punishment and responsibility or in legal epistemology (such as evidence and legal procedure). For those interested in legal pragmatism, other work includes Beth Singer’s work on rights, including her *Pragmatism, Rights, and Democracy* (Fordham University Press, 1998), Robert Westbrook’s *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Cornell University Press, 2005), and Cheryl Misak’s *Truth, Politics. Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (Routledge, 2000).

David Boersema


The purpose of this edition of Emerson’s most popular book is primarily pedagogical. The subtitle says it all: “A New Study Edition with Notes, Philosophical Commentary, and Historical Contextualization.” As such it is meant for readers who need help understanding anachronistic diction and historical references. If, as books like *The Twilight of American Culture* (2001) and *The Dumbest Generation* (2008) report, almost all of classical knowledge is unknown to students, then Emerson, who consistently invokes the likes of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Coleridge, Burke, and Byron, not to mention August Boeckh and Johann Winckelmann, would be impenetrable without Callaway’s diligent annotations. The only substantive change to the original text, published in 1870, is the modernization of the spelling. The abundant notes, located at end of page, are “to assist students and the educated public in a deeper reading of Emerson’s text as a contribution to American and to world philosophy.” Ah, but the price. ‘Tis a wee bit dear, as they say in Ireland.

The work itself consists of twelve chapters titled in sequence as follows: Society and Solitude; Civilization; Art; Eloquence; Domestic Life; Farming; Works and Days; Books; Clubs; Courage; Success; Old Age. These chapters are introduced by the editor’s essay, “Emerson and the Law of Freedom.” In it, Callaway explains that the Emersonian antinomies are never reconciled but stand in permanent tension due to the “law” of personal freedom. Recurrent themes and problems, which can be traced back to both Stoicism and Platonic Idealism, take their place beside and set limits to the universalistic rhetoric of which Emerson is fond. Likewise, raw and salty New England, where Emerson traveled and lectured, kept his feet on the ground while his head stirred the clouds. He gained strength from his writing and lecturing, which are physical activities when all is said and done. It appears that his earthbound destiny helped give rise to the element of cheerful wisdom in his philosophy, which he derived to a large extent from encountering diverse peoples in New England and abroad. Although the circumstances of these people vary immensely, Emerson says, their portion of happiness does not: “the beggar cracking fleas in the sunshine under a hedge, and the duke rolling by in his chariot; the girl equipped for her first ball, and the orator returning triumphant from the debate, had different means, but the same quality of pleasant excitement” (108). This democratic spectacle of mirth is something Emerson took to heart, and appreciated with portentous phrasing in his review of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

For a long time Emerson depended on and appreciated the subsidies of churches, schools, and clubs for his writing and lectures; this funding put a roof over his head so he could continue
his work. But he craved privacy all the same. Emerson understands the emotional obscurity integral to the remoteness of writers and thinkers. “The dearest friends are separated by impassable gulfs,” he says in the lead chapter. “Solitude is impracticable, and society is fatal.” These pithily expressed intuitions evince the unbridgeable distance between the philosopher, who holds himself to austere vows and standards invisible to outsiders, and the common folk, whom he loves and secretly envies for their apparent simplicity of lifestyle. Emerson was majestic to others, but a timorous rebel to himself. The nonconformity which was his finest virtue was not part of the virtuousness for which he was praised in public. In the final analysis, social life represents for Emerson a false plentitude that pays his wage but never satisfies his intellect or shows his true self, never gets the writing done that he feels he must do. And yet, one hears few complaints and a great deal of enthusiasm.

In this regard the pages of Society and Solitude demonstrate the concrete optimism that Nietzsche so admired Emerson for sustaining throughout his writings. The revolutionary happiness of knowing announced in Die fröhliche Wissenschaft (1882) was already fully demonstrated (one might even say performed) in the pages of Emerson by 1870. The joyful wisdom seems to issue from the intrinsic relation that Emerson establishes in his prose and poetry with the world of nature, and from his sociality tempered by New England wit and toughness of character. One should not underestimate the tonic effect issuing from Emerson’s long walks in Concord by himself and with his cantankerous companion, Thoreau. (William James would find the Adirondacks equally salubrious.) The personal outcome is an elevated and exposed state of soul that, at least to Nietzsche, seemed to be a self-overcoming of nihilism. The origin of this intensified, blissful existence poses a conundrum for Nietzsche, who was conscious when reading Emerson that his own knowledge had “not yet learned to smile.” The outdoor antics of Zarathustra are a sort of alpine version of what we take for granted in the Yankee peregrinations of Emerson and Whitman. For them, exteriority, which Levinas locates in the face of the Other, is the otherness of both persons and places, and proves an antidote to the melancholy that brings down many writers, artists, and philosophers.

But is exteriority enough? It can be argued that a powerful will or creative impetus is also required for self-overcoming. Nietzsche sensed that Emerson’s cheerful wisdom might have been a necessary illusion, a simulacrum of cheer and harmony, all the more powerful for its longstanding endurance precisely as an illusion. In his essay, “Works and Days,” included in the present volume, Emerson refers to the “illusory energy of Vishnu.” This is the same veil of Maya that Nietzsche first discovered upon reading Schopenhauer, only to find it more powerfully incorporated by Emerson’s thought. Emerson: “Such are the days,--the earth is the cup, the sky is the cover, of the immense bounty of nature which is offered us for our daily ailment; but what a force of illusion begins life with us, and attends us to the end!” (107). Here is the prose of the “cosmic” Emerson that emboldened Nietzsche to overcome Schopenhauer’s pessimism. Nietzsche did so through the ecstatic doctrine of the Eternal Return, delivering thought from resentment and regret and making it more, well, Emersonian.

Society and Solitude is indicative of the public and vigorously heterogeneous content of Emerson’s thought. Only in the lead essay, “Society and Solitude,” do we glimpse the sometime

Douglas McDermid has written a fascinating little book relating traditional pragmatism—especially in the guise of Jamesian thought—to its reinvention in the work of Richard Rorty. The Jamesian title might mislead readers a bit since the book does not pretend to cover and assess in any detail the history and development of a variety of pragmatisms. The project is much more focused and sets out: 1. To reveal for contemporary readers what most scholars of pragmatism have known for many years, that pragmatism is not averse to some version of representationalism that allows for an intelligible discussion of truth; 2. To establish Rorty’s various reasons for a rejection of epistemological projects, and 3. To show that the old (especially James) and the new (Rorty) are not at all the same notions of pragmatism. In the end McDermid hints at his own temptation to side with the earlier pragmatism. Indeed, he says many things that are reminiscent of Peirce’s work, making one wonder why he did not include more direct conversation regarding Peirce. The book is clearly and cleverly written in a philosophical language that should appeal to mainstream philosophers.

The book is divided into two sections. The first deals with early pragmatism and its relation to the correspondence theory of truth. The second considers Rorty’s neo-pragmatic resistance to something one might call pragmatist epistemology. The first section raises the standard nominalistic complaints concerning the correspondence theory of truth—that there is no thing called a world to which our language is comparing itself and, that if there were, the language could not escape itself to make the comparison. McDermid is adept at showing that criticisms developing along these lines do not really address Jamesian and Deweyan pragmatism. He sees the subtlety in James’s work and provides a good analytic antidote to Bertrand Russell’s caricatures of James and Dewey. He notes the various places where James respects the idea that there is a real that constrains our perception and our thought even if it is not simply mimicked by our ideas. James’s pragmatic realism is nevertheless, as he shows, tempered by the Kantian notion that the inquirer plays a role in the interpretation of the constraining real and, most importantly, in selecting what is to be observed. The upshot for McDermid is “that the brand of constructivism espoused by the classical pragmatists—unlike that advanced by some contemporary neo-pragmatists—is actually consonant with the cause of realist correspondence”