Philosophy Americana
Douglas Anderson

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Notes

INTRODUCTION
INFRINGEMENT, TEACHING, AND THE INSANE
ANGELS OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Our Cultural Invisibility

1. All references to the writings of John Dewey will be to Early Works (EW), 5 vols. (1967–72); Middle Works (MW), 15 vols. (1976–83); and Later Works (LW), 17 vols. (1981–90), all edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press). They are listed in the text with abbreviated titles and volume and page numbers.

2. I will employ the term “tychism” throughout the book. Charles Peirce coined the term to indicate a belief that some real chance was a feature of the universe. It was tychism that most attracted William James’s interest in Peirce’s early cosmological essays.


10. Ibid., p. 59.


17. Jerry Garcia is the better known of these two, having been for many years the musical center of the Grateful Dead. Warren Zevon, perhaps best known for his song “Werewolves of London,” was another offbeat California musician of the 1970s. The point here is that both Zevon and Garcia, as ironist, poetic, social critics, remind me of Thoreau’s similar role in his hometown of Concord, Massachusetts.


19. The song of this name can be found on Charlie Daniels’s 1982 album *Windows* (Epic 85443).
20. Some of these letters can be seen at the Experience Music Project in Seattle, WA.


**CHAPTER ONE**

**SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE ORIGINS OF PRAGMATISM**


4. Ibid., p. 593.

5. Ibid.


12. James, *The Will to Believe*, p. 64.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**ROYCE, PHILOSOPHY, AND WANDERING**

*A Job Description*


4. Ibid., p. 35.

5. Ibid., p. 348.

6. Ibid., p. 349.


9. This description of God interestingly foreshadows Royce’s later move to focus on community, because a God who is at home as a wanderer cannot merely be a static totality.


11. Ibid.


13. Ibid., p. 54.


15. Ibid.


17. Ibid., p. 154.

18. Ibid., p. xv.

19. Ibid., p. 2.

20. Ibid., p. xv.

21. Ibid., p. 2.

22. Ibid., p. 3.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 5.

25. Ibid., pp. 28–29.

26. Ibid., p. 374.


1. I use the word "wilderness" here as did European–Americans in the nineteenth century. However, what is wilderness for some is "home" for others, and it is important to keep these perspectives in mind. As Bruce Wilshire suggests, some persons have a "wilderness self" that allows them to be at home in wild situations (*Wild Hunger: The Primal Roots of Modern Addiction* [Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998], pp. 84–85). Nevertheless, the European–American version is useful in establishing the analogy that Bugbee develops.

2. Henry Bugbee chose to do philosophy differently in the 1950s. *The Inward Morning* was unique and drew significant praise, but was held to be something other than philosophy. After working for several years at Harvard, Bugbee was let go for the usual reason—he didn’t publish enough in the right places. Nevertheless, W. V. Quine, who worked with Bugbee for a time, recalled that “Henry is the ultimate exemplar of the examined life.”


3. Ibid., p. 76.


5. Ibid., p. 39.

6. John Anderson, *The Individual and the New World: A Study of Man’s Existence Based upon American Life and Thought* (State College, PA: Bald Eagle Press, 1955), p. 20. Anderson and Bugbee were good friends and long-time correspondents; Bald Eagle Press was the initial publisher of *The Inward Morning* in 1958.


8. Ibid., p. 107.


12. Ibid., p. 164.

13. Ibid., p. 209.


16. Ibid., p. 15.
17. Ibid., p. 93.
19. Ibid., p. 43.
22. Ibid., p. 51.
23. Ibid., p. 53.
24. Ibid., p. 83.
25. Ibid., p. 53.
26. Ibid., p. 66.
27. Ibid., p. 170.
28. Ibid., p. 155.
29. Ibid., p. 96.
30. Ibid., pp. 144, 141.
31. Ibid., p. 160.
32. Ibid., p. 155.
33. Ibid., p. 126.
34. Ibid., p. 128.
35. Ibid., p. 220.
36. Ibid., p. 152.
39. Ibid., p. 158.
41. Ibid., p. ix–7.
42. Ibid., p. ix–6.
43. Ibid., p. ix–9.
44. Ibid., p. ix–6.
45. Ibid.

**Chapter Four**

**Working Certainty and Deweyan Wisdom**

2. Ibid., p. 233.
3. Ibid., p. 232.
4. Ibid., p. 233.
5. By “belief” I do not mean a dead proposition but, following Peirce and Hocking, that upon which I am willing to act, a living animation of will.
7. Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being (South Bend, IN: Regnery/Gateway, 1950; new ed., 1968), vol. 2, pp. 79–80. Marcel is here discussing “belief taken in its full or comprehensive reality” and not “a particular belief.” Nevertheless, I think his point is effective at least as a description of what I have in mind for our disclosed intuitions and found inheritances.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 113.

CHAPTER FIVE
WILDNESS AS POLITICAL ACT

2. Ibid., p. 821.
3. Ibid., p. 592.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 106. Richard Drinnon notes this mediation in “Thoreau’s Politics of the Upright Man,” in Thoreau in Our Season, ed. John H. Hicks (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966). Thoreau’s differences with the social reformers, like Emerson’s, resulted directly from his different conception of political action and what constituted ameliorative work. By and large, he saw reformers as unfree—as disciples of one sort or another, or as marketers.
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8. Ibid., p. 594.
9. Ibid., p. 624.
10. Ibid., p. 593.

11. Numerous folk songs attest to this role of the walker. The opening line of “Black Jack Davy” is exemplary: “Black Jack Davy is the name that I bear; I been alone in the forest a long time.”


16. It is important to note here that Thoreau’s Walker walks with a different sort of aimlessness—a willingness to get lost. Whereas the vagabond is merely wandering, the saunterer wanders with a generic aim whose specificity can be found only in the walking.


18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., p. 624.


22. Ibid., p. 594.


26. Ibid., p. 602.


30. Ibid., p. 650.

31. Ibid., p. 624.

32. Ibid., p. 119.
CHAPTER SIX

"AFTER ALL, HE’S JUST A MAN"

The Wild Side of Life in Country Music


2. Note, for example, the political risk undertaken by the Dixie Chicks in disagreeing with the “war” in Iraq. It appears that from early on, country women had a better sense of the “border life” Thoreau described. It’s not that they were less “wild,” but, perhaps because of the sexism they suffered under, they understood how to use their wildness more effectively.


4. Ibid., p. 169.

5. Ibid., p. 179.

6. Ibid., p. 311.

7. The song, written by Tammy Wynette and producer Billy Sherrill, appeared in late December 1968 and can be found on Wynette’s 1969 album Stand by Your Man (Epic/Legacy) as well as on any number of collections and reprints. In a 2003 poll conducted by Country Music Television, “Stand by Your Man” was voted the top song in country music history.


13. Clearly there are a number of male country stars one might use to investigate the male world of country music. I leave Elvis out of account here primarily because of his complexity and because his influence moved so directly beyond the world of country music. Others left out of consideration here include Lefty Frizzell, Merle Haggard, David Alan Coe, Roger Miller, Willie Nelson, and Jerry Jeff Walker, to name but a few.


16. Escott, Hank Williams, p. 64.

18. Escott, Hank Williams, p. 52.

19. Ibid., p. 46.

20. Out of this Austin movement there developed a long and rich tradition of alternative country music that is not driven by high-end income or constrained by the mainstream, crossover sounds of Nashville.

21. If one suspects that the Grateful Dead are inappropriate in this context, it is important to note both Garcia’s roots in bluegrass and the various country influences on his style that can be found throughout the musical history of the Dead. Jackson Browne, although he blends folk and rock, writes with a strong country flavor. See, for example, his “Shaky Town” on Running on Empty.


23. Ibid., p. 224.


31. Ibid., p. 148.

CHAPTER SEVEN
WILLIAM JAMES AND THE WILD BEASTS OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL DESERT


3. William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature (New York: Collier Books, 1961), pp. 100–1. It is interesting to note that James includes religious officials among those who engage in this rejection of religious experiences. It was certainly an issue among reli-
gious intellectuals who did not want religion’s integrity muddied up with actual religious experiences. This remains an issue today, for example, among mainline Protestant groups.


7. Ibid., p. 341.

8. Ibid., p. 48.


13. Ibid.


16. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 34.

17. Ibid.


19. Ibid., p. 106.

20. Ibid., p. 124.

21. Ibid., p. 47.

22. Ibid., p. 211.


25. Richard Gale, in *The Divided Self of William James* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), argues for a systematic and irreparable division in James’s life and work. His claim is that a “mystical” James eventually overcomes a “Promethean” James. Though I am not fully convinced of the victory of the mystical James, I am convinced that Gale’s work is an important contribution to the reading of James’s religious work.


28. Ibid., p. 290.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 284.
34. Ibid., p. 175.
40. Ibid., p. 285.
41. Ibid., p. 32.
44. Ibid.
46. James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 408.

**Chapter Eight**

**John Dewey’s Sensible Mysticism**

3. Ibid., p. 352.
4. Ibid., p. 353.
5. I borrow “synechistic” from Peirce; “synechism” was his theory that the world is at bottom marked by continuity.
10. Ibid., p. 22.

**CHAPTER NINE**

*“Born to Run”*

Male Mysticism on the Road

2. Ibid., pp. 343–344.
3. Springsteen’s lyrics can be found at Brucespringsteen.net (SONY Music, 2001). Copyright, Bruce Springsteen (ASCAP).
5. See univie.ac.at/Alistic/easy rider/dtat/FeatWilling.htm.
12. See *Tracy Chapman* (Sbk/Elektra, 1988).

**CHAPTER TEN**

Philosophy as Teaching

James’s “Knight Errant,” Thomas Davidson

2. Ibid., p. 85.
3. Mildred Hooker, notes in the archives of the Keene Valley, New York, Public Library. Filed under VF Glenmore. I am indebted to the library and to those who organize and maintain the archives for external researchers.


10. Ibid., p. 34. Davidson’s resistance here is similar to Dewey’s worry over the mechanical inflexibility of Marxism; however, on the whole, he is more attuned to James’s emphasis on the individual’s need for a creative life.

11. Ibid., p. 27.

12. Ibid., p. 37.

13. Ibid., p. 93.


19. Ibid., p. 258.

20. Ibid., p. 257.


22. Davidson, *Education as World-Building*, p. 17.

23. Ibid., p. xxv.


25. Ibid., p. 250.


29. James, *Memories and Studies*, p. 89.

30. Dewey did purchase land next to Davidson’s Glenmore in the Adirondacks and participated in some of the summer discussions. Nevertheless, the two men were temperamentally quite different and noted their differences more than their similarities.


32. Ibid., p. 34.
33. Ibid., p. 44.
34. Ibid., p. 69.
36. Ibid., p. 265.
43. Davidson, Education as World-Building, p. xxxiii.
45. Ibid.
46. James, Memories and Studies, pp. 87–88.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
LEARNING AND TEACHING
Gambling, Love, and Growth
(with Michael Ventimiglia)

5. For an interesting discussion of the loss of teacher autonomy in British schools in the second half of the twentieth century, see Gary McCulloch,


7. I have no quarrel with the establishment of standards. However, standards need to be understood not as narrow formulas but as generic, regulative ideals that may be met in a variety of ways. It is always important to keep in mind the question What are the best ways to achieve one’s standards and to ensure they have a lasting effect?

8. Rebecca Hawthorne tells the interesting story of middle school teacher Cecilia Braddock. Braddock exercises her autonomy and displays all the traits of an outstanding teacher. However, to do so, she requires the assistance of her department chair: “Cecilia Braddock’s department chair acts as a buffer between Cecilia and the organization in which she works, protecting Mrs. B’s highly prized autonomy by mediating her organizational obligations.” Braddock’s case is not an unusual one. Rebecca Hawthorne, Curriculum in the Making: Teacher Choice and the Classroom Experience (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992), p. 58.


10. It is one of the tragedies of our culture that we persistently work to lower the status of teachers. It is almost as if we culturally feel a need to reduce teachers to an ancillary status to make sure they don’t threaten someone else’s status.


12. It is worth noting that the strand of postmodern thought which argues that all canons are socially constructed along political lines maintains its own canon which includes Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, and others. The important point is that the success of Derrida and Foucault, for example, is in large measure a function of their extensive knowledge of and familiarity with the history of Western philosophy and their ability to write sophisticated philosophical texts. Their texts are not chosen randomly or arbitrarily, but because they measure up to a working standard of philosophical expertise.

13. Though discussions of cherishing love or concern are not easy to find in textbooks for teaching teachers, they are not entirely absent from general discussions of teaching. See, for example, Alicia Fernandez, “Leadership in an Era of Change,” in The Life and Work of Teachers, ed. Day et al., pp. 239–55.
CHAPTER TWELVE
EMERSON’S PLATONIZING OF AMERICAN THOUGHT


3. Most recently, Richard Rorty has chosen not to identify himself with philosophy, in part it seems, because of the constraints the name of philosophy tries to impose on one’s thinking and writing. In Francis J. McConnell, Borden Parker Bowne: His Life and Philosophy (New York: Abingdon Press, 1929), p. 279.


6. Theodore Parker, “The Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson,” in Konvitz, The Recognition of Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 34.

7. For an account arguing that “pleasure” is pretty much the extent of Emerson’s importance, see James Truslow Adams, “Emerson Re-read,” in Konvitz, The Recognition of Ralph Waldo Emerson, pp. 182–193.


9. Stanley Cavell’s work on Emerson often raises this point—as, for example, when in his “The Division of Talent” (Critical Inquiry 11, no. 4 [June 1985]: 519–38) he places Emerson in the context of a Romanticism “whose defining mission” is “the redemption of philosophy and poetry by one another” (p. 521). Two points, however, make me shy from following Cavell more closely: (1) he tends to underplay Emerson’s influence on later American thinkers—an influence important to the way I am reading Emerson, and...
his labeling of Emerson as Romantic, while obviously accurate to some degree, seems to miss the streaks of shrewd, pragmatic commonsensism found throughout Emerson’s work.


15. Ibid., p. 136.


17. Kenneth M. Harris, “Emerson’s Second Nature,” in Emerson: Prospect and Retrospect, ed. Joel Porte (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 40. Harris, in his discussion of Emerson’s defining of “nature” in “Nature” (Essays: Second Series), also points out that Emerson probably intends this defining to be philosophical. Furthermore, he argues for the subtlety of the second “Nature” vis-à-vis the first—a point many Emerson scholars seem unwilling to admit.


20. There is some irony here, however, insofar as the literary appropriation of Emerson’s phrases and sentences has tended to mark him as a writer of quips and maxims.


23. Samuel Crothers, Ralph Waldo Emerson (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1921), p. 11.


26. W. T. Harris, “The Dialectic Unity in Emerson’s Prose,” Journal of Speculative Philosophy no. 18 (April 1887). Harris’s reading of Emerson, while perhaps in part too Hegelian, is extremely insightful and, so far as I can tell, has for the most part been overlooked.


29. Glen Johnson, “The Making of Emerson’s Essays,” dissertation, Indiana University (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1976). Johnson’s concern is only with the first edition (1841) of Essays, which does not include, of course, the Second Series.

30. Ibid., p. 7.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid., p. 11.

33. Although there is no room to make the case here, I see the essays aligned in a reciprocal order, as if meant to face and confront each other. Roughly, I align “History” and “Nominalist and Realist,” “Self-Reliance” and “Politics,” “Compensation” and “Nature.” Then, collectively, “Spiritual Laws,” “Love,” “Friendship,” “Prudence,” and “Heroism” face “Gifts,” “Manners,” and “Character.” Finally, “The Over-Soul” and “Circles” match “Experience,” and “Intellect” and “Art” are coupled with “The Poet.” I exclude “New England Reformers” because it was added later.


36. In “The Dialectical Unity in Emerson’s Prose” Harris offers dialectical readings of “Experience,” Nature, and “The Over-Soul.” Again, despite the narrowing effect of his Hegelianism, Harris begins to suggest what it means to take Emerson seriously as a philosopher on his own terms.

37. It is true that the address “New England Reformers” was added to the end of the original eight essays. However, Emerson added it only after his publisher maintained that the initial collection was too short. Moreover, the address, in its emphasis on a particular aspect of lived experience, remains consistent with my general description of the two series of essays.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

AMERICAN LOSS IN CAVELL’S EMERSON


3. I take James’s absence to be equally important. However, that marks a second project. For now, I confine myself to the limited mention of Dewey that Cavell provides.


6. This failure to follow Rorty is perhaps less ironic than it seems, since Rorty squeezes much of the Emersonianism out of Dewey by eliminating interest in Dewey’s metaphysical thinking in Experience and Nature and Art as Experience.


13. Ibid., p. 43.

14. I mean to employ the ambiguity in the term “culture” here. Dewey’s rich notion of culture may in fact be part of the source of Cavell’s resistance to him. Cavell, in calling on psychoanalysis and modern art, seems to have in mind a more “cultured” culture. If this is the case, the challenge is for Cavell, not Dewey, to demonstrate his Emersonianism.

15. “Moral perfectionism” is Cavell’s term, and while he wants its meaning, in Emersonian fashion, to be exemplified by and disclosed through the whole of his text, he does offer a brief definition at the outset of the book: “Perfectionism, as I think of it, is not a competing theory of the moral life, but something like a dimension or tradition of the moral life that spans the course of Western thought and concerns what used to be called the state of one’s soul” (C:2).

16. Although Cavell does suggest that elements of this description fit Emerson, he does not show just how close the fit might be. Consider, for example, the following from “Self Reliance”: “Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day” (CW, 2:33).


18. Ibid., p. 81.


20. Cavell displays this same misreading of Dewey’s notion of intelligence in *This New Yet Unapproachable America*, where he argues that for Dewey “the mission of philosophy is to get the Enlightenment to happen” (p. 95).

21. In the one place where Dewey is mentioned, Cavell again tries to separate him from Emerson. In discussing Emerson’s suggestion in “Experience” that certain features in experience veil us from nature, Cavell thinks he finds a significant point of difference:

An opening and recurrent target of Dewey’s *Experience and Nature* is thinkers who take experience to “veil or screen” us from nature. Its dissonance with Emerson is interesting in view of Dewey’s being the major American philosopher who, without reservation, declared Emerson to be a philosopher—without evidently finding any use for him. (C:40)
It is interesting that Cavell should read both Dewey and Emerson with such abandon. Dewey did not, in his attacks on classical empiricism, mean that all experience speaks the truth, but that experience is not an epistemological prison in all its guises. Likewise, Emerson does not make experience necessarily imprisoning, but potentially (and in many cases effectively) so. For Emerson, the answer to skepticism was not philosophy alone but courage—a point I am not sure Cavell admits. The radical separation of Emerson and Dewey by way of their accounts of experience simply does not make sense.

22. I am well aware that my reading of Emerson here is much more straightforward than Cavell might wish. However, while I recognize the importance of reading Emerson with the irony and daring Cavell provides, I do not think the reading of Emerson ends there. However much Emerson sees philosophy transformed in his own Platonic adoption of the balance of poetry and philosophy, he still acknowledges strands of traditional “first philosophy” in his thinking.


24. Contemporary students of Dewey might be as uncomfortable as Cavell with the lineage I am suggesting here. However, my point is not to reduce one thinker to the other, but to show that by seeing the lineage we can find in both Emerson and Dewey possibilities that we might otherwise be tempted to overlook.


26. In “Fate” Emerson takes up the presence of various encounters of and resistances to the developing selves of a community. His interest in environing circumstances also shows up clearly in ”Nature” and ”New England Reformers.”

27. McDermott, Streams of Experience, p. 32.

28. See Cavell, This New Yet Unapproachable America and In Quest of the Ordinary.


30. McDermott, Streams of Experience, p. 35.

Chapter Fourteen
Emerson and Kerouac
Grievous Angels of Hope and Loss

2. Parsons’s death and the burning of his body in Joshua Tree National Forest by his friend Phil Kaufman have become the subjects of a film, *Grand Theft Parsons*.


10. Ibid., p. 7.

11. Ibid., p. 292.

12. Ibid., p. 293.


14. Ibid.


16. Ibid., pp. 59, 64.


**Chapter Fifteen**

**Pragmatic Intellectuals**

*Facing Loss in the Spirit of American Philosophy*


10. James, Pragmatism, p. 60.

11. Ibid., p. 222.


16. See, for example, ibid., pp. 90ff.


20. This is noticeable, for example, in Rorty’s persistent practice of dividing issues into two camps and then opting for one camp and deriding the other. The irony involves asking why a poet would take such an approach.


23. James, Pragmatism, p. 6.

24. Ibid., p. 51.

25. Eugene Miller’s collection of his father’s correspondence in the Williams College Archives, Williamstown, MA, p. 369.

