CHAPTER 2

The Self, Ideology, and Logic

F.C.S. Schiller’s Pragmatist Critique of and Alternative to Formal Logic

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1 Introduction

Classic philosophies have to be revised because they have to square themselves up with the many intellectual and social tendencies that have revealed themselves since those philosophies matured. The conquest of the sciences by the experimental method of inquiry; the injection of evolutionary ideas into the study of life and society; the application of the historic method to religions and morals as well as to institutions; the creation of the sciences of ‘origins’ and of the cultural development of mankind—how can such intellectual changes occur and leave philosophy what it was and where it was?

The eminent British historian Herbert Butterfield viewed the scientific revolution (from Copernicus to Darwin) and the historical revolution (perhaps best exemplified by Ranke) as the two decisive intellectual transformations that created modern Western consciousness. They instated two, at times competing and at times complementing, perspectives by which modern Western man sees, conceives, and constructs himself and the world in which he dwells.

Both revolutions shook and crumbled pre-modern conventions governing the

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4 For a relevant contemporary statement on how the sciences have become historical, see W.R. Sorley, “The Historical Method,” in *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, ed. Andrew Seth and R.B. Haldane (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883), 102–126, 102.
legitimacy and boundaries of thought, and in their stead erected new ones. Both revolutions, for example, demolished, by means of superior empirical methods, the dating of the world and the human species propagated by Christian churches and the Bible, and so undermined Christian claims to true knowledge of nature. The scientific revolution, furthermore, queried Christian assumptions about morality, while the historical revolution challenged the Enlightenment belief in the uniformity and unshakeable foundations of man’s mental and behavioral faculties, such as man’s rationality, consciousness, and historical progress.

In spite of crucial differences, both science and history characterized human life in an immanent frame, that is, by recourse to the earthly origins, changes, developments, and in immediate contexts of things and persons. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, such an immanent frame had substantially gained in purchase, which is readily observable in the higher education, literature, and politics of the time once we recognize that Darwinism, probability theory, statistics, historicism, idealism, pragmatism, and philology belong to the thicket of the two revolutions, as do nationalism and the industrial organization of society.6

Broadly speaking, there were two ways in which philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could adapt to these two revolutions. They could either join ranks with one, and go to intellectual war with the other, or they could combine the two in a single systematic scientific-historical-philosophical worldview. More often than not, historicism, positivism, and analytical philosophy became traditions aligned around the first type of response, while idealism and pragmatism followed the second trail: Dewey’s passage above attests to precisely this fact.7 This second type of response is also evident in some thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose thought resolutely refuses to sit easily in any disciplinary category or intellectual tradition, such as Nietzsche.8

The latter attitude (combining the two revolutions), however, was only possible during a time when the natural and human sciences were in principle

7 Cf. Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), especially 139–160.