

Critical Notice of Joseph URBAS, *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson*

New York, Routledge, 2021

Nicholas L. Guardiano



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/2634>

DOI: 10.4000/ejpap.2634

ISSN: 2036-4091

Publisher

Associazione Pragma

Electronic reference

Nicholas L. Guardiano, "Critical Notice of Joseph URBAS, *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson*", *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* [Online], XIII-2 | 2021, Online since 20 December 2021, connection on 07 October 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/2634> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.2634>

This text was automatically generated on 7 October 2022.



Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Critical Notice of Joseph URBAS, *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson*

New York, Routledge, 2021

Nicholas L. Guardiano

REFERENCES

Joseph URBAS, *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York, Routledge, 2021

The Mind and Heart of Ralph Waldo Emerson in World Perspective

- 1 All serious readers of Emerson's writings will gain insight from Joseph Urbas's "historical reconstruction" of Emerson's bottom-line philosophical commitments. By closely engaging an exceptionally wide breadth of primary material – one simply unseen in previous philosophical interpretations of Emerson – *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson* brings to bear the weight of his published and unpublished corpus on the topics of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, esthetics, religion, and politics (the six main chapters of the book). Urbas's technique synthesizes well-known essays and poems together with lesser known lectures, journal entries, letters, and even the sermons of Emerson's brief career as a Unitarian pastor in order to uncover numerous philosophical leitmotifs that occupied Emerson's thinking. The erudition here further extends to the intellectual environment informing the philosopher of Concord, including conversations with other transcendentalists and his readings of classic texts and commentators. The result is a scholarly achievement that is perhaps understated by the book's title. Rather than an abstract accounting of philosophical principles, we are given *The Mind and Soul of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, that is, the thoughts and feelings of an American genius as they grew up in his philosophical *atelier*, percolated throughout his lifetime, and emanated forth into a variety of outlets, both public and private.

- 2 We must recognize just how long awaited this volume is as a scholarly resource. With it we finally escape from the cherry-picking, de-transcendentalized, and “radically linguistic” (Urbas 2021: 7) – not to mention often dogmatic and clearly self-serving – approaches to Emerson that have proliferated over the recent decades. To name just one example here, there is the 2010 collection of essays *The Other Emerson*, edited by Branka Arsić and Cary Wolfe. The postmodernist appropriations of Emerson largely grounded in Cavellian interests and utilizing an anachronistic lens of Continental preoccupations effectively place under erasure Emerson’s central metaphysical and religious claims while further arguing in sophistic fashion through unexplained metaphors and the indulgence of paradox for paradox’s sake. In such scholarly re-imaginings where the goal of re-construction seems to be abandoned, “Emerson” becomes little more than a placeholder for promoting antithetical academic trends. Over the recent decade, Urbas has been fighting against the current of these misunderstandings while closely examining Emerson’s full corpus, as found in his previous book *Emerson’s Metaphysics: A Song of Laws and Causes* (2016) and his articles “How Close a Reader of Emerson Is Stanley Cavell?” (2017), “‘Bi-Polar’ Emerson: ‘Nominalist and Realist’” (2013), and “Cavell’s ‘Moral Perfectionism’ or Emerson’s ‘Moral Sentiment’” (2010). His latest work provides a topically-rounded picture with the same refreshing handling of Emerson’s *actual* worldview. Consequently, the professional credentials of future scholarship on Emerson’s philosophy require closely consulting and contending with its conclusions.
- 3 However, as is the case with Emerson’s own writings – we recall that the published essays were understood by their author as *essais* or “tries” – Urbas’s reconstruction is no final word, nor intended to be so, on essential philosophical issues from an Emersonian perspective. Books “are for nothing but to inspire,” and “it is not instruction, but provocation, that I can receive from another soul” (CW1: 56, 80). Hence, we witness Urbas less using the Conclusion of his book to make a final judgement on Emerson’s philosophical contributions than provoking someone else to conduct that task. Fittingly, in the title of his final section, he alludes to Emerson’s final-but-not-final chapter of *Nature*: “Prospects, or ‘Tolerable Unfinishedness.’” A strand of incompleteness in fact runs throughout the book as it characterizes the medley of leitmotifs separately taken up in the short vignettes that constitute the main chapters. Whether from a critical philosophical or systematic hermeneutical lens, work remains to be done here. For instance, we are provoked to tie together and assess the theoretical merit of Emerson’s proposals about the relationship connecting human beings to nature, the role of feeling in knowledge (an aspect of his *gefühlphilosophie*), and our actual duties toward political and social reform. Urbas gives some hints along the way but mostly leaves unexplored the philosophical work of adjudicating Emerson’s statements about such pressing human concerns of past and present. Similarly, there is work to be done on further locating Emerson’s positions against the background of World historical archetypes both East and West. Emerson was not simply an American philosopher but a World philosopher with deep roots and outward branchings extending across time and place. Many of Urbas’s interpretations conceptually resonate with this greater history, including Spinoza’s pantheism, Neoplatonic cosmology, the Brahmanical self, Stoic ethics, and more close to home, Thoreau’s civil disobedience, John Brown’s moral zealotry, and Charles Peirce’s evolutionary pragmatism. Building on Urbas’s identification of Emerson’s main principles, comparative studies may

determine his place in the history of philosophy, as well as sketch a road-map for identifying the cultural spread of his ideas on like-minded thinkers.

- 4 Taking a closer look at the details while critically building upon Urbas's presentation of Emerson's philosophy, we can examine the metaphysics with an eye for its historical relevance and theoretical coherence. Urbas states that the two "fundamental laws of [Emerson's] metaphysics" are "identity" and "flux," or unity and variety, a sort of ontological "bi-polarity" (Urbas 2021: 15-6). Identity pertains to, at minimal, an "ontological sharing" (*ibid.*: 19) between the beings of mind/nature or self/world, whereas flux to the constant becoming of existing particulars. Furthermore, Urbas identifies a crucial third element in causality or causation – variously associated by Emerson with a primordial Mind, Soul, and Spirit – that serves as "ultimate grounding principle" (*ibid.*: 15) of the bi-polarity. In Emerson's cosmogony, the three come together whereby identity is the origin of all things with flux and variety emerging from it by a causal process (*ibid.*: 272). From a critical perspective, some questions immediately arise: (1) What is meant by identity? Is it absolute unification, similarity, a kind of relationality, or something else? (2) How is variety compatible with this unity, that is, how do the two realities hang together and cross-inform? And (3) What kind of causation are we dealing with: efficient, final, natural, divine, or some other?¹ These are complicated but metaphysically crucial issues to address. Another major concern arises in the central role of causation, and the association of the primary identity with lawfulness, order, and necessary connection. "[R]eality is one great causal continuum, a perfect network of relations and connections. There is 'not a weak or a cracked link in the chain that joins the first and the last of things.' Nothing – no matter how small or remote – falls outside the causal order" (Urbas 2021: 35).² Is this determinism? Urbas does not comment.³ Nonetheless, despite some of Emerson's language, such a position would seem, *prima facie*, incompatible with his many progressive views about self and world.
- 5 I believe we can begin to address some of these concerns by comparing Emerson's metaphysics with that of Plotinus. Plotinus was one of Emerson's major influences and his Neoplatonic cosmology provides a frame of reference for understanding some of the nuances of Emerson's position.⁴ To speak of an original unity from which a plurality of particulars emerge is textbook Plotinus. It is the One existing as absolute unity and necessary condition of all particular units or individual beings. The One further serves as a primal source of the lower hypostases of Intellect and Soul and of the sensible world of nature, as these each sequentially emanate downward into greater fragmentation and multiplicity. Despite its transcendence from our world of ordinary experience, the One is the primordial ontological foundation of the universe. It is a first cause, and in more senses than one. On the one hand, it resembles a formal cause because it is the fundamental essence of unity, a trait that all existing things necessarily possess.⁵ In another way, the One functions as a final cause by being the pure Good toward which living things aspire. But neither of these senses explain how the One is generative of entities other than itself. To satisfy this theoretical need, Plotinus adds that the One must be a kind of productive power, and of such that it does not lose its necessary unity. He compares it to the way the sun radiates light without diminishing. In fact, the One is said to be infinite or boundless, not in size, of course, but in power or potential.⁶ It is ἡ πάντων δύναμις where the particular things of the universe are "not poured out from him [the One] with the result that they diminish him; for there is no bulk; otherwise the things generated from him would be perishable.

But as it is they are eternal, because their principle remains the same, not divided up into them but abiding as a whole” (*Enneads*: VI.9.9). Here we have a productive causal source that is primordial both as origin and abiding presence, and to such a boundless extent that it thoroughly empowers the creative activities of Intellect, Soul, and nature throughout time.

- 6 It is no wonder Neoplatonism gripped Emerson’s interest, a philosopher-poet who when describing the “method of nature” sees that: “We can point nowhere to anything final; but tendency appears on all hands: planet, system, constellation, total nature is growing like a field of maize in July; is becoming somewhat else; is in rapid metamorphosis” (CW1: 126). To support nature in its “ecstatic” productivity toward not a particular end but “a universe of ends” (*ibid.*: 125), he postulated his own version of the Plotinian One in the form of an immanent creative principle that remains wholly preserved throughout the beings of nature both high and low.⁷ This helps us pinpoint what Emerson’s identity of cause amounts to: an abiding boundless plentitude of creative potential. If there is determinism or necessity involved here, I see it more in a necessity to create than a necessity of outcome. Emerson’s universe is a universe of *poiesis* (Urbas 2021: 44, 143-5, 175-8), and we recall his definition of art as the active “need to create” (CW2: 215). Likewise, if there be reign of law, it is in being bound to an effulgent force or a growing tendency, and if there be order, it is a dynamic and metamorphic one.
- 7 The outcome is a transcendentalist metaphysics featuring a line of American Platonism that elevates nature with its organic forms and processes. Creator and created are undivided ends of a spectrum of being that is self-generative and self-amplifying, recalling the dynamic order of nature given in Eriugena’s, Spinoza’s, and F. W. J. Schelling’s twin principles of *natura naturans/natura naturata* (nature naturing/nature natured).⁸ The two modalities exist as complementary functions of one living Reality with effects becoming causes and sensuous actualities supporting future possibilities. Consequently, in the flow of particulars, there unfolds a process of “onward and onward” growth “as new limitations appear and, with them, fresh possibilities for overcoming, expansion, and empowerment” (Urbas 2021: 137). Emerson’s most important student Henry Thoreau found nature pregnant in this way when in his chapter “Spring” of *Walden* he memorably describes the sublime appearance of a thawing sandbank whose material flows display a kaleidoscope of shapes and colors. The phenomenon is a metaphysical showcase of reality, namely, “an anticipation” (Thoreau 2004: 306) of the full scope of geographic, vegetable, animal, and human forms in metamorphic relation. Thoreau is discovering Goethean morphologies in the Concord woods, but ultimately, the phenomenon proves that “[t]here is nothing inorganic. These foliaceous heaps lie along the bank like the slag of a furnace, showing that Nature is ‘in full blast’ within. The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry” (*ibid.*: 308-9). That “living poetry” provokes Thoreau’s own poeticizing of *Walden* which further promotes the meditative speculations of his readers and future co-admirers of nature.
- 8 Another philosophical heir to Emerson’s transcendentalist metaphysics is Charles Peirce, a student by elective affinity, on whom I will comment more below.⁹ His synechistic universe relating mind and matter (or nature) on a single ontological continuum along with his cosmological principle of an “energizing reasonableness”

supports the open proliferation of novelty across an interpermeating “universe [...] perfused with signs” (EP2: 68, 394). What is more, the cosmic “development of Reason” is its own living poetry, as it amounts not to a rationally sterile process of pure thought but “requires, too, all the coloring of all qualities of feeling, including pleasure in its proper place among the rest [...]. Reason itself comprehended in all its fullness” (EP2: 255).

- 9 We can extend the discussion of Emerson’s metaphysics by following Urbas’s lead from his chapters, which each inform that metaphysics plays a foundational role in the other branches of his philosophy (although I hesitate to speak of “branches,” that is, those conventional, academic divisions of philosophy that too easily compartmentalize the life of the mind in ways antithetical to Emerson’s thinking). I wish to comment on, in particular, its connection to epistemology, but my greater aim is making a point about Emerson’s unique way of doing philosophy. His transcendentalist worldview is hardly some mystical vision detached from everyday lived human experience. For instance, it explains the possibility for human beings – clearly finite and fallible creatures – to learn abstract truths about their world and gain practical skill in manipulating it. These successful cross-engagements between self and world or mind and nature would seem to require the existence of a shared ontological identity. For Emerson, “[o]ntological participation or sharing comes *first*, before knowledge and higher forms of awareness” (Urbas 2021: 57). The insight is traceable back to Spinoza, Eriugena, Augustine, Plotinus, Aristotle, and Plato who held some version of “like knows like.”¹⁰ It also appears in the post-Kantian German idealists who establish a necessary link between subject and object, although not merely at the level of a priori forms. Beyond Emerson’s time, the doctrine gains support in modern evolutionary theory that highlights the organic links shared between human biology, other organisms, and even the elements of the physio-chemical world that contribute to life as we know it.
- 10 The same can be argued for from the perspective of our everyday experience of nature. When we positively interface with nature, an initial felt-interest in a non-human world, or at least in that which does not immediately appear to have much practical bearing on our lives, seems a necessary condition at the most basic level. Emerson will take such a felt-interest as evidence for a deeper vital connection. On the opening page of his first philosophical text *Nature*, he provides a sort of propaedeutic that addresses the epistemic grounds of any future philosophy of nature: “Undoubtedly we have no question to ask which are unanswerable. We must trust the perfection of the creation so far, as to believe that whatever curiosity the order of things has awakened in our minds, the order of things can satisfy” (CW1: 7). What is the source of our wonderment in things and can we trust that it can ever be satisfied? Emerson believes we can trust it because we participate in the very being that is both the origin of and solution to our wonderment. Through us, nature is asking (and answering) its own questions. In the chapter “Idealism” and “Spirit,” Emerson again undercuts the skeptical dilemma that our questions about the nature of things are unanswerable while rejecting a series of phenomenalist arguments for the unreality of nature. The path out of phenomenism he finds in our felt sympathy, which amounts to a kind of “epistemic piety” (Urbas 2021: 83), for our natural environment given its “consanguinity” with human beings: “I own there is something ungrateful in expanding too curiously the particulars of the general proposition, that all culture tends to imbue us with idealism. I have not hostility to nature, but a child’s love to it. I expand and live in the warm day like corn and melons. Let us speak her fair. I do not wish to fling stones at my beautiful mother,

nor soil my gentle nest. I only wish to indicate that true position of nature in regard to man” (CW1: 38, 35-6). On display in these lines is Emerson’s philosophical heart keyed to the “moral sentiment” (aka “religious sentiment”), a feeling for the inward life of the universe that outweighs all other moods and compels belief (Urbas 2021: 100-3, 185-7, 244). It hardly needs explaining that Emerson’s approach to the foundations of knowledge is radically different from modern epistemologies that focus on faculties of the mind, forms of reasoning, and the logical analysis of propositions. It also departs from a general Anglo-American way of doing philosophy that takes such epistemological concerns as its starting point and over intellectualizes its topics. Rather, Emerson zeroes in on an experiential dimension that is both generative and supportive of our intellectual pursuits, and that involves the whole human being, both mind and heart, in its lived relationship to nature.¹¹

- 11 I find that there is something uniquely American about this philosophical starting point, which seems to join together at once topics in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and esthetics (hence my hesitation about using “branches” above), thus serving as a sort of germinating seed for the possibility of philosophical contemplation.¹² Urbas does well to catch on to some of the historical *Zeitgeist* here in the works of William James and John Dewey (2021: 49-50n. 14, 57-8). Perhaps even more apropos is the synechistic philosophy of Peirce already briefly discussed. Peirce would apply his synechism, that is his theory that continuity is “an idea of prime importance in philosophy” (EP1: 313), on matters concerning the logic of reasoning, in particular on humankind’s positive ability to learn about its world. Peirce makes the insightful observation that our success at discovering things, whether in philosophy or science, is actually quite miraculous, or so it would seem. This is because it is logically improbable, indeed infinitesimally so, that we ever would hit upon the right hypothesis given the myriad of false hypotheses available for us to try out.¹³ But since we *do* sometimes guess right, Peirce concludes we must possess some instinct of reason, some “*il lume naturale*” (RLT: 176), or “natural bent in accordance with nature’s,” because without just *that* we would have practically no “chance at understanding nature, at all” (EP2: 444). From a biological perspective, instinct may be understood as an example of continuity with respect to animal behavior; it is one instance of the human organism’s shared continuity with the greater living universe. Moreover, from a deeper metaphysical perspective, instinct in its disclosive power for truth is a function of the ontological continuity between the mind’s thought processes and the inherent rational structures of the universe, or what Peirce calls, the “Logic of Things” (RLT: 108).¹⁴ Continuing in transcendentalist spirit, Peirce adds an important ethico-esthetic component he believes supports *il lume naturale* in securing the possibility of knowledge.¹⁵ Because the practice of philosophy and all forms of inquiry involve real-life agents naturally possessive of personalities, beliefs, and attitudinal dispositions, these all-to-human qualities will directly bear on the success of inquiry. But not all things are created equal from an epistemological perspective: some dispositions hinder the pursuit of knowledge whereas others promote it. First and foremost among those having a positive affect is our “Will to Learn” (RLT: 170) joined by a pious attitude toward our subject matter. We must treat nature, Peirce says – in a moving line that deserves to be more widely cited than it is – as “something great, and beautiful, and sacred, and eternal, and real, – the object of its [the inquirer’s] worship and its aspiration” (*ibid.*: 177). We can verify Peirce’s claim about the epistemic power of such an attitudinal disposition by considering the great scientist Jane Goodall and her

humble approach to studying nature. Her incredible patience and caring efforts were instrumental to her field-observations of chimpanzees in the wild, which resulted in no less than the most groundbreaking discoveries about non-human primates in history. To return to Emerson, we have before us an embodiment of his *Gefühlphilosophie* (Urbas 2021: 4) in the domain of pragmatic reasoning. Both transcendentalism and pragmatism recognize the transformative power of feeling in philosophy and science, as well as ethics, politics, and our everyday relations with others.¹⁶

- 12 In my opinion, Urbas saves one of his best sentences for last: “With its own principle of identity, Emerson’s unfinished world affords limitless scope to human creativity” (Urbas 2021: 279). The cadence of openness alludes again to Emerson’s own writings, both their content and form. But what I find important is how after covering a wide breadth of themes across Emerson’s philosophy, the final word is given to creativity. That serves as an ideal principle for critically organizing and advancing Emerson’s ideas on reality, knowledge, art, and more, and it is the right takeaway from the philosopher who consistently insisted we “enjoy an original relation to the universe” (CW1: 7).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ANDERSON Douglas R., (2006), “Emerson’s Platonizing of American Thought,” in *Philosophy Americana: Making Philosophy at Home in American Culture*, New York, Fordham University Press.
- ANDERSON Douglas R., (2019), “Emerson’s Receptivity: Inferencing Animals,” *Philosophy Americana* blog. Online: <https://philosophyamericana.wordpress.com/2019/09/18/emersons-receptivity-inferencing-animals/>.
- ARSIĆ Branka & Cary WOLFE (eds), (2010), *The Other Emerson*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- DILWORTH David A., (2010), “Swedenborg, Emanuel,” in Tiffany K. Wayne (ed.), *Critical Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, New York, Facts on File, 380-1.
- EMERSON Ralph Waldo, (2013 [1971]), *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson, Joseph Slater, Douglas Emory Wilson, Ronald A. Bosco, et al., 10 vols., Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. (Cited as CW followed by volume number.)
- FABBRICHESI Rossella, (2019), “Spinoza, Emerson, and Peirce: Re-Thinking the Genealogy of Pragmatism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 55 (2), 103-18.
- GUARDIANO Nicholas L., (2017), “Charles S. Peirce’s New England Neighbors and Embrace of Transcendentalism,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 53 (2), 216-45.
- GUARDIANO Nicholas L., (2021), “Transcendentalist Encounters with a Universe of Signs,” *The American Journal of Semiotics*, 37 (1-2), 5-45.
- KOVALAINEN Heikki A., (2018), “Review of *Emerson’s Metaphysics: A Song of Laws and Causes* by Joseph Urbas,” *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 54 (1), 109-13.

- PEIRCE Charles Sanders, (1992), *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, ed. Kenneth Laine Ketner, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press. (Cited as RLT.)
- PEIRCE Charles Sanders, (1992), *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, volume 1, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, Bloomington, Indiana University Press. (Cited as EP1.)
- PEIRCE Charles Sanders, (1998), *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, volume 2, ed. Peirce Edition Project, Bloomington, Indiana University Press. (Cited as EP2.)
- PLOTINUS, (1988), *Enneads*, volume 7, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press. (Cited as *Enneads* using standard section divisions.)
- SCHNEIDER Herbert W., (1966), "American Transcendentalism's Escape from Phenomenology," in Myron Simon and Thornton H. Parsons (eds), *Transcendentalism and its Legacy*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 215-28.
- THOREAU Henry D., (2004), *Walden*, J. Lyndon Shanley (ed.), Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- URBAS Joseph, (2010), "Cavell's 'Moral Perfectionism' or Emerson's 'Moral Sentiment'?", *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, 2 (2), 41-53. Online: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejppap.897>.
- URBAS Joseph, (2013), "'Bi-Polar' Emerson: 'Nominalist and Realist'," *The Pluralist*, 8 (2), 78-105.
- URBAS Joseph, (2016), *Emerson's Metaphysics: A Song of Laws and Causes*, Lanham, Lexington Books.
- URBAS Joseph, (2017), "How Close a Reader of Emerson is Stanley Cavell?," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 31 (4), 557-74.
- URBAS Joseph, (2021), *The Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, New York, Routledge.
- WALLIS Richard T., (1995), *Neoplatonism*, London, Bristol Classical Press.

NOTES

1. Heikki A. Kovalainen (2018) also addresses this question that looms large over Urbas's interpretation of Emerson's metaphysics.
2. See also Urbas (2021: 17-9, 23-4, 26-8, 31-2, passim).
3. Urbas (2021: 277) gives some response after citing Charles Hartshorne's same concern about Emerson's surprising flirtation with determinism while simultaneously promoting creative acts of the self. He says that, for Emerson, there is "no inconsistency here" and that this is part of Emerson's "compatibilism." But *how* is there no inconsistency? *How* are such opposing doctrines compatible?
4. Emerson's love of Neoplatonism and especially Plotinus was great, as evident in his epigraph on the cover page of the first edition of *Nature* (1836) quoting the *Enneads*. Neoplatonism made an indelible impact on Emerson's thought, imbibing its ideas through his direct readings of Plotinus and the impact it made on Medieval mysticism, British Romanticism, F. W. J. Schelling, and Emanuel Swedenborg. We see its appearance throughout his career in such writings as *Nature*, "The Over-Soul," "Circles," "Method of Nature," "The Poet," and "Nature" (Dilworth 2010).
5. I say "resembles" because technically the One, for Plotinus, is not a form (Wallis 1995: 58). Descriptions of the ineffable One are only ever approximately accurate.
6. See *Enneads* VI.9.6.
7. Emerson himself will sometimes name the fundamental reality "the One." See, for example, "The Over-Soul" where he states: "[W]ithin man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the

universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one” (CW2: 160; capitals are Emerson’s).

8. Emerson appropriates the distinction in his essay “Nature” (1844). On Spinoza, see Fabbrichesi 2019 who locates his metaphysics and ethics of power (*conatus*), which is grounded in God/nature’s essential *potentia agendi*, as historical background to Emerson’s philosophy, as well as Charles Peirce’s pragmatism.

9. The founder of American pragmatism asserted about his intellectual biography that he was born and reared in Cambridge, “the neighborhood of Concord” (EP1: 312), and made repeat acknowledgement of the fact that New England Transcendentalism made an indelible impact on his philosophical career (Guardiano 2017).

10. I expand on Urbas’s list given at 2021 (97n. 19).

11. See Anderson 2019 for an excellent discussion of Emerson’s unique approach to learning that emphasizes a non-egotistical receptivity and genuine caring about truth.

12. For complementary interpretations, see also Schneider 1966 on American philosophy’s “escape from phenomenology” contra the commitment of recent Continental philosophy to phenomenology; and Anderson 2006 on Emerson’s “Platonizing of American thought” by his poetic understanding of philosophical practice as broadly addressing the full human being and our lived experience. In Guardiano 2021, I work out a similar thesis from the perspective of semiotics arguing for what I call nature’s “transcendentalist significance.”

13. Peirce discusses this dilemma in several places with a notable example occurring in “The Nature of Meaning” (EP2: 217).

14. This is from “Philosophy and the Conduct of Life,” the first lecture of Peirce’s 1898 Cambridge lecture series that he aptly named *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*. In later lectures, he frequently returns to this backgrounding idea about the real continuity between mind and nature, such as when he states: “so far as there is any reality, what that reality consists in is this: that there is in the being of things something which corresponds to the process of reasoning, that the world *lives*, and *moves*, and **HAS ITS BEING**, in a logic of events. We all think of nature as syllogizing” (EP2: 161).

15. Peirce’s division of the Normative Sciences seems implicit here, with Logic, or the study of reasoning, having its ground in Ethics and Esthetics.

16. This intuitionism is no blind sentimentalism and thus comes with limits. See Urbas’s section “Our ‘Irregular, Spotty’ Experience” (2021: 76-9). Likewise, for Peirce, there remain fallibilistic constraints on all our forms of reasoning.

AUTHORS

NICHOLAS L. GUARDIANO

Research specialist at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale
 nguardia[at]lib.siu.edu