

EMERSON'S PRAGMATIC CALL FOR CRITICAL CONSCIENCE: DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS, COGNITION, AND HUMAN NATURE

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Ralph Waldo Emerson, William James and John Dewey, in various keys, develop a philosophy of pragmatic naturalism that articulates the continuity and inter-animation between human experience and nature. By the time Darwin published *Origin of the Species* in 1855, Emerson's work as a natural philosopher had already led him to a general understanding of the evolutionary continuity between simple and complex forms of life: "the fossil strata show us that Nature began with rudimentary forms, and rose to the more complex, as fast as the earth was fit for their dwelling place; and that the lower perish, as the higher appear" (1983, p. 1033; also pp. 175-176; 668-669; 945). James and Dewey both started their work by focusing on psychology and evolution—exploring the ways that mental activity is connected to our physical nervous system. They argued that the brain is continuous with the body as part of their critique of the traditional philosophical dualism between body and soul. Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald note, "Emerson foreshadows not only the pragmatism of Peirce, James and Dewey, and others, but the studies of cognition and literacy that have influenced composition studies so profoundly in the last thirty years" (1998, p. 56).¹

Joan Richardson places pragmatism's studies of cognition in a Darwinian context: "the signal, if implicit, motive of pragmatism is the realization of thinking as a life form, subject to the same processes of growth and change as all other life forms" (p. 1). Human cognition is located in our animal nature; our minds are embodied (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, pp. 16-44; Unger, 2007, pp. 136-137; Herrnstein Smith, 1997, pp. 46-47). As Richardson notes, "James learned from Darwin and from Emerson to consider not only language but thinking, too, as a life form constantly undergoing adaptation and mutation" (p. 8). For Emerson, the brain is continually expressing these adaptations and transformations. Some, like Descartes, claim our minds are eternal "souls" and our brains are merely mechanical (Doidge, 2007, pp. 213). Others such as

Emerson and the classical pragmatists claim that “because the history of nature is characterized in” the brain (1983, p. 548; also see Pierce, 1955, p. 359) our mind/soul must be understood in terms of natural science: the evolutionary and cognitive patterns of instincts, habits, beliefs, affects, attention, moods, classifications, and imaginations constitute various historically sedimented and yet evolving cognitive abilities.

For Emerson and the classical pragmatists, persuasion must understand, explore, and use cognitive patterns to effectively alter others’ beliefs. In order to understand the materiality of persuasion, Emerson identifies two patterns in the human mind—two evolutionary forces or instincts, one centripetal and the other centrifugal. They form our double consciousness, one private and one public, which are locked into an “irreconcilable antagonism” (Emerson, 1983, p. 174). The inter-animation of these “two poles of nature” (Emerson, 1983, p. 173) provides “a certain self-regulated motion, or change” (Emerson, 1983, p. 457). The human conscience is constituted in the space between the centripetal and centrifugal forces that inter-animate one’s double consciousness of private and public mind. The two evolved cognitive tendencies are survival instincts: self-protection, a conservative, centripetal force;² and self-projection, an expansive, innovative, centrifugal force.³ The call to conscience emerges and sways between the two poles of nature, between the two instincts, where a social and individual psychology emerges with the same biological and cultural plasticity and ameliorative properties as the rest of nature.⁴

Emerson articulates the two primary forces of nature’s self-regulation—self-protection and self-projection—which occur in the human brain as two contrary instincts more persistently and clearly than the other classical pragmatists. “No [hu]man” Emerson states, “can continue to exist in whom both of these elements do not work” (1983, p. 176). However, he admits, to establish a “harmony of the centrifugal and centripetal forces” (1983, pp. 174; 549; 628) would make “an impossible whole.” In *The Conservative*, Emerson identifies this “primal antagonism” as “the two parties that divide the state, the party of Conservatism and that of Innovation” (1983, p. 173). Human politics, throughout civic history, demonstrates how we strive to hold society together in “an impossible whole” (Emerson, 1983, p. 175). Self-protection is the centripetal force that conserves tradition, “the actual state of things” (Emerson, 1983, p. 174) and the individual’s everyday public understanding of one’s world. In the self-protecting mode, one’s discourse and understanding is embodied, limited, partial; while it does have some truth value, it also has false values; but it remains useful because in this mode of being-in-the-world, we are conditioned to operate in the known limits of the state of things (Emerson, 1983, p. 176-177). This “existing world is not a dream . . . but it is the ground on which [we] stand, it is

the mother of whom [we] are born" (Emerson, 1983, p. 177). We are thrown into the existing world and it provides a conditioned ground for us to thrive. As Emerson states: "we are encamped in nature, not domesticated" (1983, p. 552).

Self-projection is the centrifugal force that pushes us from our center, our grounding in endoxa (everyday public knowledge), opening an individual's understanding to different understandings of one's world. In the self-projecting mode, one's discourse and understanding is incarnate, expansive, and ecstatic; its force pushes us up from the ground of the actual so that the private mind emerges from self-protective modes of thinking imposed on it by public embodied discourse to imagine new possibilities for being-in-the-world. Neither feature of double consciousness, the private or the public, is otherworldly; rather, they exist in a transitive network down to the molecular level: "All things are in contact; every atom has a sphere of repulsion" (Emerson, 1983, p. 585). The sphere of attraction and repulsion, of closing one's self off from possible threats to one's being and opening one's self up to new possibilities for being, is at the heart of the undomesticated antagonism.

Self-protection is the centripetal adaptive instinct to defend tradition and the status quo—to conserve the beliefs and knowledge of the present order. It does not domesticate us because it is compensated by self-projecting instinct to change and transform ourselves and our relations to the enviroing world. These "strange alternation[s] of attraction and repulsion" (Emerson, 1983, p. 503) are tendencies or patterns of nature nurturing; they sway between the withdrawing (self-protection) and arrival (self-projection) to disclose the partiality of truths, which are not calculable, not measureable. The polarities are always already embodied in human discourse, cognition, and experience, and, for Emerson, indicative of how the brain/mind physically operates according to tendencies of human nature. The self "can not live without a world" (1983, p. 254), Emerson claims, because it is a necessary platform that resists our instinct to expand outwards, to be self-reliant, to imagine and project ameliorations for one's future.

One's imagination emerges in the gravitational force that sways between the private and public minds or selves—what Dewey calls the "inner and outer vision," when "possibilities are embodied ... that are not elsewhere actualized" (1980, p. 268). Imagination is not isolated from the enviroing world, nor is it a faculty of mind, self-contained and separate from history; it is a cognitive and communicative act: "Expression of experience is public and communicating because the experiences expressed are what they are because of experiences of the living and dead that have shaped them" (Dewey, 1980, p. 270). Self-expression is a most human behavior, opening our habituated public self to "an influx of the ever new, ever sanative conscience" (Emerson, 1983, p. 256). The call of conscience emerges in the inter-animation of private integrity—"nothing at last

is sacred but the integrity of your own mind” (Emerson, 1983, p. 261)—and public care for one’s world. Conscience calls the private mind from submersion in the public mind, and recalls our desire for self-reliance—to imagine, project, and innovate towards a better state of things (Emerson, 1983, p. 174; Dewey, 1922, pp. 106ff). Self-projection is the imaginative reformation of the self and existing reality.

Contrary to Richard Rorty and Stanley Fish’s claims—that there is no conception of critical self-awareness or self-consciousness that is not “at once impossible and superfluous” (Fish, 1989, pp. 463-464; also see Rorty, 1991b, pp. 211ff), I argue that the “axis” upon which a classical pragmatist theory of persuasion turns is a “call to conscience,” which discloses critical self-awareness as a cognitive event that is directed by care and attention, imagined by thinking and disclosed by action that is ameliorative. Emerson and the classical pragmatists—James, Pierce, and Dewey—are important interlocutors for the field of rhetoric and composition, even though in most classification schemas of the field, their work has not been fully explored. I focus on three cognitive features that Emerson and the classical pragmatists describe—classification, imagination, and the plasticity of the mind—that are particularly useful for understanding how classical pragmatism is affiliated with rhetoric and composition. On the one hand, we will see how critical conscience is the way human beings interact with their environment at specific moments, not a faculty of mind, or a permanent state of critical awareness. And, on the other hand, I propose an interpretation of pragmatist rhetoric that has substantial differences from what Steven Mailoux calls, “a rhetoricized version of contemporary neo-pragmatism” (1998, p. 56). Rather than focusing on conventions and beliefs, as do the neo-pragmatists, the classical pragmatists focus on why affective reasoning and imagination are both persuasive and expresses truth: as Dewey notes, reasoning “must fall back upon imagination—upon the embodiment of ideas in emotionally charged sense” (1980, p. 33). My claim focuses on three aspects of human expressivity—classification, imagination, and plasticity—explicated by pragmatism’s cognitive science; which can lead rhetoric and composition to a less antagonistic relationship with critical discourse—legitimizing research that focuses on individuality, self-expression, and mindful being-in-the-world.

COGNITION AND CLASSIFICATION

Classical pragmatists were at the forefront of cognitive psychology to contextualize the continuities between humans, as beings embodied in the world, and nature. The continuities include, but are not limited to, these three cognitive features—classification, imagination, and plasticity—which offer us useful,

albeit narrow, examples that contribute generally to pedagogy, and specifically to rhetoric and composition, so, as James puts it, we can “make our nervous systems our ally instead of our enemy” (1992, p. 140). For James, classification is a feature of “our organic mental structure” that was produced accidentally by evolutionary variation, “then transmitted as fixed [a] feature” (1955, p. 851). As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson note, “every living being categorizes ... food, predators, possible mates, members of their own species, and so on” (1999, p. 17). Culturally and socially, classification is central to organization of human institutions, particularly education and generally to the organization of intellectual history. As Mike Rose aptly notes, classification schemes both “sharpen [our] own abilities to systematize what [we] study, and to develop a critical awareness of the limitations of classification schemes” that we are submerged in (1989, p. 139).

From a rhetorical point of view, classification starts as an invention strategy *divisio*, the division into categories or classes and then becomes *dispositio*, the effective arrangement of ideas that structure an argument. As Frank J. D’Angelo argues, rhetorical topics are “differentiations of basic mental processes that have evolved over thousands of years” (Judd, 2005, p. 81. From a cognitive point of view, classification is a phenomenological/hermeneutical act that psychologically is both private and public: we understand everything in term of its structure. We understand it as a danger, as a food source, as something that matters or not, as something to care for, or not. According to Patricia Smith Churchland, “pre-scientifically, we classify things on the basis of their gross physical and behavioral similarity, or on the basis of the relevance to our particular needs and interests.” (2002, p. 124). In a scientific context, classification schemes order “the reality behind appearances” according to specific principles that “have an effect on perceptual recognition” (Churchland, 2002, p. 129). In either case, classification structures how the brain understands something as-something: we must know something as-something before we can understand or make statements about it (Heidegger, 1996, pp. 139ff). What one perceives depends upon either one’s needs and interests or one’s sense that there is a pattern that organizes what is perceived.

Classification, in the public sense, is the process of surveying a field of objects to discern and thematize patterns, to identify and distinguish and therefore to define or redefine the topic. This is useful for cognition because it frames and structures one’s argument in relation to the categories created by the topographical map. In the public mind,⁵ the classification becomes part of social and institutional power—i.e. in higher education, it is used to control what and how a subject is taught.⁶ How does one teach composition in the university? Is there one theory of composition that works most effectively? Should pedagogy focus

on the product or on the writing process? Questions like these exist because our minds are embodied; cognitive operations like classifying are structured by how bodies/minds have evolved, therefore structuring our everyday understanding of the order of things.

Emerson was fascinated by natural science, especially how the cognitive ability of the human brain uses classification schemes to advance factual knowledge.⁷ Emerson intends to give an “account, which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world” (1983, p. 634). Emerson’s knowledge of neural networks was up to date for his time; he was aware of Galvani’s discovery that nerves operate on electrical energy and he hypothesized that the mind uses electrical, and therefore physical, force to shape and animate the mind. The interaction of a brain/mind shapes both the mind and world: “Every solid in the universe is ready to become fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind The whole world is the flux of matter over the wires of thought to the poles or points where it would build” (Emerson, *Essays* 1983, p. 964-965).

Classification is closely related to imaginative cognition that is necessary in the natural sciences, as well as the humanities: “Science does not know its debt to imagination” (Emerson, 1929, vol. 8, p. 10). Emerson argues that classification is a cognitive activity, a “tyrannical instinct of the mind” (1972, vol. 2, p. 23): “it is the perpetual effort of the mind to seek relations between the multitude of facts under its eye, by means of which it can reduce them to some order” (1972, vol. 2, p. 22). Emerson identifies classification both as an instinct and as one of “the actions of the intellect” (1972, vol. 2, p. 25) because it discloses unexpected resemblances and common origins between things that, at first, appear unrelated (1972, vol. 2, p. 27).

For Emerson, classification creates a vocabulary that becomes part of the private and public mind, an antagonistic discourse within our double consciousness. The instinct to classify is natural and useful; yet, it has a double edge because as it becomes commonplace knowledge of the public mind, we lose sight of the fact that we are part and partial of an organic system that continually changes:

A nomenclature, a classification used by the scholar as a help to the memory, or a bare illustration of his present perception of the law of nature, the memorandum only of his last lesson, and, in the face of it, merely a makeshift; merely momentary; a landing place on the staircase, a bivouac for a night, and implying a march, a progress [that] becomes, through the indolence or absence of mind, a barrack, a stronghold, an obstacle; in which the man settles down immoveable, insane, obstinate,

mistaking his means for his ends ... and requires your respect to this whimsy as to truth itself. (1972, vol. 3, pp. 129-130)

Emerson and the classical pragmatists describe classification in a way that is useful to argumentation, persuasion, and pedagogy of composition because it is based on understanding our human nature—how our brain/mind actually works. For classical pragmatists, every time one classifies, one encounters the sway of “doubleness” between its usefulness for the private mind and its dangers for the public mind.

Dewey agrees with Emerson, classification is one of the various instinctual organizational tendencies that circumscribe all mental activity:

To classify is, indeed, as useful as it is natural. The indefinite multitude of particular and changing events is met by the mind with acts of defining, inventorying, and listing, reducing to common heads and tying up in bunches. [These acts] are performed for a purpose. [But we often lose sight of the purpose] to facilitate our dealings with individuals and changing events. Our thought [becomes] hard where facts are mobile; bunched and chunky, where events are fluid and dissolving. The tendency to forget the office of distinctions and classifications, and to take them as marking things in themselves, is a fallacy. (1992, p. 131)

Dewey's stipulation that classification does not represent things in themselves echoes Emerson's description of how self-protection works to turn contingent classifications into fixed truths.

Our environment forces us to pay attention to an array of “indefinite multitude of particular and changing events” (James, 1992, p. 227); also, we use systems of classification to assess the amount of attention we need to spend on a given object. In other words, in order to create opportunities to self-project, to take advantage of changing events, decisive classification is necessary. As Herrnstein Smith notes

human beings have evolved as distinctly opportunistic creatures and that our survival, both as individuals and as a species, continues to be enhanced by our ability and inclination to reclassify objects and to “realize” and “appreciate” novel and alternate functions for them—which is also to misuse them and to fail to respect their presumed purposes and conventional generic classifications. (1988, pp. 32-33 also see pp. 122-123)

Lakoff and Johnson give a concrete biological example of how classification allows us to function in the world opportunistically:

Each human eye has 100 million light-sensing cells, but only about 1 million fibers leading to the brain. Each incoming image must therefore be reduced in complexity by a factor of 100. That is, information in each fiber constitutes a “categorization” of the information from about 100 cells. Neural categorization of this sort exists throughout the brain. (1999, p. 18)

Most of our cognitive categorizations come from how our bodies function in our environment. These are mostly unconscious and when we are in stable environments, we tend to rely on them to speed decision making processes; however, in environments that are unstable we tend to more carefully examine objects, sometimes creating new classifications.

Elizabeth Flynn argues that the received view of romanticism/expressivism is a form of “anti-modern” discourse or rhetoric: “Since individuals are unique and since perceptions of reality are entirely subjective, scientific knowledge has very limited authority, and the ability of scientific projects to lead to valid or reliable truth claims is questioned” (1997, p. 542). Flynn is correct that romantics and expressivists, like classical pragmatists, critique the modernist drive to calculation and commodification of nature. Yet, while romantic writers are generally considered to be reacting against the modernist quest for certainty, for objective truth typified by modern science, these critiques do not mean that every expressivist rejects natural science tout court. Many expressivists—Goethe, Thoreau, and Emerson, to name a few—actually embrace the useful applications of new facts that natural sciences disclose. Emerson notes that the human brain becomes impatient when confronted with

a multitude of facts; it aims to find some pattern or reasoning to set them in some order. Classification is one of the main actions of the intellect . . . every theory of science, every argument of the barrister, is a classification, and gives the mind the sense of power in proportion to the truth or centrality of the traits by which it arranges. (1972, vol. 2, p. 25.).

IMAGINATION, USE, AND THE CONDUCT OF LIFE

The endless passing of one element into new forms . . . explains the rank which the imagination holds in our catalogue of mental powers. The imagination is the reader of these forms.

—Emerson

Descartes' claim—that our minds are disembodied, not physical and that our brains are material objects, merely things—has a dramatic effect on how imagination has been classified in modernity. He claims imagination does not produce “entirely certain and indubitable” knowledge (1968, p. 95). Therefore he rejects imagination (and emotion) as essential components of rationality or human nature (1968, pp. 151-152). Rhetoricians tend to agree with Descartes that the expression of affect and imagination is not a cognitive activity, and while they are not separate from the mind, they are separate from the social realm: “key terms [of Romantic rhetoric] are solitude, spontaneity, expression of feeling and imagination—all quite opposed to the rhetorician’s concern for society, planned discourse, communication, and moving the will through reason and passion”; the received view reduces “expressivism” to a “soliloquy, not an argument, and ... reflection not action” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001, p. 995).

The received view claims that “expression of feeling and imagination” is opposed to the rhetorical goals of “reason and passion;” however, pragmatists do not make the foundation lists move by appealing to “reason” because that implies the imagination is an innate faculty like reason and passion. Neither the idea of antecedent thought nor the social constructionist denial of our biological human nature explains how our experiences of the world are inseparable from our conceptualization of the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 509). As Lakoff and Johnson argue, the metaphoricity of language is fundamental to the “sensorimotor inferences” that minds use to perpetually search for relations in order to classify things, to describe emotions, concepts, and percepts in terms of similitude (1999, p. 555). Classical pragmatists understand imagination as a natural part of our cognitive network. “Imagination uses an organic classification” (Emerson, 1929, vol. 8, p. 29) that is part of our self-projecting instinct: “imagination expands and exalts us” (Emerson, 1929, vol. 8, p. 29). Imagination moves us from the embodied realm of self-protection; it brings us to new ways of living in the world; “imagination animates” (Emerson, 1929, vol.8, p. 29).

Imagination is not a solitary or quietist concept for the classical pragmatists: “Our modes of living are not agreeable to our imagination” (Emerson, 1929, vol.1, p. 271). Neo-pragmatists Rorty and Unger argue that pragmatism and romanticism are not opposed because both give priority to the imagination rather than to reason (Rorty, 2007, pp. 105ff).⁸ “Imagination,” says Unger, “does the work of crisis without crisis [showing] us how we can turn what we have into something else” (2007, pp. 61-62). Emerson, like Dewey notes, “imagination [is] a perception and affirming of a real relation between a thought and some material fact” (1929, vol. 8, p. 29).⁹ The imagination is not a discrete faculty of a static brain; rather, it is the use of materiality, the transformation the material world to ameliorate enviroing conditions. The power of eloquence is that

one uses the materiality of language “to report the inner man adequately to the multitudes of men, and [to] bring one man’s character to bear on all others” (Emerson, 1972, vol. 3, p. 349).

While many assume that Emerson’s first work, *Nature*, announces a uniquely American iteration of romantic idealism which is monological, others understand the book’s lasting contribution as being the first to articulate a pragmatic “doctrine of Use.”¹⁰ The imagination is important to Emerson; yet, in terms of priority, he emphasizes use over either imagination or reason: “the imagination may be defined to be, the use which the Reason makes of the material world” (1983, p. 34).¹¹ Emerson’s “doctrine of Use” is a central principle shared by pragmatists, “neo” or classical. He analyzes the materiality of “brute nature,” and how nature educates the brain/mind “in the doctrine of Use, namely, that a thing is good,” and has being only so far as it serves “the production of an end” (1983, p. 29).

For Emerson, the doctrine of use is “the axis on which the frame of things turns” (1983, p. 747). As Emerson and Unger note, sudden moments of crisis force humans into revising their commonplace beliefs (Emerson, 1929, vol. 7, p. 92). The imagination, according to Unger, “does the work of crisis without crisis” (2007, p. 61). As in moments of crisis, imagination provokes the self-protection instinct, and releases energy that powers our imaginative performances and our conduct in implementing them as caring acts in the world. Emerson argues that nature does not serve any single or multiple ends; nature follows an ecstatic structure of circular movement that tends to produce redundancy and excess, focused on momentary ends that are always superseded by new ends, and therefore open to modification and transformation (Herrnstein Smith, 1997, pp. 38, 46, 49). The imagination expresses possible new ends and communicates its fundamentally social dimensions: “the heart of language is not ‘expression’ of something antecedent, much less expression of antecedent thought. It is communication; the establishment of cooperation in an activity in which there are partners, and in which the activity of each is modified and regulated by partnership” (Dewey, 1958, p. 179).

Rorty is correct that pragmatists explicate the universal dispositions and tendencies of human minds in terms of the exigencies of the existential context. As Emerson notes, the exigency of each generation resolves “itself into a practical question of the conduct of life” (1983, p. 943). These dispositions and tendencies provide the means for a “comprehensive and persisting ... standardization of habit” that orders all “social interaction” (Dewey, 1958, p. 190). For Emerson, the “worst feature of this double consciousness is, that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which we lead, really show very little relation to each other, never meet and measure each other” (1983, pp. 205-206).

Concrete understanding of the enviroing world—which attunes to its use and takes protective care of it—is human conduct based on the desire for stability and consistency. The individual mind (self), which uses imagination and reason to self-project, to create, and to communicate new possibilities in the world, renews habituation and the conduct of life. Renewal happens because nature has various forms of compensation to maintain the balance between self-protection and self-projection. If society privileges the concept of materialism, then idealism emerges as compensation, and so it is with concepts like the one and the many, reality and imagination, identity and difference, stasis and change, reform and conservation, or, subjective and objective. In the run of everyday life, the double consciousness shows little relation to each other. It is, as we see below, the call of conscience that connects the private mind and the public mind.

Compensatory behavior does not emerge from “a single and all-at-once beginning,” but from the natural evolutionary pattern of fits and starts, composition and decomposition, and from an excess of ends, the ecstatic culminations of “incessant beginnings and endings,” which animate nature (Dewey, 1958, p. 97-98; Emerson, 1983, pp. 120-121; Poirier, 1992, p. 54-55). The human brain/mind reflects nature’s propensity for “calculated profusion”: “the craft with which the world is made, runs also into mind and character of” human beings (Emerson, 1983, p. 550). Peirce calls the brain/mind “organized heterogeneity”—which, nonetheless, has “extreme complexity and instability. It has acquired in a remarkable degree of a habit taking and laying aside habits” The laws of the brain/mind are “so fluid a character as to simulate divergence from law” (Peirce, 1955, p. 359-360).

The brain/mind is, as Pinker says, a complex and interactive media that is attuned to the world. It uses all of its unpredictability in order to adapt to and reorganize the world; evolution produces a basic design for relatively stable habits of mind (1997, p. 32). In other words, the innate aspects of human nature are “what all minds have in common, and how minds can differ” (Pinker, 1997, p. 34). The mind has various organizational tendencies that circumscribe species-wide mental activity: “Simple logic says that there can be no learning without innate mechanisms to do the learning. Those mechanisms must be powerful enough to account for all kinds of learning that humans accomplish” (Pinker, 1997, p. 101). But these mechanisms are not, a priori, knowledge: “Saying that the different ways of knowing are innate is different from saying that knowledge is innate” (Pinker, 1997, p. 315). The claim that the human brain has sets of habits, or internalized adaptations, characterized by reflexive actions or instinctual reflexes, should not be confounded with claims that human nature has an unalterable or essential nature, or biological determinism, as is crudely articulated by Social Darwinism or by the more modern notions like genetic deter-

minism, or that the brain is a modular and ‘hard-wired’ computer-like machine (Unger, 2007, pp. 131-133).

There is continuity between nature and the dispositions acquired that have evolved into brain/mind (Dewey, 1980, p. 29). Some neo-pragmatists, like Rorty, claim the lack of intrinsic, genetic or evolutionary human nature does not make human existence a relativistic “abyss.” The traditional interpretation of Emerson, which often acknowledges his repeated claim, “there are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile” (1983, p. 403), is coterminous with Rorty’s non-foundation position. The only way it would not be synonymous is if one erroneously assumes “abyss” somehow implies a bipolar, other-worldly ideal or stable universal, which Dewey disputes: Emerson “finds truth in the highway ... in the unexpected idea His ideas are not fixed upon any Reality that is beyond or behind or in any way apart” (1980, pp. 27-28) from the natural world. Rorty’s argument, however—that there is an “absence of an intrinsic human nature”—is not supported by evidence from contemporary cognitive and biological science (1991a, p. 132). All mental development or learning depends upon the deconstruction of useless neurons and reconstruction of useful neural networks. Current neutral studies show that each human brain has “100 billion neurons and 100 trillion synaptic connections” (Ratey, 2002, p. 18). Many unused connections die during a development stage called ‘pruning’ and “new connections grow, again depending on which are used and which are not” (Ratey, 2002, pp. 34-47). Therefore, a) the concept of innateness can only hold meaning in terms of potentialities, and b) the tabula rasa theory can only hold meaning in terms of reconstructing what we are born with, not simply inscription on a blank slate by experience. As Lakoff and Johnson state, “the traditional innateness versus learned dichotomy is simply an inaccurate way of characterizing human development, including linguistic development” (1999, pp. 507-508).

Dewey clarifies how human nature contains “regularity” without resorting to static universals:

Since nothing in nature is exclusively final, rationality is always means as well as end. The doctrine of the universality and necessity of rational ends can be validated only when those in whom the good is actualized employ it as a means to modify conditions so that others may also participate in it, and its universality exist in the course of affairs. (1958, p. 120)

Dewey, like James and Emerson, argues, “nothing in nature is exclusively final” (1958, p. 120), including things like the brain/mind, which were thought to be

static and unchanging, like truth or the self (James, 1992, p. 287). Imagination and classification are cognitive behaviors adapted from the plasticity of nature; both cognitive behaviors are useful insofar as they “incarnate themselves in action.” Thinking is for use; it frames, animates, alters, and ameliorates both the private or public mind; Emerson, 1929, vol. 12, pp. 18-19).

PLASTICITY AND HUMAN NATURE

Whilst we converse with truths as thoughts, they exist also as plastic forces.

—Emerson

The third cognitive disposition that Emerson and the classical pragmatists analyze, which makes humans capable of experiencing moments of critical conscience, is an inherent evolutionary plasticity both in the human brain/mind and in nature. Darwin's evolutionary discovery—that species have no foundational point of origin but emerge, reconstructing themselves and in effect deconstructing those that cannot or do not change—is fundamental to pragmatic naturalism. This structure of “continual decomposition and recomposition” (Emerson, 1983, p. 656; 1929, vol. 8, p. 213) is fundamental to the ways classical pragmatists think about the world—not as a telos intended to culminate in stable fixed object with a predetermined origin and end—but as an endless creative production of infinite ends. All organisms in nature change without logical end or goal; evolutionary changes emerge randomly and yet conservatively. Usefulness is the architect of the human mind. If a structure in the brain is not useful, it wastes away; yet, if it is useful, it is maintained even if new structures get added to face later challenges. As Wolf Singer notes, “the architectures of brains evolved according to the same principles of trial, error, and selection as all other components of organisms. Organisms endowed with brains whose architecture permitted realization of functions that increased their fitness survived and the genes specifying these architectures were preserved” (2011, p. 98).

As James argues, “our fundamental ways of thinking about things are discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves throughout the experience of all subsequent time” (1975, p. 83). Our most primitive ways of thinking can be traced back the reptilian brain, or the paleo-mammalian brain which maintains the old structures but adds the limbic system, memory and emotion, and the neo-mammalian brain, which maintains both and adds abstract thinking and planning abilities.¹² Taken together, we have a triune brain (Ratey, 2002, p. 10), what James calls an “additive constitution” (1975, pp. 82-83). The cognitive and physical changes in the brain follow the evolutionary process. Plasticity works both at the historical/evolutionary

scale and the contingent individual scale: “changing your pattern of thinking also changes the brain’s structure Activities that challenge your brain actually expand the number and strength of neural connections devoted to the skill” (Ratey, 2002, pp. 36-37). Cognitive science now understands the brain can repair certain injuries, rewire itself by relearning, for example, how to speak after a stroke. We now know that the act of learning can rewire certain parts of the human brain; sustained and mindful learning causes neurons to link and then fire at the same time (Doidge, 2007, p. 63). After the neurons wire together and fire together the brain becomes more efficient (Doidge, 2007, p. 67); the more we learn (an essential survival trait) and the faster we think, act, and react to enviroing conditions.

As Pinker notes, “neural plasticity is not a magical protean power of the brain but a set of tools” that indicates the complexity of human nature (1997, p. 100). Some parts of the brain are not plastic, and even in childhood, our most plastic developmental period, plasticity has real limits. However, plasticity also explains why persuasive discourse must focus on habits, moods, and beliefs (rather than logic and evidence)—because the brain/mind can learn to change how it thinks, but generally only adapts to change by gradually retuning its disposition to a topic or issue. The self-protecting instinct conserves so that change is resisted: “we keep unaltered as much of our old knowledge, as many of our old prejudices and beliefs as we can” (James, 1975, p. 83). James states

the moment one tries to define what habit is, one is led to the fundamental properties of matter Organic matter, especially of nervous tissue, seems endowed with a very extraordinary degree of plasticity . . . so that we may, without hesitation, lay down as our first proposition the following, that the phenomena of habit in living beings are due to the plasticity of the organic materials of which their bodies are composed. (1955, p. 68)

Plasticity is the brain’s ability to change according to environmental conditions, circumstances, and experiences. It is essential for learning and developmental processes, and for recovery from injuries. While the most active period of plasticity is between the ages of three and ten, the brain maintains a level of plasticity throughout its existence (Ratey, 2002, pp. 35-47). New changes are carried forward through the variety of useful adaptations and transformations (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 43). Evolution discloses that the human brain is “far from being a freely instructable tabula rasa” (Singer, 2011, p. 100). As Dewey argues, “reformers, following John Locke, were inclined to minimize the significance” of instincts and dispositions in order to emphasize “the possibilities inher-

ent in practice and habit acquisition" (1922, p. 106).¹³ While Locke attempts to describe a more plastic vision of humanity by arguing that all human brains are potentially and equally unlimited—depending upon the social or phenomenal experience inscribed upon them—it has left us a legacy that ignores how human nature develops from important interactions between biology, instincts, and the environment. Wilson, in *On Human Nature*, argues: "the human mind is not a tabula rasa, a clean slate on which experience draws intricate patterns ... The accumulation of old choices, the memory of them, the reflection on those to come, the re-experiencing of emotions by which they are engendered, all constitute the mind" (Wilson, 1979. pp. 67). Like Pinker, Wilson argues that Locke's description of human nature as a tabula rasa misrepresents human nature and excludes biological evolution, which has thoroughly integrated into the human organism sets of instinctual, reflexive, and innate behaviors, some of which are interactional, some socially determined, and some that are determined by genetics. For Pinker, the "blank slate" is only partially true: in some cases, social experience does inscribe and construct human practices in a purely situational and contingent manner. His objection centers on their denial of biological and evolutionary forces, some of which are intrinsic to all species and some of which emerge in specific interactions with the environing world.

Some neo-pragmatists, like Rorty, argue there is no such thing as human nature because any description offered is either another set of justifications or another effort to reinscribe metaphysical dualisms and create a foundation outside of a human life-world through a non-linguistic access. According to Rorty, "Dewey spent half his time debunking the very idea of 'human nature'" (1991b, p. 211). However, other neo-pragmatists, like Herrnstein Smith and Unger, agree with the classical pragmatists' understanding that common tendencies can shape the brain, mind, and cognition, without over-determined universalism. Unger argues that innate human nature does not require metaphysical foundations or dualisms: "we associate innateness with constraint. However, our most significant innate faculty is a structure for out-reaching and rebuilding all structures" (2007, p. 132). Unger identifies the recursive process of the brain as the fundamental habit of mind that powers the imagination—the instinct of surprise and to invent. To survive, the mind must be able to make cognitive moves that it has never made before (Unger, 2007, p. 68). The call to conscience is an instinctual care for one's world—conduct attempts to create ameliorating and imaginative reconstructions.

Herrnstein Smith and Unger agree with the classical pragmatists that human nature exists and includes innate components—while guarding against the "first generation" of cognitivist claims (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 75-76)—which claims the brain works like a computer, has an innate modular structure, and

is “hardwired,” stable, unchanging (Unger, 2007, p. 131). As Unger notes, the brain is an open system “subject to the enrichments and transpositions resulting from the plasticity of the brain” (2007, pp. 131-132). This openness includes rethinking the way innate aspects of the mind actually produce the ability to self-project. The brain’s plasticity, they argue, allows for constant adaptation and reorganization—connecting the contingent existential conditions to how we know and what we do (Dewey, 1966, pp. 336-338).

Herrnstein Smith notes, “plasticity of belief is obviously advantageous and indeed necessary for any creature that survives, as humans do, by learning ... the countertendency—that is, mechanisms that foster the *stability and persistence* of beliefs—would, under a broad range of conditions, also be necessary and advantageous. We are, it seems, congenitally both docile and stubborn” (1997, pp. 50-51). These two instinctual tendencies, stability and plasticity, provide us with cognitive power to imagine new or ameliorating possibilities that can arise either in moments of crisis (Unger, 2007, pp. 61, 112, 130, 132) or in moments of imaginative self-projection. On the other hand, they provide us with “cognitive conservatism,” the instinctual act of self-protection—both individual and social.¹⁴ Herrnstein Smith notes, it “is not merely the tendency to hold fast to one’s beliefs but to incorporate into them whatever comes along and, often enough ... to turn what might otherwise be seen evidence against one’s beliefs into evidence for them” (1997, p. 51). Human nature, like nature itself, grows not from “a single and all-at-once beginning” but ecstatic culminations of “incessant beginnings and endings” (Dewey, 1958, pp. 97-98; Emerson, 1983, pp. 120-121).

The classical pragmatists (and neo-pragmatists Herrnstein Smith and Unger) apply evolutionary adaptations to deconstruct the Mind/Body binary, arguing that human nature exists as shared, evolved tendencies to certain temperaments, habits, and dispositions. They understand science as a method of inquiry into nature’s regularities and tendencies—without claiming that human nature is a static essence operating from discrete and static faculties of mind. Human nature is configured by the species’ interactions in the enviroing world. As beings-in-nature we produce culture and the arts, including eloquence and argumentation (Dewey, 1922, p. 16), through ecstatic moments of imagination that allow an individual to momentarily step out from habituation. Moments of critical conscience and nonconformity to social conventions are both possible and necessary.

THE CALL TO CRITICAL CONSCIENCE

The failure of critical consciousness is a failure without consequences since everything it would achieve—change, the undoing of the status quo, the re-distribution of power and authority, the emergence of new forms of action—is

already achieved by the ordinary and everyday efforts by which, in innumerable situations, large and small, each of us attempts to alter the beliefs of another.

—Stanley Fish

We only insist that the man meliorate, and that the plant grow upward, and convert the base into the better nature.

—Emerson

The call to conscience reaches across both social realms of preserving and transforming society; it operates on the level of individual citizens whose best thought allows for democratic and ameliorative cultural critique. As James describes it, social evolution is caused by the interaction of the individual, who bears “the power of initiative and origination” of change, and the public or social environment that has the “power of adopting or rejecting” original ideas to reform and change society. The self-projecting instinct is necessary to balance the self-protecting instinct, which tends to conformity, passivity, and fixity of a public everyday understanding of one’s world: “the community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse [to change] dies away without the sympathy of the community” (James, 1992, pp. 629-630).

Both Fish and Rorty argue against a form of critical consciousness that leads to emancipation or freedom (Fish, 1989, p. 332; Rorty, 1991b, p. 211ff). For Rorty, a pragmatist utopia should be based on “narratives of increasing cosmopolitanism, though not narratives of emancipation.” Rorty’s utopia is “not one in which human nature has been unshackled [t]here is no human nature which was once, or still is, in chains” (1991b, p. 213). Unfortunately, Rorty frames emancipation or freedom in terms of over-determined universalism. Dewey makes a different claim, arguing that emancipation “designates a mental attitude rather than external unconstraint of movements” (1966, p. 305). Dewey does not claim to free individuals from human nature, but rather to develop democratic societies that promote intellectual freedom.

While Fish and Rorty deny that “critical consciousness” is possible because they deny that human nature exists, classical pragmatists articulate a melioristic call to conscience framed around democratic political processes that provide a context for cultural critique. The “human condition,” Emerson states, is tied up in “old knots of fate, freedom, and foreknowledge;” the way to untie the knots is to propound double consciousness: the oscillation between the public and private mind (1983, p. 966). Critical thinking extends the narrow understanding of existing conditions by projecting into the truly practical realm of the unknown. For Emerson, the public mind of everyday understanding is “a comatose tendency in the brain” (1929, vol. 11, p. 300). As Dewey states it:

men [sic] must at least have enough interest in thinking for the sake of thinking to escape the limits of routine and custom. Interest in knowledge for the sake of knowledge, in thinking for the sake of the free play of thought, is necessary then to the emancipation of practical life—to make it rich and progressive. (as quoted in Brinkmann, 2013, p.96).

Critical conscience, according to Unger, shortens “the distance between the ordinary moves” we make in everyday life, which are unconscious and operate within established habits and limits, and “the exceptional moves by which we redefine these limits” (2007, p. 57). We can ameliorate and liberate “individuals from entrenched social division and hierarchy” (2007, p. 56) shrinking the distance “from context-preserving and context-transforming activities” (2007, p. 57). The power of thought to transform the world—the “choosing and acting” of the mind—provides the context for what Dewey calls emancipation. Emerson states it this way: “so far as a [hu]man thinks, he is free” (1983, p. 953). Thinking that is self-projecting is based on futurity. Thinking ends in ameliorative action: it is “an actual alteration of a physically antecedent situation in those details or respects which called for thought in order to do away with some evil” (Dewey, 1916, p. 31).

For West and Rorty, Emerson’s style of writing is “culture criticism” (Rorty, 1982, p. xl; West, 1989, p. 36).¹⁵ Cultural criticism is not a discrete analysis or evaluation of literature, intellectual history, moral philosophy, epistemology, or social problems; rather, “all these things mingled together into a new genre” (Rorty, 1982, p. 66) defy “disciplinary classification” (West, 1989, p. 9). Emerson’s position outside of academic institutions allows him to evade and “strip the profession of philosophy of its pretense, disclose its affiliations with structures of powers (both rhetorical and philosophical) rooted in the past, and enact intellectual practices, i.e., produce texts of various sorts and styles, that invigorate and unsettle one’s culture and society” (West, 1989, p. 37).

James and Dewey both refer to the same passage in *Nature*: while “crossing a bare common” Emerson experiences an ecstatic union with nature in which he emerges from the public conventional external way of understanding, to a living incarnate sense that humanity’s “life currents” are given by the material world (James, 1992, p. 856). As Dewey states, “every individual has grown up, and always must grow up, in a social medium He lives and acts in a medium of accepted meanings and values” (1966, p. 295). These values are embodied beliefs that shape his mind; therefore the idea that a mind is isolated and singular is impossible: a “self achieves mind in the degree in which knowledge of things is incarnate in the life about him, the self is not a separate mind building up

knowledge anew on its own account" (Dewey, 1966, p. 295).

Persuasion is a form of cultural criticism that "flourishes in free countries" (Emerson, 1929, vol. 8, p. 112) and is most noticeable during moments of social crisis (Emerson, 1929, vol. 8, p. 119). Unger argues that imagination transfers to moments of everyday life the call to conscience that emerges in social crisis. If the call to conscience can be heard in everyday practices then a critical inquiry can occur in every "account which the human mind gives to itself of the constitution of the world" (Emerson, 1983, p. 634). It therefore becomes the duty of each individual to become more fully free; concomitantly, each individual has a public duty to make "laws just and humane ... and with the simple and sublime purpose of carrying out in private and public action the desire and need of mankind" (Emerson, 1929, vol. 11, p. 538). Finally, the pragmatic theory of "double consciousness" represents the "incessant" role that human nature plays in "the formation of the speculative man or scholar" (Emerson, 1983, p. 747). As Emerson notes, in the United States, the power of eloquence to persuade and suddenly expand the public mind is privileged:

here is room for every degree of it, on every one of its ascending stages, —that of useful speech, in our commercial, manufacturing, railroad and educational conventions; that of political advice and persuasion on the grandest theatre, reaching ... into a vast future, and so compelling the best thought and noblest administrative ability that the citizen can offer.
(1929, vol. 8, p. 132)

By focusing on Emerson's psychological and cognitive understanding of "double consciousness ... of [our] private and public nature" (1983, p. 966), I offer a counter-history to the received view about Emerson's pragmatic understanding of eloquence. His focus on biological and cognitive aspects of the brain/mind leads us to recognize his affiliations with James and Dewey, and to see that pragmatism has an inherent call to critical conscience, which is embedded in the hopeful sense that continual democratic cultural critique brings with it amelioration and social change. For Emerson and other pragmatists, eloquence is a means to provoke ameliorating social action in a democracy. Democratic persuasion, as a call to conscience, describes the sway between personal and public as the space where self-reliant behavior demonstrates that critique is a form of attending to one's world with care. Change entails persuasion directed at the private duty of each individual to care for what Emerson calls the "secular ... evolution of man" (1929, vol. 11, p. 299). Care is a demonstration of our duty to use new knowledge practically, for the purpose of becoming more fully free, and our public duty to make "laws just and humane ... and with the simple and

sublime purpose of carrying out in private and public action the desire and need of mankind” (Emerson, 1929, vol. 11, p. 538).

EXPRESSIVISM

The field of composition and rhetoric is arguably dominated by “social constructionist” interpretations, which, as Steven Pinker argues in *The Blank Slate*, have become hegemonic in social sciences and humanities (2002, p. 6). As Xin Liu Gale notes, social constructionists base much of their theory on neo-pragmatist philosophers (1996, p. 18), especially the work of Richard Rorty. Typically compositionists assume that Rorty’s philosophy articulates a “social constructionist” position. Olson is startled because “Rorty does not recognize the term social constructionism as referring to any intellectual movement that he is aware of” (1988, p. 1). In another context, Rorty aptly argues the claim that everything that is socially constructed is “hopelessly misleading” (2007, p. 115). Rorty claims classifying all objects as “social constructs” detracts from the debate over “the utility of alternative constructs” (1999, p. 86).

Berlin traces expressive rhetoric “to Emerson and the Transcendentalists, and its ultimate source is to be found in Plato” (1987 p. 71).¹⁶ Emerson, like Peter Elbow and others, is categorized by social constructionist taxonomies, like James A. Berlin’s, as an expressivist.¹⁷ Berlin’s position simply recapitulates the received literary view of Emerson, what Thomas G. O’Donnell calls “expressivist bashing” (1996, p.423), or what Michael Lopez calls the “anti-Emerson tradition (1996),” epitomized by W. Ross Winterowd’s “Emerson and the Death of Pathos” (1996).¹⁸ In the received view, Romantic rhetoric based on Kantian or neo-Platonist idealism is committed to “an epistemology that locates all truth within a personal construct arising from one’s unique selfhood [and] prevents these expressionists from becoming genuinely epistemic in their approach” (Berlin, 1987, p. 153). While there have been many articles that have defended Elbow against what O’Donnell calls the “common but false assumptions about expressivist epistemological orientations” (1996, p. 424); also see Donald C. Jones, Sherrie Gradin, Stephen Fishman and Lucille Parkinson McCarthy (1992 and 1995), Kathleen O’Brien, Philip P. Marzluf, and Kristi Yager), only Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald defend Emerson’s position in this dispute, which is particularly odd given the resurgent interest in literary and philosophical studies in Emerson’s contributions to pragmatism¹⁹ and the emergence of a neo-pragmatist “school” of rhetoric.

Yet Emerson argues that knowing is not a subjective state of mind; rather it is an activity, an event in service of use: “my metaphysics are to the end of use There is something surgical in metaphysics as we treat it” (1929, vol. 12, p. 13). Imaginative discourse is useful and social because it releases and increases

the interactions between interlocutors and the agency of individuals. Emerson's description of the uses of eloquence and argumentation appropriately integrates the social and personal process in which individuals participate in coming-to-know truth and work to apply those truths to provoke political change.

NOTES

* Editors' Note: Anthony Petruzzi passed away while writing this chapter. We are grateful to his family and friends for making sure his work was able to be included here.

1. Mark Bauerlein also argues that the classical pragmatists develop their ideas around a conception of mind: "in the writings of Emerson, James, and Peirce [there is] a close relation between method and mind" and their pragmatic 'method' develops from "a sophisticated model of cognition" (1997, p. 5).

2. James says, "We find this mode of protecting the Self by exclusion and denial very common ... All narrow people entrench their Me, they retract it, from the region of what they cannot securely possess" (1955, p. 201).

3. Self-projection is what James calls self-seeking, one "of our fundamental instinctive impulses": "by self-seeking we mean the providing for the future as distinguished from maintaining the present" (1955, p. 198).

4. As a discipline, Psychology separates from Philosophy in the mid-19th century. Robert Danisch aptly notes, in *Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric*, that James and Dewey both wrote key texts and played significant "roles in the burgeoning science of psychology" (2007, p. 5). Current discussions of pragmatic rhetoric exclude Emerson, who, of the three, is the only practicing rhetorician; Crick and Danisch's recent books suggest that pragmatism helps us to retrieve a sophistic, proteogorian, rhetoric for the 21st century. Neither book distinguishes classical pragmatists from neo-pragmatists, who tenuously claim that pragmatism is postmodern sophistry (Mailloux, 1998, pp. 1ff; Smith, 1988, p. 86; Crick, 2010, pp. 14 and 22ff; Danisch, 2007, pp. 7ff).

5. Emerson has several terms for what I am calling the "public mind"; he refers to it as "the universal mind," "the mind of humanity," and "the absolute mind" (or what Dewey would call the continuity that interanimates nature's power and "the constitution of things."

6. Carol Synder puts it this way:

all too frequently students merely rehearse categories and repeat standard distinctions. The absence of argument in these papers suggests that students typically misunderstand the provisional status of classifications and their dependence on disciplinary con-

ventions, tending to regard them as though they were as reliably permanent What such writers need, it seems clear, is a more challenging introduction to division and classification, one that can at once spur the interest that makes for engaged, purposeful writing and promote a better understanding of division and classification as scholarly tools. (1984, p. 209)

7. Classical pragmatists understand that the brain, consciousness (or mind), and language are evolutionary adaptations; they have what Pierce calls “the scientific attitude” (1955, p. 42ff); evolutionary science is a method they use to define pragmatism as a new form of philosophical cultural criticism (Dewey, 1958, p. xvi). The classical pragmatists all considered themselves, as Pierce states, driven by the “impulse to penetrate into the reason of things” (1955, p. 42) through scientific inquiry; however, they want alternatives to modernist claims, which creates a dualism between subject-object, that truth is only valid when disclosed objectively by a neutral and impartial observer.

8. For Rorty, Emerson and the classical pragmatists are also strongly linked together because of their emphasis on self-reliance and their support a uniquely American form of social democracy (Rorty, 1991a, p. 2).

9. Emerson continuously emphasizes the importance of seeing relationships:

A [hu]man does not see ... that relation and connection are not somewhere and sometimes, but everywhere and always; no miscellany, no exemption, no anomaly, but method, and an even web; and what comes out was put in In the human mind, this tie of fate is made alive. The law is the basis of the human mind. (1983, p. 1065)

10. Lopez notes, “in essay after essay Emerson further elaborates and refines his fundamental perception of a universe in which all varieties of relationships ... may be defined in terms of our capacity to use or be used” (1996, p. 57). For Lopez, Emerson’s most mature exposition of his “new gospel of pragmatism” is most clearly articulated by the final sentence of *Representative Men*: human beings can continue to evolve and realize life “first, last, midst, and without end, to honor every truth by use” (1983, p. 761).

11. Contrary to the received view, it is hard to reconcile statements like this and claim that Emerson is a romantic exponent of solipsistic self-expression and asocial political action.

12. Both human consciousness and language are relatively new evolutionary adaptations, generally thought to have developed between 50,000 to 100,000 years ago. Language is an innate or fixed action (not taught) mechanism; for example, speech is a universal human instinct, while literacy, whether reading or writing, universally

needs to be taught to each individual. Speech is important for the survival of the species; it is specialized practice that gives an advantage to the species. Through the continuity of thousands of generations, the species undergoes an adaptation that became instinctual, but language demonstrates not just continuity but wherever the species is found we find a random plurality of diverse, contextual, contingent variations practiced. It is this unity within plurality that is central to pragmatist ontology.

13. Locke's original intent was, probably, to challenge the political structure of his day, which was based on the notion that human nature was unalterable and the political order, the divine right of kings, was based on this foundational principle.

14. Similarly, Pinker argues that an ethic of morality runs across all human emotions to provide stability and plasticity. He claims there are two streams of morality: an ethic of autonomy, which frames judgments about individuality, their interests and cares, and an ethic of community, which frames judgments about following social conventions, deferring to authority, and duty towards tribe, nationality, or political affiliation (2002, p. 271).

15. For Cavell, Emerson prefigures post-modern positions:

We are by now too aware of the philosophical attacks on system or theory to place the emphasis in defining philosophy on a product of philosophy rather than on the process of philosophizing. We are more prepared to understand as philosophy a mode of thought that undertakes to bring philosophy to an end, as, say, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein attempt to do, not to mention, in their various ways, Bacon, Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal, Marx, Kierkegaard, Carnap, Heidegger, or Austin Ending philosophy looks to be a commitment of each of the major modern philosophers" (1991, pp. 129-130).

16. To Berlin's credit, in *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, he reverses his interpretation of Emerson. Berlin rejects the received view that Emerson is a neo-Platonist who claims that truth is a "private vision" (1988, p. 15). Berlin states, "I am convinced that those who find in Emerson a rhetoric of self-expression are mistaken, even though this reading may be used in support of modern expressionist rhetoric" (1987, p. 55). However, Berlin's later of Emerson's work has been ignored because his argument that Emerson is a "post-Kantian" (1987, p. 48), who finds the "ground of reality is the ideal" (1987, p. 46), does little to counter the clichés that frame Emerson as a Romantic.

17. Lopez states

I am not suggesting that the familiar features of the Transcendentalist Emerson are not there or that are merely critical constructions imposed on him. They are *there* The problem is ...

this way of approaching him leaves out radically contradictory tendencies, tendencies that seem to me not only equal but ultimately greater in extent and importance. (p. 9)

For Patterson, “Emerson’s writings exhibit a consistent pattern of contradiction that is fundamental to his critical reassessment of democratic values” (p. 5).

18. Roskelly and Ronald aptly describe Ross Winterowd, as a typical critic of Emerson and romanticism; his response, in general, is “less well articulated and more stereotypical” than received view: “He defines romanticism in predictably traditional ways” (1998, p. 36). They reinterpret and defend Expressivism and Romanticism from the oversimplifications of the social constructionists.

19. By 1988, Michael Lopez, who does an excellent job of summarizing previous scholarly interpretations of Emerson (1996, pp. 19-52), states that the “major, current trend in” Emerson scholarship is “de-transcendentalizing” his work (p. 77).

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