

Abstract

This BA thesis aims to investigate the sources and correspondences between the philosophical work of Ralph Waldo Emerson and philosophy of pragmatism. Emerson, as one of the chief figures of American philosophy, laid the cornerstone of pragmatic method of thinking which later became further developed by philosophers such as Richard Bernstein, John Dewey, Sidney Hook, Richard Poirier, Richard Rorty, and William James, among others. The main aim of this thesis is to compare the thoughts of these thinkers to those of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who either directly or indirectly precedes them; and additionally to determine whether these reflections are only correspondences, or whether Emerson was a direct source. This thesis examines four main signs of pragmatic method of thinking, and each of these signs has its own chapter. Chapter 2 explores the Pragmatic method, which focuses on practical differences and conclusions, and compares Emerson mainly to William James and Sidney Hook. Chapter 3 is divided into two subsections: Emerson's Orientation Towards the Future and his sense of Fugacity, or fleetingness. Among others, prophetic pragmatism of Cornel West and Richard Rorty's views on fleetingness of signs are compared to Emerson's works. Chapter 4 examines Emerson's Perspectivism, Creative Metaphors, and Imagination, and concentrates on Richard Poirier's approach to pragmatism; it also overviews the possibilities of how to apply the creative agency in education. Chapter 5 will then consider Emersonian Pragmatic Individualism, which will examine Emerson's position on solitude but also Dewey's mix of solitude and society. Finally, Conclusion will offer an overview of the thesis, and a realization that while Emerson might be notoriously hard to understand, his thoughts serve as a base for one of the most vital contemporary philosophical styles of thought.

Key words: Ralph Waldo Emerson, pragmatism, method, fugacity, future, creativity, metaphor, imagination, individualism, Richard Poirier, John Dewey, education, growth