To begin to philosophize anew, within a new intellectual tradition, might be as risky as it is advantageous. Pragmatism, having begun in the 19th century cultural conditions of the “New World,” was this position. It was a risky as well as an advantageous attempt, and for the same reason: it lacked a direct involvement in the intellectual history of the “Old World” while also attempting to sidestep that history. However, what might have appeared to be insufficient knowledge of the ancient and modern traditions, can now be reevaluated as a great creative act. Pragmatism is a genuine creative philosophical act in Western intellectual history because it has had a unique cultural opportunity to look at ancient and modern Western philosophy from both the inside and the outside. This is how human creativity works, and that is why non-Americans are able to see pragmatism today from the outside as they attempt to see it from the inside. Thus pragmatism, not having been involved in the Cartesian and Kantian philosophy of the Enlightenment, has contributed new philosophical insights and vocabularies. To philosophize at all is to use, and in some luckier cases to form, a philosophical vocabulary in a new cultural situation and context, which is a philosophical means as well as an end.

Today it is clear that the philosophy of pragmatism, this unique contribution of American origin to world philosophy, has been revived within the last two decades of the 20th century. There is a growing interest in pragmatism all over the world, including Central and Eastern Europe. Today there are philosophers and other writers and scholars working on pragmatism and within its paradigm not only in the United States but also elsewhere. Apparently pragmatism has become an international philosophical movement at the dawn of the new millennium.

The new intellectual situation in Central and Eastern Europe since the breakdown of the old communist regimes has opened new vistas for philosophers from this part of Europe which allow them to search for new influences and identities. Pragmatism has become one of the new influences, which has led in turn to the founding of the Central European Pragmatist Forum (CEPF), established as an informal international group in 2000. For detailed information and further developments visit the CEPF website at www.filozofia.sk/cepf.

This new intellectual situation has brought to the fore several new issues to be explored: How is it possible for pragmatism to be adopted and/or accommodated within very different cultural and intellectual contexts? Is there a place for pragmatist philosophy within contemporary Central and Eastern European culture? Is pragmatism somehow compatible with European cultural traditions and its contemporary culture, and if so, to what extent? How, if at all, could pragmatism enrich European culture? What new and valuable fea-
Can the new pragmatism bring to European cultures? Can any sort of pragmatism be developed in Central and Eastern Europe?

The present volume is a result of an effort to reflect on many of these issues. Under the title “Pragmatism and Values,” the First Central European Pragmatist Forum conference convened from 29 May to 1 June 2000, in the Hotel Academia of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Stará Lesná, Slovakia. The conference consisted of a group of 30 specialists in pragmatism and American philosophy, roughly half from the United States and half from Eastern Europe and elsewhere. We came together to discuss pragmatist philosophy, its value and contributions, its problems and shortcomings, and its potential place in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. The volume, which includes most of the papers from the CEPF conference, contains a wide range of perspectives and ideas, which taken together provide a picture of the multinational and multicultural dialogue that began within the framework of the Stará Lesná conference.

For the purposes of coherence and continuity we have organized the papers into three sections. Thematically, however, they may be organized differently. Some papers present a broad survey of pragmatism and its contemporary value (Margolis, Višňovský, Ryder); others address the neopragmatism or postanalytic pragmatism of Richard Rorty (Rockmore, Skinner, Rodriguez). The majority of the papers address either historical issues or figures in pragmatism and American philosophy, or they apply pragmatist concepts and methods to current theoretical and practical questions.

It is not surprising that most of the papers deal either with historical exploration or contemporary application, since both efforts are required as pragmatism looks to make its way in Central and Eastern Europe. It is necessary on the one hand to uncover pragmatism’s background and historical antecedents, both American and European. But perhaps more importantly, the value of pragmatism in contemporary circumstances in the United States, Central and Eastern Europe, or anywhere else, will depend on the work it can do. In light of that point, it is fully appropriate for both European and American specialists to apply pragmatism to culture, community, democracy, feminism, metaphor, racism, aesthetics, and the environment, all explored in these pages. These themes represent profound challenges for any society. If pragmatism can make itself useful in addressing them in their Central and Eastern European context, then it will have performed a valuable service indeed.

The CEPF was founded on two assumptions: that pragmatism and American philosophy in general are rich intellectual traditions that can be valuably put to work in Central and Eastern Europe, and that there is considerable value in American and European specialists having the opportunity to spend several days together to consider these questions together. A precursor meeting to the CEPF conference was held two years prior, in 1998, in Karpacz, Poland, organized by Beth Singer and Leszek Koczanowicz, which demonstrated the
truth of the second hypothesis. The opportunity for American and European specialists to spend time together was invaluable. The organization of the CEPF and its first conference in Stará Lesná in 2000 confirmed that judgment. The adequacy of the first assumption will be in the results of the work done, as represented by the papers in this volume. Most of the papers delivered at the conference are offered here, to advance the conversation between U.S. specialists in American philosophy and their counterparts abroad.

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