

ИСТОРИЯ ФИЛОСОФИИ

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EMERSON AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF PRAGMATISM

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Beginning in the nineteenth century with the writings of Ch. S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, pragmatism later fell into eclipse during World War II with the influx of logical positivism. But W. V. O. Quine and Wilfrid Sellars attacked logical positivism at its foundations in analyticity and the simply given, and then pointed contemporary philosophy back to classical pragmatism, and so began the revival. Following Quine and Sellars, Rorty in his brilliant *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* stamped pragmatism back into contemporary philosophy, reestablishing James and Dewey as central figures. Today the movement of pragmatism is once again in full swing, with major pragmatist philosophers, like Richard Shusterman and Russell Goodman, engaging the tradition and reconstructing its background in Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalism, and the founders like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

Keywords: Franklin, Emerson, Transcendentalism, Peirce, Pragmatism, Rorty, Shusterman

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Reconstructing Pragmatism

Logical positivism began to collapse in the mid-twentieth century with W. V. O. Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (1951) and Wilfrid Sellars's *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956). While Quine and Sellars both directed philosophy back to pragmatism, a fuller revival would have to wait until Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), and the pragmatist writings of Hilary Putnam and Ruth Anna Putnam, recently collected as *Pragmatism as a Way of Life: The Lasting Legacy of William James and John Dewey* (2017).¹ From around the 1980s until the present, pragmatism has continued to draw philosophers, and to produce some of the major works of recent decades,

¹ See, for example, Putnam, H., Putnam, R. A. *Pragmatism as a Way of Life: The Lasting Legacy of William James and John Dewey*. Cambridge, 2017. For a helpful analysis of this book, see Cooke, E. F. "Critical Notice for *Pragmatism as a Way of Life*," *Analysis*, 2018, Vol. 78, Issue 4, pp. 754–766. I am grateful to Elizabeth Cooke for helpful discussion of the present essay, and in particular the pragmatism of the Putnams.

such as Robert Brandom's *Making It Explicit* (1994).² But even a cursory glance at the history of pragmatism, with its origins in nineteenth century Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the writings of Charles S. Peirce and William James, reveals a sharp contrast between pragmatism past and pragmatism present. Much contemporary pragmatism is typically narrower in scope, more linguistic and analytical, perhaps less contemplative or concerned with the logic of abduction (with some exceptions, of course), and certainly less open to teleological visions of the long run and process metaphysics.

Understanding this transition from past to present inevitably requires reconstruction of the tradition, and perhaps even reconstruction of the background of the tradition. For just as contemporary pragmatists, like Sellars, Rorty, Brandom, and the Putnams, all reach back into the tradition to recover the insights of classical pragmatism, increasingly contemporary pragmatists reach even farther back into the tradition to recover the insights of the transcendentalists, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson, and sometimes even farther back than that, to the founders of America, especially Benjamin Franklin. Rorty himself, for example, in an essay on "Professionalized Philosophy and Transcendentalist Culture," in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), finds Emerson and George Santayana already writing philosophy in a new and more literary and imaginative way, refusing the genre boundaries of philosophy, literature, literary criticism, cultural critique, and history, a kind of writing which would shape Rorty's own very literary and elegant style.³ Later in "Pragmatism and Romanticism," in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (2007), Rorty finds in Emerson's essay "Circles" (*Essays: First Series*) the poetic outlines of a romantic philosophy of ongoing cultural creation, which is then taken up by William James and John Dewey. As Emerson finds each new great poet or philosopher to survey the perimeter of his or her culture, and then draw a new "circle" around the last, Rorty follows suit: "Every human achievement is simply a launching pad for a greater achievement."⁴ Cornel West in *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* similarly reconstructs American pragmatism beginning with Emerson's romantic transcendentalism.⁵ Richard Shusterman in "Emerson's Pragmatist Aesthetics"⁶ likewise finds Emerson to be a pragmatist before pragmatism, and Russell Goodman in *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition* claims Emerson as the Atlantic bridge along which European Romanticism passed and became American pragmatism: "Emerson is a direct link between American philosophy and European Romanticism."⁷ Goodman also carries this reconstruction deeper into the past, for example, in *American Philosophy before Pragmatism*, with chapters on "Benjamin Franklin" and "Thomas Jefferson."⁸

² Brandom, R. *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment*. Cambridge, 1998, pp. 285–298.

³ Rorty, R. *Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis, 1982, p. 66.

⁴ Rorty, R. *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*. Cambridge, 2007, p. 109.

⁵ West, C. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison, 1989, pp. 9–41.

⁶ Shusterman, R. "Emerson's Pragmatist Aesthetics," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 1999, Vol. 53, No. 207(1), pp. 87–99.

⁷ Goodman, R. *American Philosophy and the Romantic Tradition*. Cambridge, 1990, p. 34.

⁸ Goodman, R. *American Philosophy before Pragmatism*. New York, 2015, p. 48.

The following discussion attempts another brief reconstruction of this same tradition, from Franklin to Emerson to pragmatism and Santayana, to logical positivism (and its eclipse of pragmatism), to pragmatism's revival, and then, within that revival, pragmatism's attempt to understand itself in relation to its tradition, and the background of this tradition, and ultimately its future.

Before Pragmatism

Franklin was a prosperous printer and the publisher of *Poor Richard's Almanack*, an Enlightenment philosopher and inventor who defined "man" philosophically as "A tool-making animal,"⁹ and the scientist who discovered positive and negative charge in electricity with his famous kite in the lightning storm experiment. In his own lifetime and still today Franklin seems to be the quintessential man of the world, a scholar, a statesman, and an ambassador, a rugged intellectual dressed in the American wilderness, with his marten fur hat, who spoke French in France and would seem to the French a wonderful philosophical tapestry of oppositions elegantly poised to address King Louis XVI. A friend of the French philosopher Voltaire, and the Scottish philosopher David Hume, at home Franklin founded the American Philosophical Society, as he records in his *Autobiography*,¹⁰ whose members counted George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Paine, the very architects of the country.

Hume in a letter from Edinburgh, dated 10 May 1762, wrote to his friend Franklin requesting him to stay in Europe, rather than return to America, despite enviable designs on constructing a new country.

I am very sorry, that you intend soon to leave our Hemisphere. America has sent us many good things, Gold, Silver, Sugar, Tobacco, Indigo &c.: But you are the first Philosopher, and indeed the first Great Man of Letters for whom we are beholden to her: it is our own Fault, that we have not kept him.¹¹

Rightly identifying America's first great philosopher, Hume must have known only too well that Franklin could not remain in Europe, anymore than Plato himself in such a position, while faced with the philosophical and political prospect of creating a new republic in the wilderness, the dream of philosophers since the beginning. Plato drew his own ideal city in the *Republic*, but never lived to see it built, and yet this very dream at last began to materialize, in a new historically shaped form, with the *Declaration of Independence*.

The *Declaration of Independence* (July 4, 1776) begins self-consciously in history, in opposition to the past: "When in the course of human events." But the *Declaration of Independence* proceeds like a philosophical treatise of British empiricism: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." Franklin added the philosophical terminology of "self-evident," using John Locke's language of "self-evident" in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.¹² The Committee of Five, i.e., Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jeffer-

⁹ Benjamin Franklin, as quoted by Samuel Johnson, in Boswell J. *The Life of Samuel Johnson*, LL.D. London, 1900, p. 425.

¹⁰ Franklin, B. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. New York, 1907, p. 189.

¹¹ Hume, D. *New Letters of David Hume*. New York, 2011, p. 67.

¹² See Goodman, R. *American Philosophy before Pragmatism*, p. 80.

son, John Adams, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman, drafted and submitted the *Declaration of Independence* to Congress on July 2, 1776, almost a year after the beginning of the American Revolutionary War, also known as the American War of Independence (1775–1883). America was made in war.

The Revolutionary War broke out on the morning of April 19, 1775 by Old North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts, not far from the house of a little boy named William Emerson. There from “The Old Manse” young William could see the Old North Bridge, and heard the first shot ring that started it all. That boy grew up to become the Reverend Emerson, and the father of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who would later immortalize the battle with his 1837 poem “Concord Hymn” (“Sung at the Completion of the Battle Monument, July 4, 1837”). The poem begins,

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

By the “rude” Old North Bridge American farmer soldiers fought and won and unrolled their flag in “Spirit, that made those heroes dare / To die, and leave their children free.”¹³ Of that first shot not name nor side is known, but like the musket-fired ball heard round the world, so too would words be heard by all: that all men and all women are created equal, that we hold this truth to be self-evident as any *a priori* analytic claim made upon Hume’s fork of reason.

Born in 1803, the second of five children of Ruth Haskins and William Emerson, the preternaturally intellectually gifted “Waldo” grew up to rival Franklin as America’s greatest philosopher. Emerson himself greatly admired Franklin, and in “Self-Reliance” even set Franklin and Washington in the class of Shakespeare and Newton: “Where is the master who could have taught Shakespeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is unique.”¹⁴ Such noble respect mingles with manly rivalry best perhaps in Emerson’s 1837 oration “The American Scholar,” which reads like a second *Declaration of Independence*, as if the Sage of Concord, by some strange metaphysical twist of time, had been wrongly left out of the Committee of Five, and would now, as a Committee of One, draft and deliver his own *Declaration* right to the center of the American mind. As Emerson declares in “The American Scholar,” “Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close.”¹⁵ If the *Declaration of Independence* of 1776 established America’s political independence from Britain, Emerson’s own intellectual declaration of 1837 would establish America’s philosophical independence of Europe as a whole. No longer would America obey Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Hume, no longer would the settlers worship at the altars of Homer and Virgil and Shakespeare, but at last create their own, beginning with Emerson himself in “The American Scholar,” America’s first statesman of mind. As Oliver Wendell Holmes in *Ralph Waldo Emerson* wrote rightly of Emerson’s address, “This grand Oration was our intellectual Declaration of Independence.”¹⁶

¹³ Emerson, R. W. *Poems*, Vol. IX of Emerson, R. W. *The Collected Works*, 11 Vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971–2013, p. 307. Emerson’s *Collected Works* hereafter will be referenced as “CW” followed by volume and page number.

¹⁴ Emerson, R. W. “Self-Reliance,” *CW*, Vol. II, p. 47.

¹⁵ Emerson, R. W. “The American Scholar,” *CW*, Vol. I, p. 52.

¹⁶ Holmes, O. W. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Boston, 1884, p. 115.

Of course, not everything would be new. The very language of English, in which the essay was written, was already long inherited, a language carrying the whole tradition, including its philosophy. But that philosophy would be resynthesized, reconstructed, and remade, to speak for a new country's mind, in the voice of one very powerful American scholar. This American scholar, who was none other than Emerson himself, accepted a grand responsibility, for it was nothing short of a transcendentalist's synthetic unification of the fragmentary manifold of all the men and women, all their thoughts and practices, as a new whole. Like objects in the manifold in the receptive sensibility, in Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Emerson found his people spread across the land, in fragments transformed by utilitarian crafts and industry. America seemed then to Emerson a country-sized version of Hume's "bundle" theory of self, all impressions and instruments, all requiring the cultural analogue of Kant's unity of apperception. That unity would require new philosophical poetry, and new poetic philosophy, by a new philosopher poet of the first order; indeed, it would require Emerson himself.

But the task like the land was vast, colossal. As Emerson himself would write in "The American Scholar," the synthesis of the manifold of the country required the simultaneous reassembly and creation of a giant whose faculties and limbs and organs had been dismantled and spread across the land, knowing little or nothing of their disunity. The men and women of America appeared to Emerson these very limbs and organs and faculties, and only a superior mind could put hands and feet and trunk together again. "The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk," writes Emerson, "and strut about so many walking monsters, – a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man."¹⁷ Only a new genius with new philosophy and poetry could reunify and reanimate the giant of America, a new genius who would, in the final act of synthesis, take his rightful place behind the eyes of the giant, as the "intellect" and "perception" of the American giant, and speak on equal terms to the giants of the past, to Shakespeare as intellect of England, to Plato as intellect of Greece, and speak to them as a king among kings. As Emerson writes in "The American Scholar," "They are the kings of the world who give the color of their present thought to all nature and all art."¹⁸ If the *Declaration of Independence* rejected all kings, Emerson in his new declaration of independence declared all nations monarchies ruled by their highest intellects, the great scholars and poets, and himself a king in a land without a king.

The Early Pragmatists

The first pragmatists claimed hardly less of Emerson whose own lengthened shadow cast long over the Cambridge of their youth. Peirce in his "Study of Great Men" (1883–1884) would name Emerson as one of the "300 Great Men" of history,¹⁹ and identify pragmatism with Emerson's most famous poem, "The Sphinx." James in his "Address at the Centenary of Ralph Waldo Emerson, May 25, 1903" would likewise remember Emerson as "an ideal wraith" impressing his

¹⁷ Emerson, R. W. "The American Scholar," *CW*, Vol. I, p. 53.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁹ Peirce, Ch. S. *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, Vol. 5. Bloomington, 1993, pp. 32–33.

mind permanently into the mind of America and the English language itself.²⁰ John Dewey in his essay on “Emerson – The Philosopher of Democracy” would similarly claim Emerson as “the one citizen of the New World fit to have his name uttered in the same breath with that of Plato.”²¹ Emerson’s inspiration and influence on pragmatism can hardly be denied, even if the extent of that influence remains in question, following Stanley Cavell in his essay “What’s the Use of Calling Emerson a Pragmatist?”²²

In any case, Peirce as a young man fed on a fairly steady diet of transcendentalism, and while perhaps more Kant than Emerson, Emerson was never far from view, so that both transcendentalists would mingle in one new and gifted Cambridge mind. Like Kant, Peirce was a scientist and logician establishing the categories of the mind and experience, but, like Emerson, Peirce was an adventurer and naturalist exploring the wilderness of the new world. These two dimensions of transcendentalism merged intensely in Peirce, who while eighteen and surveying the wilds of Louisiana first learned of Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Almost immediately Peirce began constructing a new evolutionary philosophy in which the human mind itself evolved, through inquiry, from out of the past, and ultimately toward truth and knowledge in the long run.

Within this evolutionary pragmatist philosophy, Peirce maintained, with the Emerson of “The Over-Soul,” and the Kant of “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (Proposition 2), and G. W. F. Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a view of humanity as possessing one collective mind, and conceived this mind, drawing partly on Emerson’s *Nature* and “The Sphinx,” as an incessant streaming Heraclitean flow of signs. Emerson in “The Sphinx” called the universal mind (or language) “the universal dame,” and claimed her to see even through the eyes of the poet attempting to answer her riddle. Peirce loved the poem, and in “What is Sign?” quotes the Sphinx speaking of her semiotic mind seeing through all individual minds: “The symbol may, with Emerson’s sphinx, say to man, ‘Of thine eye I am eyebeam.’”²³ Like Emerson, Peirce reversed the ordinary way of thinking, conceiving the individual as not wholly the author of her thoughts, but a powerful conduit of the signs of nature and the signs which make up the language of the past, a conduit synthesizing these signs in new thoughts, new experiences. As Peirce writes in his early essay, “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” “just as we say that a body is in motion, and not that motion is in a body we ought to say that we are in thought, and not that thoughts are in us.”²⁴ For Peirce, as for Emerson, we are in the Sphinx, and the Sphinx is in us, and she sees and thinks through our eyes, almost as if each individual were a kind of lens, more or less clouded by error and confusion about who exactly is doing the seeing.

In the same essay, “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” Peirce quotes Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* (II.2.117–20) on “man, proud man, / Drest in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what’s most assured, / His glassy

²⁰ James, W. *Writings 1902–1910*. New York, 1987, p. 1125.

²¹ Dewey, J. “Emerson – The Philosopher of Democracy,” *International Journal of Ethics*, 1903, Vol. 13, No. 4, p. 408.

²² Cavell, S. *Emerson’s Transcendental Etudes*. Stanford, 2003, p. 215.

²³ Peirce, Ch. S. “What is a Sign?” *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 2. Bloomington, 1998, p. 10.

²⁴ Peirce, Ch. S. “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 1. Bloomington, 1992, p. 42.

essence,”²⁵ a passage also noted in Emerson’s *Topical Notebooks*.²⁶ Peirce returns to this image of man’s “glassy essence” in an essay entitled “Man’s Glassy Essence,” in the *Monist* series (1891–1893), much to the same effect. In fact, the entire *Monist* series is infused with the spirit of Emerson’s philosophy, as Peirce himself acknowledges in “The Law of Mind” (also in the *Monist* series), even if with searing irony, as Joseph Brent notes in *Peirce: A Life*: “Despite his often expressed opposition to transcendentalism, Peirce, with heavy irony, did proclaim, when he was fifty-two, its profound influence on him.”²⁷

Rorty in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* also highlights this image of “man’s glassy essence,” but finds this metaphor to indicate precisely what is deeply wrong with Peirce’s version of pragmatism. Rorty even subtitles Part I of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* “Our Glassy Essence,” in opposition to Peirce.

Our Glassy Essence was not a philosophical doctrine, but a picture which literate men found presupposed by every page they read. It is glassy – mirror-like – for two reasons. First, it takes on new forms without being changed – but intellectual forms, rather than sensible ones as material mirrors do. Second, mirrors are made of a substance which is purer, finer grained, more subtle, and more delicate than most.²⁸

According to Rorty, for all of Peirce’s evolutionary and semiotic thinking, he remained hopelessly trapped in modern philosophy’s enchantment with an image of the mind as “mirror of nature,” pure and detached from history, beholding all within its “glassy essence.” Later in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty reiterates this critique: “Peirce himself remained the most Kantian of thinkers – the most convinced that philosophy gave us an all-embracing ahistorical context in which every other species of discourse could be assigned its proper place and rank.”²⁹ According to Rorty, Peirce could not break free of the philosopher’s fantasy of a grand system of all things, lorded over by the kingly philosophers themselves, godlike spectators of nature, even if they happened to construct their experience; indeed, especially if they happened to construct their experience.

But James and Dewey knew better, writes Rorty, for they conceived the human mind as itself an evolutionary contingency, an adaptation, with its own tools of adaption for transforming the environment, and ultimately itself. James in *Pragmatism* sets before the eyes this very vision of the human creature as intrinsically creative and constructive: “The really vital question for us all is, What is this world going to be? What is life eventually to make of itself?” But once this new question replaces the old questions of modern epistemology about whether and how the mind can know the world, then philosophy must change as a whole. As James writes in *Pragmatism*, “The centre of gravity of philosophy must therefore alter its place.”³⁰ After Darwin, human beings appear as evolving, adapting, instrumental creatures, social and cultural inventors, creators and artists, far more than ontological photographers or metaphysical archeologists of what lies beneath in being. The world is not so much there to behold by a spectator or mirror, as it is there in the hands of a sublimely gifted and artistic species. As James

²⁵ Peirce, Ch. S. “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,” *The Essential Peirce*, Vol. 1. Bloomington, 1992, p. 55.

²⁶ Emerson, R. W. *The Topical Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. II. Columbia, 1993, p. 192.

²⁷ Brent, J. *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*. Bloomington, 1998, p. 46.

²⁸ Rorty, R. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, 1979, pp. 42–43.

²⁹ Rorty, R. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 161.

³⁰ James, W. *Pragmatism*. Indianapolis, 1981, p. 57.

writes in *Pragmatism*, “In our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We *add*, both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality. The world stands really malleable, waiting to receive its final touches at our hands.”³¹ Here lies the origins of pragmatism, according to Rorty, not in Peirce’s misguided vision of “man’s glassy essence,” but in James’s vision of a “really malleable world,” in a vision of man and woman as artisans of language, remaking all anew. Of course, Peirce named pragmatism, but as Rorty reconstructs the tradition, that was really all Peirce ended up doing. As Rorty writes of Peirce, “His contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James.”³²

James, in turn, inspired Dewey who equally saw in Darwin a new fulcrum of philosophy. As Dewey writes in “The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy,” “The influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life for the principle of transition, and thereby freed the new logic for applications to mind and morals and life.”³³ With Darwin, Heraclitean flux replaced Parmenidean permanency, and the tools of ontological transformation were set neatly in the hands of humanity. Christening this shift in metaphor, Dewey dismissed once and for all “the spectator theory of knowledge,” in *The Quest for Certainty*,³⁴ and recast the mind as “the tool of tools,” in *Experience and Nature*,³⁵ essentially the same opposition of metaphors at the center of Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*: modern mirrors and pragmatist tools. But if Rorty admired Dewey’s overcoming of Peirce’s Kantian transcendentalism, with the “tool of tools,” Dewey drew his favored metaphor (which Rorty then adopted) from Emerson’s transcendentalist “Works and Days” (*Society and Solitude*):

Our nineteenth century is the age of tools. They grow out of our structure. ‘Man is the metre of all things,’ said Aristotle; ‘the hand is the instrument of instruments, and the mind is the form of forms.’ The human body is the magazine of inventions, the patent-office, where are the models from which every hint was taken. All the tools and engines on earth are only extensions of its limbs and senses. One definition of man is ‘an intelligence served by organs.’³⁶

Here Emerson synthesizes Aristotle’s “tool of tools” from the *De Anima* (*DA*) III.8³⁷ with Protagoras’s relativism, found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* X.1.³⁸ Emerson in “Works and Days” then goes on to claim, “One definition of man is ‘an intelligence served by organs.’” Emerson does not say which philosopher he’s quoting in this passage, but everything before it suggests Aristotle; and something very close to this line appears in *DA* I.4 where Aristotle describes human beings as organs, like glassy eyeballs connected to a vast mind, a passage Emerson also quotes in “The Sphinx,”³⁹ and which reappears in *Nature* as the famous image of the “transparent eyeball:” “Standing on the bare ground, – my

³¹ James, W. *Pragmatism*. Indianapolis, 1981, p. 115.

³² Rorty, R. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 161.

³³ Dewey, J. “The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy,” in: J. Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*. New York, 1997, p. 8.

³⁴ Dewey, J. *The Later Works*, Vol. 4: *The Quest for Certainty*. Carbondale, 1988, p. 19. See also Rorty, R. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 9.

³⁵ Dewey, J. *The Later Works*, Vol. 1: *Experience and Nature*. Carbondale, 1988, pp. 189–190.

³⁶ Emerson, R. W. “Works and Days,” *CW*, Vol. VII, p. 79.

³⁷ Aristotle. *De Anima* III, 8, 432a 1.

³⁸ Aristotle. *Met.* 1053a35–1053b3.

³⁹ Aristotle. *De Anima* I, 4, 408b 18–30. Cf. also Emerson’s line in “The Sphinx,” “if thou couldst see thy proper eye,” and Aristotle’s line in *De Anima* I, 4, “could recover the proper kind of eye.”

head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, – all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all.”⁴⁰ As the “universal dame” sees through the man as a transparent eyeball, all his mean egotism vanishes, and he becomes her organ, an instrument of instruments, effectively her hand to write her poetry and philosophy for the age.

Despite this early rejection of egotism in *Nature*, Santayana in “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy” claims Emerson’s Kantian transcendental “method” to be grounded in “egotism.” According to Santayana, for Emerson, the poet listens to the inner “demon” of his “inmost self,” and then constructs an elaborate literary dream, which he then imposes on the manifold world (as if it were true), knowing only too well that new poets will come to replace the dream with their own no less brilliant dreams. This philosophical and poetic “egotism,” writes Santayana, is the essence of Emerson’s transcendentalism: “Transcendentalism is a systematic subjectivism,”⁴¹ which, in turn, is “romanticism” in philosophical form. But again, Emerson openly rejects “egotism” in *Nature*, and in its place sets the universal mind, or “over-soul.” But Santayana never could make sense of the over-soul, and in a critical essay entitled “Emerson,” Santayana asks, “Did he know what he meant by Spirit or the ‘Over-Soul’?”⁴² If the over-soul was the central idea in Emerson’s philosophy, and the over-soul was incomprehensible, then apparently, according to Santayana, Emerson had little or no philosophy at all: “At bottom he had no doctrine at all.”⁴³

By contrast, Peirce in his “Study of Great Men” identified Emerson’s “over-soul” as his “greatest conception.”⁴⁴ Of course, great philosophers may disagree about what is great and what is not in one another’s works, but Santayana’s rejection of the “over-soul” as incomprehensible is mysterious because Santayana appears to hold much the same view with his theory of “the mind of Europe” in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*.⁴⁵ Emerson himself uses this very language of “the mind of Europe” in “The Age of Fable,”⁴⁶ and the “mind of Europe and America” in “The Tendencies and Duties of Men of Thought,”⁴⁷ and the “European mind” in “Plato, or the Philosopher.”⁴⁸ Following Santayana, and apparently following Emerson as well, T. S. Eliot uses the same language of “the mind of Europe” in “Tradition and Individual Talent,” even identifying this “mind of Europe” with Aristotle’s theory of the universal mind (*nous*) in *DA* I.4, despite Eliot’s well-known opposition to Emerson.

But Santayana’s “Emerson” is subtle and complicated, and ends in words recalling Dewey’s declaration of “the one citizen of the New World fit to have his name uttered in the same breath with that of Plato.” “If not a star of the first magnitude,” writes Santayana of Emerson, “he is certainly a fixed star in the firmament of philosophy.”⁴⁹ So, on the one hand, according to Santayana,

⁴⁰ Emerson, R. W. *Nature*, *CW*, Vol. I, p. 10.

⁴¹ Santayana, R. “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” in: R. Santayana, *The Genteel Tradition*. Lincoln, 1998, p. 45.

⁴² Santayana, G. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. Cambridge, 1989, p. 131.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Peirce, Ch. S. *Study of Great Men*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ Santayana, G. *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. New York, 1955, p. 53.

⁴⁶ Emerson, R. W. *The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 1. Cambridge, 1959, p. 255.

⁴⁷ Emerson, R. W. *The Later Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol. 2. Athens, 2001, p. 188.

⁴⁸ Emerson, R. W. “Plato, or the Philosopher,” *CW*, Vol. IV, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Santayana, G. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, p. 132.

“Emerson had no system,”⁵⁰ and “no doctrine at all,” while, on the other hand, Santayana finds Emerson “a young god making experiments in creation,”⁵¹ and a “fixed star in the firmament of philosophy.” The tension could hardly be greater, and Santayana masterfully draws the reader into its fold, to explore in philosophical dialogue the subtle intricacies of a relationship far too little explored, at least not after Dewey in “Emerson.” The reason the dialogue withered, of course, was the war; that, and the consequent influx of logical positivism, so proud of its logic and “drest in a little brief authority,” most ignorant of its mirror image in history.

Analytic Philosophy and the Revival of Pragmatism

Europe exported logical positivism to America, and there with its little brief authority threw pragmatism into shadow. With hindsight, logical positivism appears little more than a mathematical variation on Hume’s own empiricism, only without all the style and art and historical self-understanding, and yet still containing so many of the problems Kant revealed. Famously Santayana writes in *The Life of Reason*, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” and if the logical empiricists had failed to remember their own philosophical past, then a new generation of analytic pragmatists would condemn them for repeating it. Quine in “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” and Sellars in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, like knights in revolt, attacked and felled the analytic castle from within its very walls. Quine dismantled the analytic/synthetic distinction that held since Hume, and pointed the way back to pragmatism,⁵² while Sellars in his “incipient *Meditations Hegeliennes*,”⁵³ attacked the “simply given,” and signaled his own return to pragmatism in *Science, Perception, and Reality*, “pragmatism, with its stress on language (or the conceptual) as an instrument.”⁵⁴ As Rorty writes in his Introduction to Sellars’ *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, “The fundamental thought which runs through this essay [*Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*] is Kant’s: ‘intuitions without concepts are blind.’”⁵⁵ As Kant opposed Hume’s blind empiricism, Sellars charged positivism as equally blind, and Rorty, following Sellars and Quine, completed the return to pragmatism.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* Rorty masterfully applies Thomas Kuhn’s philosophical theory of scientific paradigm shifts, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, to the history of philosophy. According to Kuhn, science alternates historically between two phases: normal science and revolutionary science. In normal science, scientists reinforce a paradigm of scientific thought by filling in that paradigm with data, and generating supportive experiments, wherever needed, and smoothing over any anomalies. But over time, despite the normal scientist’s best efforts, anomalies accumulate, and eventually the paradigm weakens, until, at last, a revolutionary scientist, like a Galileo or a Darwin, focusing on all

⁵⁰ Santayana, G. “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” p. 49.

⁵¹ Santayana, G. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, p. 132.

⁵² Quine, W. V. O. “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” *Quintessence: Basic Readings from the Philosophy of W. V. Quine*. Cambridge, 2004, p. 53.

⁵³ Sellars, W. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, 1997, p. 45.

⁵⁴ Sellars, W. *Science, Perception, and Reality*. Atascadero, CA, 1991, p. 340.

⁵⁵ Rorty, R. “Introduction,” in: W. Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 3.

the anomalies, and finding the old paradigm wanting, simply discards the old paradigm, and signals a scientific revolution. Out with the old paradigm, and in with the new, normal science gets to work again in filling in the new paradigm with evidence and experiment, always smoothing over any apparent anomalies, and so on without end.

Rorty describes the history of philosophy in exactly these terms, highlighting especially modern philosophy (but really the whole tradition) as enchanted by the “spectator theory of knowledge,” which, by the time of the pragmatists, had already accumulated so many anomalies, like those identified by Quine and Sellars. According to Rorty, James and Dewey are the revolutionary philosophers who bravely discard the old paradigm and establish the next paradigm of pragmatism, and while for a brief time the old paradigm reappeared in the middle of the twentieth century, the function of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* was precisely to solidify the new paradigm created by James. Since 1979 the pragmatist revival has been more or less in full swing, with generations of philosophers, inspired by Rorty, continuing to engage the great writers of classical American philosophy, e.g., Peirce, James, and Dewey, but also Santayana, Emerson, Franklin, Jefferson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller, often exploring the same central metaphors of the tradition as deeply informative of the dialogue, e.g., the transparent eyeball, the Sphinx, man’s glassy essence, the mirror of nature, the stream of consciousness, and the tool of tools.

One of the most interesting philosophers to have emerged within this revival is Richard Shusterman, who, like Rorty, has sought to recover the insights of the tradition, from Emerson and the classical pragmatists alike, with a sharp focus on the imagery permeating the tradition, in a project aimed at reviving, within pragmatism, the centrality of human embodiment, something already essential to Dewey’s philosophy, and Emerson’s too, but, like so other many things, was lost for a time. Opening his essay “Somaesthetics and the Body/Media Issue” with Emerson’s “Works and Days,” Shusterman identifies the body as the tool behind all tools: “The human body is the magazine of inventions. . . . All the tools and engines on earth are only extensions of its limbs and senses.”⁵⁶ Shusterman finds in Emerson’s Aristotelian study of the “tool of tools” a rich philosophy of embodiment, very similar to Dewey’s study of the body/mind as the “tool of tools,” without which neither culture, art, nor philosophy can even be written. In *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* Shusterman writes:

We humanist intellectuals generally take the body for granted because we are so passionately interested in the life of the mind and the creative arts that express our human spirit. But the body is not only an essential dimension of our humanity, it is also the basic instrument of all human performance, our tool of tools, a necessity for all our perception, action, and even thought. Just as skilled builders need expert knowledge of their tools, so we need better somatic knowledge to improve our understanding and performance in the arts and human sciences, and to advance our mastery in the highest art of all – that of perfecting our humanity and living better lives.⁵⁷

As a sculptor studies and improves his hammer and chisel and rasp, the better to master the stone he works, the human creature does well to study and improve the body/mind as the tool of tools, the better to master thought and experi-

⁵⁶ Shusterman, R. *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*. Ithaca, 2000, p. 137.

⁵⁷ Shusterman, R. *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*. Cambridge, 2012, p. 26.

ence and culture arising from his tools. Understanding this “tool of tools” can only improve the works of art and culture, while understanding the arts and culture may reveal new ways of understanding and improving the “tool of tools.” But ultimately this improvement of humanity, the setting to work of the tool of tools upon its very form, is the highest art of civilization, and Shusterman’s Emersonian and pragmatistic somaesthetics aims precisely at this perfection.

Conclusion

Rorty in *Consequences of Pragmatism* recognizes the difficulty of clearly defining pragmatism:

‘Pragmatism’ is a vague, ambiguous, and overworked word. Nevertheless, it names the chief glory of our country’s intellectual tradition. No other American writers have offered so radical a suggestion for making our future different from our past, as have James and Dewey.⁵⁸

Almost half a century later, “pragmatism” continues to be a “vague” and “ambiguous” word, for the question “What is pragmatism?” remains as central to the tradition of pragmatism as the question “What is philosophy?” is to the tradition of philosophy, in general. But perhaps the vagueness and ambiguity of “pragmatism,” and its continued search for itself, are no more detrimental to pragmatism than philosophy’s own history-long struggle for self-definition has been detrimental to its survival. Since the time of Peirce and James, and their own debate over the meaning of “pragmatism,” pragmatists like Rorty and Shusterman and others continue to explore the diversity and complexity of an incredibly rich and evolving tradition of thought. In the years to come, hopefully no clear definition or final reconstruction of that tradition will appear, and pragmatists in America and throughout the world will “keep the conversation going,” in Rorty’s terms, within an ever-expanding community of inquiry, in Peirce’s terms. For what began in America with Franklin, and transformed into Emerson’s transcendentalism, to become the pragmatism of Peirce, James, and Dewey, and the Emersonian pragmatisms of Rorty, Shusterman, and Goodman, was never really meant to remain in America, but, like a dynamic living creature, to venture out and explore the terrain of culture and history, the countries of the world, to know itself anew in new lands, and go on changing.

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⁵⁸ Rorty, R. *Consequences of Pragmatism*, p. 160.

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Эмерсон и реконструкция прагматизма

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Философия прагматизма, возникшая в XIX веке и развивавшаяся в трудах Ч.С. Пирса, У. Джемса и Дж. Дьюи, была предана забвению во времена Второй мировой войны, потесненная логическим позитивизмом. Возрождение прагматизма связывается с работами У. Куайна и У. Селларса, подвергших критике аналитические основания логического позитивизма и выработавших для современной философии новое направление, основанное на идеях классического прагматизма. Идеи Куайна и Селларса получили развитие в философии Р. Рорти, автора блистательной книги «Философия и зеркало природы», реабилитировавшей прагматизм в сфере современной философии и восстановившей Джемса и Дьюи в качестве его главных представителей. Сегодня прагматизм вновь переживает эпоху расцвета, ознаменованную работами таких мыслителей, как Ричард Шустерман и Рассел Гудмен. Нынешняя прагматистская философия не только опирается на уже известную традицию, но и восстанавливает свои истоки в трансцендентализме Р.У. Эмерсона, а также в наследии Бенжамин Франклина и Томаса Джефферсона.

Ключевые слова: Франклин, Эмерсон, трансцендентализм, Пирс, прагматизм, Рорти, Шустерман

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