in different ways by the various pragmatists, with

different kinds of emphases and different ways of developing them.

It is not accurate to say that these are the *only* theses that characterize pragmatism; one could bring out further ones implicit in those four. For example, I think Putnam is right in saying that practice is primary, but one has to also understand that practice is understood in an intersubjective or social manner. The importance of community, or sociality, or intersubjectivity is also a crucial theme in the pragmatic tradition: all inquiry involves a community of inquirers. On another occasion Putnam rightly said that the pragmatists are always looking at issues from the *agent's* point of view rather than from the spectator's point of view; this can be extracted from these theses, but it might deserve special attention; it is another theme that is very characteristic of pragmatism. So I think that these themes are a good beginning, but there are other themes; indeed, Putnam himself has sometimes given slightly different characterizations of pragmatism.

DN: Can you comment on the way you take Wittgenstein's thesis that all norms eventually are embedded in some kind of social practice? Do you see this as a pragmatic move on Wittgenstein's part?

RB: I want to make several observations here. One has to be very careful about calling somebody a "pragmatist," and I do *not* think that you can call Wittgenstein a pragmatist. But almost everybody who identifies himself or herself with the pragmatic tradition has found great affinities with Wittgenstein, particularly the later Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*. I also think there are themes in Wittgenstein, particularly the emphasis on practices, the critique of Cartesianism, the critique of mentalism, that are all very much compatible with, and develop pragmatic themes. So in that sense there are pragmatic motifs in the later Wittgenstein. If you take the specific thesis about norms being embedded in practices, I think that this is really traceable back to Peirce. It's not that Wittgenstein was directly influenced by Peirce. Peirce uses the term "norms," he speaks about the normative sciences, and his whole conception of inquiry is essentially a normative conception that takes inquiry to be embedded in practices. I also find this theme carried out in Dewey, and in others.

What is interesting to me is that this theme—which is just a formula, it has to be developed—is a theme that you can find in a long line that goes back to Peirce, through the classical pragmatists, and in Wittgenstein. It is also found in Wilfrid Sellars; and indeed, it is the most dominant theme in the work of Robert Brandom, whom I would also place in this tradition.

DN: Is it possible for social practices, at least those which we consider to be legally acceptable, to be compatible? This is a question concerning the possible incompatibility of different systems of norms, if they are really embedded in social practices.

RB: To say that norms are embedded in practices is not yet to make a claim that they all form a coherent system. In fact, it strikes me that this is exactly the point that pragmatists want to make, that what we take to be norms are themselves open to change and can be criticized. For example, what the pragmatists would argue—Dewey himself argues this—is that if we look at the nature of inquiry, say, in the context of Aristotle, there will be certain norms—about what constitutes legitimate knowledge, what does not constitute legitimate knowledge—which are embedded in practices, but subsequently they lend themselves to criticism. In another characterization that Hilary Putnam gave of pragmatism, he identified certain claims that he said were shared by the pragmatists. In this statement, which appears in his essay called “Realism with a Human Face,” he says, “Our norms and standards of warranted assertibility are historical products and they evolve in time.” And he also says: “Our norms and standards always reflect our interests and values. Our picture of intellectual flourishing makes sense only as part of our picture of human flourishing in general.” And finally he says that “Our norms and standards of anything, including warranted assertibility, are capable of reform. There are better and worse norms and standards.” Thus the view that we can be critical of some norms and standards, in light of better norms, is certainly compatible with the pragmatist view. In that sense, the idea that we can be critical of norms, that there may be norms that we give up, that are rejected, seems to be part of the pragmatist conception of self-corrective inquiry. What

pragmatism does not accept is that there are fixed, absolute, or transcendental norms that cannot possibly be called into question or reinterpreted. This thesis is closely allied to the emphasis on the community of inquirers, and again I think this goes all the way back to Peirce. Peirce, against a kind of Cartesian model which emphasizes subjectivity, thinks that we always have to make a public test, we always have to subject any hypothesis to the test of a community. It is only in this way that we can engage in a process of self-correction. Another figure who, at least in one respect, is very congenial to the pragmatic tradition is Karl Popper, who explicitly refers to Peirce, particularly in the thesis of conjectures and refutations, when he wants to make the point that we have to come up with bold conjectures and then submit them to public refutation. That is a thesis which is already there in Peirce, which Popper recognizes. In the history of science we see that certain kinds of arguments which were once considered good arguments are eventually rejected. This is not because we have some kind of fixed, permanent standards to which we can refer. Ultimately we begin seeing that they do not really work, they do not really achieve a kind of warranted assertibility. For example, as you and I know, there are many arguments that, say, Kepler used that seem to have a basis in astrology and notions about ideal geometric forms which no scientist today would accept. That does not detract from Kepler, that only shows that there can be progress not only in our specific knowledge, but in the way in which we conduct our scientific inquiry. Popper comes at this issue independently, but he knew enough about Peirce to recognize the affinity. In fact, it is Peirce who gives us one of the earliest good formulations of the criterion of falsifiability.

DN: What do you think about recent developments in contemporary American philosophy, in particular, about the works of John McDowell and Robert Brandom—about their attitudes towards these themes that you identify within the pragmatic tradition?

RB: Here let me make a few emphatic remarks. John McDowell is a philosopher originally trained in Oxford who came to Pittsburgh; and when he came to Pittsburgh,

he really became very much influenced by the thought of Sellars and his colleague Robert Brandom. There is little evidence in his work, however, that he has any deep understanding of or acquaintance with the American pragmatic tradition. I want to make that clear, because there is no question of influence in that respect. The case of Brandom is a little more complex. Robert Brandom was a student of Richard Rorty, and certainly also a great admirer of, and deeply influenced by Sellars, who was a Pittsburgh philosopher. Now, I think a more interesting *philosophical* way of coming at this issue is the following: one has to recognize that Peirce himself really began his philosophical thinking by reflecting on Kant (Peirce's notion of categories really comes from Kant). He was trying to develop an understanding of Kant that he felt was more compatible with modern scientific developments. You might say he was making Kant into a more "open" figure, although the modern use of the term "pragmatism" really comes from Kant! Indeed, Peirce said he got it from Kant. Not "practical," as in practical philosophy, but *pragmatic*. One major strain in pragmatic thinking has been reflecting on, and developing Kantian themes, but Kantian themes in what I call a more fallibilistic, open spirit.

DN: Can you elaborate on your own philosophical development and the influence different thinkers have had on you, and mention certain persistent themes in your writings?

RB: It is always difficult to speak about oneself, but I have always thought that the core of all my thinking is an inspiration that came from the rich tradition of pragmatism. I have dealt with many other figures and many other themes in philosophy, but I think it always comes back to this. For example: I think you cannot understand the origins of American pragmatism unless you understand the deeper influence of Hegel. Pragmatism is in a certain way shaped by Hegel. I think the line goes something like this: what was "in the air" in the nineteenth century was either a *development* out of Kant, which was Hegelian; or a *critique* of Kant, which was also Hegelian. Hegel always conceived of himself as carrying out a Kantian project, but showing that it ended up in a very different place than Kant thought. Hegel can be

seen as the greatest critic of Kant *and* the greatest thinker who really developed Kantian thoughts, although in ways that Kant would never have accepted. John Dewey in particular started as a Hegelian, and even Peirce once said that he considered that his version of pragmatism was very close to Hegel's form of idealism, although he rejected certain aspects of Hegel. Thus, I was led to Hegel because I had to understand the background of American pragmatism.

In terms of Marx, what is interesting (and this is something that I tried to develop in a book I wrote many years ago called *Praxis and Action*) is that there are affinities between the early Marx and Dewey—before Marx develops what some people would call his “scientism;” that is, the more humanistic, the more open, the more flexible aspects of his work. After all, Dewey, in terms of his political philosophy, is advocating a form of radical democracy. In fact, I think Marxism would have benefited, in its historical development, from a greater influence by pragmatism, because it's when Marxism became dogmatic, when it was no longer really fallibilistic, that it began to rigidify, ossify, and become reified.

Let me tell a personal story about my interest in Habermas. I first started really reading Habermas seriously when he wrote his book *Erkenntnis und Interesse*, and for me it was a shock of recognition. Here was someone who had started from a Hegelian–Marxist tradition and was moving more towards pragmatism. I started from pragmatism and became interested in a whole range of thinkers that he was interested in that book. We started corresponding about his book. Recognizing the similarity of our mutual interests was the basis for our friendship. The interest I've had in critical theory and Habermas can be viewed as extensions of my interest in pragmatism in this sense. Even when I became interested in Hannah Arendt, what originally attracted me was her understanding of action and politics and a public space, which I found very congenial from a pragmatic and Deweyian point of view.

DN: But what did your later writings add to it? I primarily have in mind your *Beyond Relativism and Objectivism* and *The New Constellation*.

RB: I do not explicitly discuss the classical pragmatists in either of those books, but if you wanted a title for pragmatism, a title like *Beyond Relativism and Objectivism* would not be a bad one. The pragmatists were never relativists, they were never skeptics, but they were also critical of various forms of foundationalism. They certainly were strong advocates of objectivity and a belief in objectivity through intersubjective inquiry, but not of objectivism interpreted as some form of metaphysical realism. So in a way, the pragmatic spirit is beyond relativism and objectivism. As I have mentioned, when I first started working on the pragmatists, the general attitude among many philosophers was that they were passé, old hat, something to be rejected. My view was that the pragmatic thinkers were ahead of their time. And I feel that in light of what has happened in the last fifty years, I have been vindicated. There has been not simply a resurgence of pragmatism, but philosophy has caught up with the insights of the pragmatic thinkers.

DN: How do you position your philosophy vis-à-vis hermeneutics? In particular, I have in mind your book on Freud, in which I think you try to use hermeneutic methods in order to establish a certain thesis.

RB: Let's consider Gadamer. After all, you might say it is Gadamer who is primarily responsible for the worldwide recognition of hermeneutics in the twentieth century, although he certainly was not the originator of it. Sometimes Gadamer refers to himself as a Hegelian of the bad infinite. What he means by that is that he takes Hegel very seriously, but he does not believe in the Absolute, in a system. I do not think Hegel did, but nevertheless, Gadamer rejects the idea that in the end, there is some grand *aufheben*. There is only, as he says, an experience that calls for further experience. So here we have a kind of open Hegelianism. Now, I know that this poses problems, and certain Hegelians find it unsatisfactory. This position, however, is very close to pragmatism. Pragmatism can be considered a Hegelianism of the bad infinite in that sense—there can be no finality to the process itself. I think the resemblance goes even deeper: if you look at Gadamer's understanding of *Erfahren*, of experience, where experience is not understood as something merely subjective or private; if you

take the importance in Gadamer of dialogue—after all, a theme that has run through all of my work has been the re-thinking of the concept of dialogue— both of these themes are essential to the pragmatic tradition. Once again, I do not want to call Gadamer a pragmatist, I want to say that there are pragmatic themes in his work. I would certainly include him as a thinker relevant to pragmatism in the Continental scene, because there is a lot that he has in common with Habermas. There are ways, however, in which the pragmatists would also be critical of Gadamer. He has, at least in *Wahrheit und Methode*, an inadequate conception of science. What is interesting is that he has also come to realize that science is more hermeneutical than he had originally thought. At any rate, I think the pragmatists would be very skeptical of a hard-and-fast distinction between the *Naturwissenschaft* and the *Geisteswissenschaft*. There would be a dialogue with Gadamer that accepts certain points and is critical of others. A Gadamerian theme that I accept and which I originally learned from the pragmatists is that you come to understand yourself through the serious encounter with the Other. When one deals with alien positions, making these positions as strong as possible is the way to encounter them. (Gadamer traces this theme of taking the Other seriously back to Plato; it's in Plato but it's also in the pragmatists.) Unfortunately, in Anglo-American philosophy, the model that has too frequently dominated is an adversarial one, in which you're always trying to show what is wrong with the position you're encountering, rather than trying to see that you could learn from it. Many people have commented that this is something that has been characteristic of my work, that I have an ability to enter into many different kinds of thoughts and then to have a serious dialogue with them. It is in that spirit that I have dealt with the analysis of Rorty.

I was also interested in dealing with Freud, as I was in my book on Hannah Arendt, because I became very much interested in Jewish themes, and in how various Jewish thinkers who were primarily secular dealt with them. So this was an occasion for me to develop that aspect. Here I would like to say one other thing: many people think that pragmatism is essentially anti-religious and anti-theological; that is another false picture of pragmatism. There were some pragmatists who were thoroughly secular, but it is interesting that James, who popularized the term pragmatism, primarily applied the term to a religious question in the first lecture in which he used

it. You might say that there is an antipathy between pragmatism and any form of fundamentalism or dogmatism, but all the classical pragmatic thinkers were concerned with certain religious issues, and all of them tried to show that there is a way of looking at religion which can disassociate it from dogmatism and fundamentalism.

DN: You published an acclaimed book on radical evil. Why should we discuss evil now? And what is your main thesis on this subject?

RB: The basic point I would make is this: first of all, I think it is important to know that I was thinking about this book and even completed the book before September 11, 2001. I finished this book in the previous summer. So the rationale for writing the book had very little to do with the most recent events. I was interested in dealing with certain primary questions: first of all, I felt, you might say, pre-analytically, or intuitively, that at the end of the twentieth century we have a tendency to distinguish between various acts, or deeds, or persons, that are immoral, and something which is much more extreme, much more radical, which is called evil. Of course, paradigmatically I think the Holocaust stands as an exemplar, but it's true in terms of terrible things, in terms of genocide all over the world, from Africa to Cambodia. And yet, it struck me that the conceptual resources for what we mean when we say that something is evil are really very thin and very weak. So I wanted to ask the question: "Is there a distinction between something which is unjust and immoral and something that we call evil?" Being a philosopher, I wanted to deal with this issue in a philosophical manner. Does the modern philosophical tradition, that is from Kant on, have anything interesting to tell us about the nature of evil? And the reason I began with Kant instead of going back to St. Augustine is that I did not want to focus primarily on the problem of theodicy. The problem of theodicy is not really about the issue of evil, whatever *evil*, but about whether you can reconcile evil with the belief in an omniscient, omnipotent and beneficent God. That's what I see as a problem for St. Augustine. It seems to be a problem right up to the contemporary tradition. The reason that I was not primarily interested in theodicy is because that discourse does

not focus on what exactly do we *mean* when we say that something is evil. Kant was skeptical of theodicy as a theoretical discipline. With Kant, a discourse begins about what we really mean when we talk about evil. That is why I begin with Kant. And the book is constructed as a series of interrogations, where I am carrying on a dialogue with philosophers and thinkers in order to understand what I think is right and important about what they have to say. The book has three main parts. The first part is the classical background, where I deal with Kant, Hegel, and Schelling, because I think that they help to set the problem. Schelling is a particularly interesting figure, because I see him at the end of one tradition, the classical tradition, and opening up a discourse that leads to another one, to what I call moral psychology of evil. The second section of the book focuses on Nietzsche and Freud. The third section deals with three post-Holocaust thinkers—they all turn out to be Jewish—who are dealing with the meaning of evil after the Holocaust, and they are Jonas, Levinas, and Arendt. I end the book with a series of theses. I express my general skepticism about a comprehensive theory of evil. I think that what we are more involved in is what I want to call a hermeneutics: we are confronted with situations that we take to be evil, and then the problem becomes trying to discriminate what it is that makes that evil. I do think that every one of the thinkers illuminates some aspect of the problem, but I do not see this as discourse that could ever be finally completed. I end the book, and this is why I did not feel like I had to write it any more after September 11, by saying that you can never anticipate the new faces of evil and the new problems that are going to arise.

I would like to say something about the very popular discourse of good and evil, which has affected so much of the official discussion in the United States and even among American intellectuals. I do believe that the introducing of the category of good and evil into political discourse is a disaster. Politics, whether you understand it in a high sense or a low sense, has to do with discrimination, with judgment, with negotiation. The difficulty with good and evil talk is that it is an extreme binary opposition. There is no way in which you can negotiate with evil—all you can do is exterminate it. And so, therefore, it seems to me, that this is a *regression* and is very dangerous. I am deeply and radically opposed to the present popular discussion of good and evil, because I think it is a regression from serious politics. I think that there is something about that discourse that has an intuitive appeal. People feel that they do

not even have to ask, they look at a picture of Saddam Hussein, or Bin Laden and that's the personification of evil. But what are you saying when you say that these people are evil? In other words, it's a demonization that is taking place here, which I think really blocks our thinking about the meaning of evil.

DN: You are planning to write a book on the "Pragmatic century." Can you say a few words about this project?

RB: I would like to write a book that would be a return to my roots which began with a serious study of the pragmatic thinkers. And the thesis that I would like to develop is both a historical and systematic thesis, that there is an interesting perspective of philosophy in the twentieth century in which we can see it as theme and variation on certain pragmatic themes. I do *not* mean that there has been an influence of the American pragmatists on the whole of philosophy, because very frequently these themes emerge completely independent of any knowledge of them. But I do see that the major pragmatic thinkers, classical American pragmatists, Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead, introduced a set of themes that have dominated a good deal of the twentieth century philosophical discussion. These include the critique of the myth of the given, foundationalism, the emphasis on the nature of community, and the themes of fallibility. What I would like to do is to write a book the first part of which would consist of a series of essays on these themes, and the second part would then try to show how they have been developed in different sorts of ways by a variety of thinkers that span the Anglo-American/ Continental content. In the so-called Continental tradition, it clearly seems to me that among the prominent thinkers one has to include Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, because not only are they dealing with pragmatic thinkers, they have been explicitly influenced by the American pragmatists. Karl-Otto Apel has written one of the best books on pragmatism, in particular on Peirce. To a great extent he is the one responsible for the serious concern with Peirce in the German-speaking world. Habermas has not only been influenced by Apel, but has been directly influenced by Mead and John Dewey. In fact, I think that the philosopher in the Continental scene closest in spirit to John Dewey is Jürgen

Habermas.

I do not want to limit it to these thinkers because there are a number of others, like Hans Joas (who is mainly a sociologist), who have been very sensitive in their analysis of pragmatic themes. Other thinkers who have been influenced by Apel and Habermas really are concerned with these themes as well. For example, recently Axel Honneth has written some superb articles on John Dewey, arguing that Dewey provides theories which help to advance the discussion of certain issues. I would go even further and maintain that there are some important similarities between, say, the work of Jacques Derrida and the American pragmatists. Once again, I do not want to say that he is a pragmatist, but if you take the critique of the metaphysics of presence, if you take his own argument for fallibilism (although he does not call it fallibilism), then it seems to me that there are related themes in his work. Indeed, there was a recent book on deconstruction and pragmatism. To go one step further: many people have pointed out that, particularly in the early sections of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, the emphasis on practice, the emphasis on *zuhanden* and so forth, represent a pragmatic approach to our being-in-the-world (the notion of equipment, etc.). Now again, one has to be very careful. Some people say that Heidegger was a pragmatist—I think that's a silly remark. Consider, however, the way in which *Sein und Zeit* begins: it begins with an attack on the Cartesian tradition, and this kind of attack has deep affinities with the critique of the Cartesian tradition that one has learned to find in Peirce and Dewey.

So it is not that I am claiming that everybody is a pragmatist, but you can see and give a reading of the pragmatic themes and this would be a challenge to what is now becoming an orthodox reading, that there is an Anglo-American tradition and a more Continental type of tradition in the twentieth century. I think what is more important are the variations on a set of themes rather than those kinds of ideological divides. So this would not be a summa, but it would encompass all the interests that I've had in my writing since the early sixties.