than in historical criticisms. The index is unusually well-detailed, though the entry for “Dewey” erroneously has his first name as “Thomas.” But these are all small criticisms, and on the whole the book serves as a fluent, careful assessment of Rorty. Grippe is like the best of teachers: able to show fault in a way that does not deflate the effort of the student, eager to see his pupil succeed but unwilling to give an undeserved grade.

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There are two texts in this short work of Sullivan’s. The first is a philosophy of jurisprudence. The legal concepts of community, individual rights, and participatory democracy are clear as he wrestles with the value of philosophy, as it informs or does not inform today’s courts. As such, the book makes a great sequel to Louis Menand’s The Metaphysical Club, particularly Menand’s parts about Oliver Wendel Holmes, Jr.

The second interwoven text is a timely and precise philosophical work on contemporary pragmatism. Just because philosophers claims to be pragmatists does not mean that they are or that they even fall within the tradition of pragmatism, and Sullivan takes them to task. His diagnosis is precise, showing the root of their malady, but then he shows with cogent arguments how pragmatic thought can inform the issue at hand.

Sullivan uses a Deweyan pragmatic perspective, but is not afraid to call forth Peirce or James to show accurately what and why pragmatism is what it is. He also uses the pragmatists’ texts to point the way to how pragmatism can still serve society today in a viable way, without the pitfalls that so many of the neo- (or pseudo-) pragmatist take. While these newcomers select parts of a pragmatic vision for their purpose, they soon discard the essence for personal flights into far less productive ground.

While these pseudo-pragmatists veer from cohesive and coherent philosophy, their errors have allowed pundits to
level claims against pragmatism, rather than at the
fallacies of this new breed. Sullivan shows how and where
this breed twisted away from the pragmatism of Dewey,
James, and Peirce, and why criticism is just against their
positions. But he diverts the criticism from pragmatic
thought to the ineptitude of the neo-pragmatic thought, and
he shows how a comprehensive understanding of pragmatic
thought could have averted the criticism in the first
place. For example, Sullivan writes:

For Posner, pragmatism is value-neutral and
"lack[s] a moral compass." This account of pragmatism
is shared by many neo-pragmatists as well as their
critics. For example, Brian Tamanaha has stated that
"pragmatism is empty of substance," and he contents
that "[p]ragmatism does not say what the good is, how
to live, what economic or political system to develop,
or anything else of that nature." Lynn Baker’s
critique of the pragmatism of Richard Rorty has in
mind a similar account of pragmatism." [p. 60]

Sullivan affirms the criticism against the neo-
pragmatists, then, shows that the issue, in this case, is
one of understanding the ends in view, arguing
"[p]ragmatism does demand the critical assessment of our
ends." He then raises the typical questions at the heart of
pragmatic philosophy as pertains to ends, and explicates
how Dewey and others addressed the questions.

Sullivan’s chapter titles alone, are instructive of
his thesis, “Taking rights and pragmatism seriously,”
“Posner’s unpragmatic pragmatism,” “Pragmatism, geneology,
and democracy.” He systematically disembowels
communitarianism showing an illness of modern American
thought that bifurcates the individual and the community in
examining the role of rights. He corrects the inaccuracies
in recent dialogs with Ronald Dworkin, Richard Posner,
Thomas Grey, Richard Rorty, and others.

While he addresses the philosophy of these scholars,
at issue is the role of the individual within a democratic
community, where laws and the judiciary define rights. The
balance between the courts and the legislature maintains
and protects individual and community rights. That balance
requires a process with end in view. He writes in the
introduction:
Rights that are claimed in theory but that do not work in practice are, from a pragmatic perspective, not rights at all because the process of protecting them undermines the reciprocity between individual and community essential for democracy. The pragmatic reconstruction of this difficulty reconceives the nature of democracy and explains how the judiciary is well-suited through judicial review to extend rather than undermine democracy. In the end, a pragmatic reconstruction of law and an expansion of democracy are seen to walk hand in hand. [p.5]

Cogent, succinct, precise, accurate, and readable are the words that come to mind upon reading Sullivan’s text. With the skill of a surgeon he has gone to the exact points of error of several pseudo-pragmatic philosophers and cut out their flaw, or at least pin-pointed it with precision, and shown why the flaw is problematic within a philosophy of jurisprudence. More importantly, he has revived the nature of pragmatic thought in understanding the functionality of rights and democracy within a community of individuals.

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Whether we know it or not, we are all Emerson’s children. Any philosophical inquiry which fails to take Emerson’s insights into account has thereby deprived itself of an invaluable conversation partner. As a recognition of Emerson’s centrality to philosophical discourse, the project of _Emerson & Self-Culture_ is one of great potential value to the future practice of philosophy. However, with the exception of a few notable moments, Lysaker’s book largely fails to deliver upon its promise. If Emerson’s insight is to have the influence upon philosophy that it rightfully ought to have, this will require a fundamental transformation of the terms in which we read, interpret, and discuss his work. We ought to regard Emerson less as a poet of illumination than as a thinker whose work remains incomplete; one whose views need to be synoptically drawn together, systematically analyzed, and critically interrogated just like the views of our contemporaries.