

CONTENDING WITH
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global, even resists the global (even while it universalizes), then the idea of one of philosophy's tasks as bringing a culture to consciousness of itself can be done only by one who touches that culture's singular unconsciousness. I do not say this can be done only by one who is native to the culture, any more than I say that those native to the culture are mostly in a position to accomplish it. A further answer is that the America I have wished to discover (Emerson insisting, in effect, that it exists only in its discovery) is the America in which Emerson and Thoreau oppose its view of itself as destined to what Critchley calls continentalism, say in the form of Manifest Destiny and wars with Mexico. Still further, or further back in my mind, is Locke's unforgettable remark that in the beginning all the world was America. The form the thought releases in me is one begun in Emerson's suggestion that America does not exist, or is not inhabited, that it has not been approached and arrived at. The thought, panic-struck, is that there may be no longer an America, not because of its global dispersion, but because the idea of democracy, of inclusive, equitable, mutual legislation, cannot be mocked indefinitely without threatening to disappear. My characterization of Emerson and Thoreau as philosophers of immigrancy (a kind of opposite of Heidegger's thoughts of dwelling and building) includes the sense that it is apt to be in memories of oppression that freedom remains heart's blood. Yet some are capable of imagining oppression as if they are remembering suffering it.

James Conant patiently and satisfyingly identifies and questions various ways of mistaking my interest in discovering an American difference in philosophy, and goes on constructively to locate the conceptual field of my concern by deploying Kierkegaard's distinction between subjective and objective categories in order to define "the peculiar concept of America," and in a large middle set of sections omitted from the present version of his text, he adduces details of a project of Seferis's that puts a comparable pressure on the concept of Greece. I appreciate the coup of the idea—apart from the intrinsic interest of the Seferis case—in this way of recommending a hesitation in concluding that the issues raised for me in the concept of America are "a fuss about nothing at all" (Conant, p. 60). Among the other comparable concepts Conant cites, beyond Kierkegaard's "Christian" and "Dane," are "husband" and "philosopher" (*ibid.*, p. 57). Since the Seferis material is not before us, I shall focus for a moment, out of the array Conant presents of peculiar concepts, on that of "philosopher."

It is my impression that my seeking an American difference of philosophy in the writing of Emerson creates an impatience with respect to the concept of America, but something more like disapproval with respect to the concept of philosophy—disapproval, I suppose, particularly with the implication that there is more than one way, even conflicting ways, of becoming, hence recognizing and evaluating the work of, a philosopher. (I assume, perhaps wrongly, that it goes without saying that I cannot be understood to recommend that all—American?—philosophers turn to a study of Emerson. My rescue effort, as I sometimes grandly think of it, is strictly to lend an ear to those who, drawn by the knowledge of Emerson as a scrupulous thinker, are apt to be dissuaded by reasons external to philosophy from following their attraction. If that attraction, pursued, is not enough

to undo what I call the repression of Emerson as a thinker by his culture, then there is no hope for it.)

The peculiar difference in the instance of the concept of philosophy, using Conant's application of Kierkegaard, is suggested in the very fact of objective ways of challenging being a Christian, a husband, an American (no record of baptism, no acceptable document of divorce from a previous marriage, defective naturalization papers), whereas we all recognize cases of significant philosophical voices who have no institutional credentials for their authorization to compose philosophy. Nietzsche is perhaps the most lurid modern case here; Rousseau and Hume would be other interesting cases. Suppose we say that the criterion of being a philosopher (after its self-distinction from being a scientist, or a theologian, or an artist) in the absence of objective credentials, is that other philosophers recognize the work as pertinent to their thinking. But is not that really all that shows any work to be philosophy, since one with objective credentials may produce work that is not (even does not purport to be) philosophy? The regress (who recognizes the philosopher who recognizes another philosopher?) expresses the fact that philosophy can accept no authority beyond itself. But there is something more at stake.

If it is taken to follow from the criterion of recognition that there is no formal criterion of philosophy (for example, the presence of an elaborate and predictable form of argumentation), then what is looked for in the recognition of philosophy is, let us say, its seriousness. (Two summers ago at the annual Wittgenstein congress in Kirchberg, the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Wittgenstein's death, half of the members of a panel on the reception of *Philosophical Investigations* were prepared to say either that that text is not philosophy, or consists of work so poor in its self-understanding as to belie any effort to promote it as representing a signal philosophical achievement. I am taking the perpetual existence of a conflict so fundamental within the ranks of professional philosophers as a mark of the nature of philosophy, in particular, in our age, that it is not a (function of) science. That is to say, it is a mark of its nature that the claim that philosophy is science, a particular body of advancing knowledge, must be contentious. Then the persistent threat to philosophy is not, or not alone, irrationality (in the form of bias or superstition or fanaticism, any of which argumentation can serve) but fraudulent seriousness, call this sophistry, born with philosophy, as it were its envious (because despised) twin. I take Nietzsche's call for joyfulness, following Emerson's, and Austin's and Wittgenstein's punctual hilarities, as expressive of the irreducible vulnerability of philosophy to false seriousness. I might at the same time take the attraction to the particular originating beauties of analytical philosophy to be its promise of defeating or exiling fraudulence from philosophy from its beginning. (This was explicit, and insistent, in Austin's instruction.) But suppose that philosophy's bad twin is not another than yourself, but rather allegorizes the ineluctable position of finitude, namely, that one's quest for reason and for freedom requires a perpetual overcoming of guises in oneself in which reason and freedom are be-guiled, fixated, stranded.

The kinds of passages I have favored in citing Emerson (e.g., "I would write on the lintels of the door post *Whim*"; "Every word they say chagrins us"; "We lie in the lap of an immense intelligence"; "Patience, patience; we shall win at the last";

“In every work of genius we find our rejected thoughts return to us with an alienated majesty”; “Is it so bad then to be misunderstood?”; etc.) seem to me understandable as concealing/revealing expressions of, tests of, philosophical seriousness. I know of no consecutive prose that internalizes these concealments/revelations more systematically than Emerson’s, including their paradoxes: “We dare not say ‘I think’, ‘I am’, but instead quote some saint or sage”—in this writing of what we must dare to say, has Emerson said it, or just quoted the sage Descartes saying it? Seriousness is here exemplified as a form of originality, of which anyone should be capable, a demand for the origination, call it, of one’s utterances. In Wittgenstein’s manner: “What we do is return words from their metaphysical to their everyday use”—which is to say, a use I can own as mine.

Conant several times recurs to the American tropism toward Europe for ratification of what counts as intellectual sophistication. It is something that Emerson shared, and fought, not alone in others. Let us remember that it is only within well into the twentieth century that American music and American painting have entered into the history of world art (jazz and film are something slightly else). American classical literature traveled more readily; but the current interest I have noticed in Europe in the writing of Melville and of Wallace Stevens takes place in the absence of a knowledge of the ambience of Emerson throughout American writing. My prediction is that the interest will not sustain itself so.

The concept of American philosophy not only contrasts with the concept of European philosophy (I do not guess how well-defined a concept that is) but, in Emerson and in Thoreau, suggests a confluence of Western philosophy, behind Europe’s back, with Eastern philosophy (linking up with a strain in Schopenhauer and in Nietzsche). That there is still need for extravagant measures in counterbalancing Europe’s dictation of intellectual standards (even in an era in which Europe is in many spots adopting Anglo-American analytical philosophy, that is to say, reclaiming some of its loss to England and America of the originators of analytical philosophy from pre-war Vienna and Berlin) is indicated, to my mind, by the current strong pressure in Europe to identify American philosophy as pragmatism.

I do not think Sandra Laugier’s interest, from her European perspective, in the fate of philosophy in America is unrelated to these considerations. I have profited (beyond the incessant opportunities for clarifying and furthering my thoughts in discussing with her problems arising in translating texts of mine) from her insistence, for example, on the idea of Wittgenstein’s and Austin’s philosophizing about, and in, the ordinary, as bearing decisively on the current, dominant discussion in English-speaking philosophy concerning questions of realism and of naturalism. I have no quarrel with what she says in her essay, and what I might add to it would be better explored in less haste in other circumstances. I would like to acknowledge that it is her unusual featuring of Austin in her account of contemporary developments in American philosophy that have helped prompt my return to Austin’s texts with renewed remuneration (as Austin might have been glad to call it). Critchley says, having found my treatment of Emerson “Un-Cavellian,” “What is Cavellian and romantic, in my view, is the endless wriggling between criteria and skepticism, a movement that is manifested in both romantic texts and the *Investigations* them-