

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY
Douglas R. Anderson and Jude Jones, series editors

PRAGMATISM IN
THE AMERICAS



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GREGORY FERNANDO PAPPAS

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ELEVEN

THE LATINO CHARACTER OF
AMERICAN PRAGMATISM

Gregory Fernando Pappas



Let me begin with an anecdote. Last fall I was teaching a class in American philosophy. After class a student from Colombia said to me, "*La filosofía de James y Dewey me encanta, pero no puedo concebir que estos filósofos sean Americanos*" ("Professor, I love James's and Dewey's philosophy but I can't think of them as *American* philosophers"). Why, for someone acquainted with both American and Latin culture, is the philosophy of Dewey and James experienced as being (on the whole) more Latin than American? What could this mean? And does this experience not call into question the standard effort to present pragmatism as the intellectual reflection of American culture? Finding answers to these questions raises issues concerning philosophy, culture, and the relation between them.

There is a history both of critics and of sympathizers trying to forge a connection between pragmatism and its native soil. Such critics as Bertrand Russell and George Santayana¹ made use of this claim to dismiss, object to, or downplay pragmatism as a philosophy. They

selected certain undesirable traits or excesses of American culture, usually with the outcome that pragmatism appeared to be a shallow type of philosophy or some form of "industrial-utilitarianism." Recent sympathizers, such as Patrick Romanell, Alan Ryan, and James Campbell, have relied on selecting certain values and aspirations of the "American Experience," then claiming them as part of pragmatism as a philosophy.² Both types of commentators share the assumption that pragmatism should be understood as a reflection or representation of North American society and culture. In this paper, I not only question this assumption, but I make the bolder claim that pragmatism is a philosophy that affirms and reflects values that are predominant and are cherished by Latin, not North American, culture. Let me begin my defense of this thesis by appealing to Dewey's reflections on the relation between philosophy and culture.

Philosophy and Culture

Dewey never denied the significance of the fact that pragmatism was born on American soil. On the contrary, he argued against those who hold "a dogma of immaculate conception of philosophical systems . . . persons to whom it seems derogatory to link a body of philosophic ideas to the social life and culture of their epoch"³ (*LW, The Later Works 1925-53*). For Dewey this is to neglect context, "the greatest single disaster which philosophic thinking can incur."⁴ The cultural context of a philosophy is "the implicit broad interpretation of life and the world" present in the practices and institutions of a society. Any significant philosophy, however, must do more than merely copy, mirror, or reflect the values and beliefs of its culture, social medium, and generation: "I doubt that any competent student of the history of thought would say that there has existed any philosophy which amounted to anything which was merely a formulated acquiescence in the immediately predominant traits of its day. Such things need no formulation, not even apologetics; they dominate and that is enough for them."⁵ There was never a philosopher who merited the name for simply glorifying the tendencies and characteristics of his social environment.⁶

For Dewey, philosophy is *criticism*. It may be a criticism of the actual influential beliefs and values that underlie culture from the point of view of its possibilities: "All serious thinking combines in some proportion and perspective the actual and the possible, where actuality supplies contact and solidity while possibility furnishes the ideal upon which criticism rests and from which creative effort springs."⁷ Thus if there is something "American" about pragmatism, it is that it represents the possibilities of American life, not the actual America. However, what grounds are there for holding that there is something "Latin" about the critical perspective adopted by pragmatism? This is more controversial simply because I must assume rough and arguable generalizations about what is characteristically American and what is Latin. In my view, there is no reason why philosophers should not engage in such generalizations so long as they are cautious. In fact, throughout their writings Dewey and James continually made comparisons between the Anglo-Saxon type and mentality and that of other cultures. (After all, both were international travelers with cosmopolitan perspectives, and not your typical APA member.) Dewey understood perfectly well the marks of "Americanization" and its consequences: "I shall not deny the existence of these characteristics. . . . In the main these traits characterize American life and are already beginning to dominate that of other cultures."⁸

The Values and Vices of Anglo-Saxon and Latin Culture

To further my thesis, I have used Dewey's and James's generalizations, the writings of Latin American philosophers, and my own experience to compile a rough and undoubtedly incomplete list of traits (page 174) that distinguish the Anglo-American culture from the Latin⁹ ("From a Mexican Notebook," *LW* 2:206–210, and "Imperialism Is Easy," *LW* 3:158–162). Latin American philosophers who have written about this issue include José Enrique Rodo in *Ariel* (New York: Las Americas Pub. Co., 1967) and Jorge Manach in *The Frontier* (New York: Teachers College-Columbia University, 1975). By "my

own experience" I mean the fact that I am a Puerto Rican who has been living in the United States for the last fifteen years; hence I consider myself someone who lives in between the two cultures.

The two columns labeled "Traits or Values" are not intended as exclusive to each culture but as values that predominate—that is, they are considered positive and fundamental for the people living in that culture. There is no assumption here of a Latin or Anglo "essence." The list is based on very general and hypothetical claims that are valid to the degree that such generalizations can be; that is, insofar as they include what is most frequent or typical. The items listed are accents of temperament and of conduct, and not exclusive modalities. For example, the Cuban philosopher Jorge Manach explains that "the fact that Anglo-Saxons are mainly volitional does not prevent them from harboring sentimentalism, even though they may try to hide it. Neither does the predominance of sensibility in Hispanic people signify a purely emotional aptitude."¹⁰ It is difficult to study, or even to identify, the fundamental traits of a culture unless they are expressed in an exaggerated way; as James said, "we learn most about a thing when we view it . . . in its most exaggerated form."¹¹

The columns labeled "Vices" represent exaggerated manifestations of the traits valued by each culture that become vices due to excess or overemphasis. When members of either culture seek to criticize the other, they usually appeal to one or more of these vices. Dewey notes how much easier it is for one culture to appreciate the vices of the other rather than its own: "The Anglo-Saxon races have the habit of scoffing at the Latin races for what they regard as their levity and lack of seriousness in their moral attitude towards the world. It is a good thing to turn matters around and look at ourselves. The judgment which the Latin races pass upon the Anglo-Saxon is that they are hard, angular, and without the delicate susceptibility to attend to the needs of others; that they set up their mark and go at it roughshod, regardless of the feelings of others. If we call them light and frivolous, they call us hard, and coarse, and brutal."¹²

This is not the place for a detailed comparison between the lists of specific traits and vices. I am more concerned here with Dewey's and

Anglo Saxon	Latin
Traits or Values	
Success	
Quantity	Quality
Technique	Emotions
Organization	Appreciation
Individualism (self-sufficiency)	Relationships
Action-Practice	Loyalty
Efficiency	Slow tempo
Bigness	Particular
Change, novelty	Continuities
Classifications and rankings	Play-Celebration
Work	Present and past
Future	Vagueness
Planning	Redundancy
Precise and concise	Spontaneity
Information	
Vices	
Overorganization	Disorganization
Stress	Levity (lack of seriousness)
Mechanization	Over relaxed
Impersonality	Inefficiency
Impatience	
Unrest, hurry, breathlessness	Laziness
Undervaluing of tradition	Overvaluing of tradition
Overprevention of risk	Overenjoyment of the present
Drudgery, boredom, routine	No planning
Quantification	Idle playfulness
Loneliness	Suffocating common bonds

James's positions regarding them. Those who have claimed that pragmatism reflects American culture have appealed to one or more of the items on the Anglo-Saxon side. I will proceed to show why these claims are unsubstantiated and will argue instead that the emphasis in pragmatism is on traits or values on the Latin side.

Pragmatism, Anglo Vices, and Latin Traits

For some critics pragmatism is American because it is the philosophy that makes practice, action, work, success, the future, interest, and profit the end of life. In other words, it assumes a "utilitarian view of the mind."¹³ It is the view "that theory is simply an instrument for practice, and intelligence merely a help toward material survival."¹⁴ Santayana said about Dewey that "he is a devoted spokesman of the spirit of enterprise, of experiment, of modern industry . . . his philosophy is calculated to justify all the assumptions of American society."¹⁵ This sort of misunderstanding stems from taking such terms as "practical" and "instrumentalism" in a pecuniary and narrow sense. It is disappointing that many critics have made use of pragmatism to react to the exaggerations of American life without first making an honest effort to read the texts carefully and generously. Dewey said, "When an American critic says of instrumentalism that it regards ideas as mere servants which make for success in life, he only reacts, without reflection to the ordinary verbal associations of the word 'instrumental,' as many other have reacted in the same manner to the use of the word 'practical.'"¹⁶ James and Dewey tried to rectify or at least prevent such reactions and associations by explicitly qualifying what they meant by "practical" and "instrumental." James indicated that his reference to the "practical" was a way of pointing to the concrete, particular, qualitative, and precognitive in experience.¹⁷ Dewey responded to views of pragmatism as a narrow instrumentalism (that treated thought as a mere means) by reminding us that pragmatism affirmed "the human and moral importance of thought and of its reflective operation in experience,"¹⁸ as well as the continuity between means and ends. For Dewey, Russell's assertion that

"pragmatism is the philosophical expression" of the American commercial and legalistic mentality was as absurd as saying that "English neorealism is a reflection of the aristocratic snobbery of the English; the tendency of French thought to dualism an expression of an alleged Gallic disposition to keep a mistress in addition to a wife."¹⁹ It was absurd because it portrayed pragmatism as a glorification of the very same American values and excesses that were the objects of its criticism. Dewey quoted James to make this point: "The man who wrote that 'callousness to abstract justice is *the* sinister feature of U.S. civilization,' that this callousness is a 'symptom of the moral flabbiness born of the exclusive worship of the bitch-goddess SUCCESS,' and that this worship 'together with the squalid cash interpretation put upon the word success is our national disease' was not consciously nor unconsciously engaged in an intellectual formulation of the spirit he abhorred."²⁰ James was very explicit about what he regarded as the chief vice of American life: "that extraordinary idealization of 'success' in the mere outward sense of 'getting there,' and getting there on as big a scale as we can, which characterizes our present generation."²¹

Pragmatism, therefore, was far from being that glorification of action or of success for its own sake that has been regarded as a peculiar characteristic of American life.²² On the contrary, "it disapproves of those aspects of American life which make action an end in itself, and which conceive ends too narrowly and too 'practically.'" Fundamental to pragmatism "is the idea that action and opportunity justify themselves only to the degree in which they render life more reasonable and increase its value."²³ It is also false to say that pragmatism supported an American overemphasis on the future, since for pragmatism what is most important is the rendering of a more significant present—that is, the qualitative enrichment of present experience. Traditionally, moral philosophers had been looking for meaning, fulfillment, and satisfaction in the wrong places; for pragmatism the only place where meaning can be found is in present activity. "Growth of present action in shades and scope of meaning is the only good within our control, and the only one, accordingly, for which

responsibility exists."²⁴ "Everywhere the good, the fulfillment, the meaning of activity, resides in a present made possible by judging existing conditions in their connections."²⁵ Dewey could be said to have taken a "Latin perspective" when he urged his readers to give up thinking of "some parts of this life as merely preparatory to other later stages of it"²⁶ and instead to aim at "fullest utilization of present resources, liberating and guiding capacities that are now urgent";²⁷ "if we wished to transmute this generalization into a categorical imperative we should say: 'so act as to increase the meaning of *present* experience.'"²⁸

Dewey and James were also critical of the American overemphasis on work at the expense of play. Dewey perceived American society as one in which the daily work activities of many were external and not an expression of themselves. Work becomes drudgery when it is taken as a mere means of survival, private gain, or getting ahead. Americans need to learn the value of play in order to secure aesthetic fulfillment in ordinary ways. In play there is a direct connection between means and ends; one is engaged in the present activity as if for its own sake. Play is free, plastic; it uses imagination and requires a serious absorption in one's present task. Without play work degenerates into drudgery; it cannot achieve aesthetic quality. "Work which remains permeated with the play attitude is art in quality if not in conventional designation."²⁹ Dewey's view of life as playful learning rather than a preparation for adulthood (or as something that focuses on planning ahead) could be said to make him one of the most Latin of all philosophers. He would not deny that one can be *too* playful, but this was not where he saw the danger in American society.

Pragmatism was by no means an intellectual justification for the view of the "American mind" that the "Will was deeper than Intellect."³⁰ In fact, it tried to undermine the dualisms that would support the glorification of the will (or action) as something separated from the intellectual and the emotional. Moreover, if pragmatism has a notable emphasis, it is on the importance of the qualitative and emotional in all facets of our lives. For pragmatism, philosophy has overemphasized the executive and intellectual capacities of moral

character at the expense of the imaginative and the emotional. According to Dewey, "the feelings, in a certain sense, are the deepest things in a person's character."³¹ About the importance of being emotionally sensitive in our moral life he said, "Nothing can make up for the absence of immediate sensitiveness; the insensitive person is callous, indifferent. Unless there is a direct, mainly unreflective appreciation of persons and deeds, the data for subsequent thought will be lacking or distorted. A person must feel the qualities of acts as one feels with the hands the qualities of roughness and smoothness."³² It is true that a strong passion can sometimes make us unreasonable. We are so absorbed that we allow no room for alternatives and are not sensitive to the complexity of the situation. Nevertheless, the conclusion is not that the emotional, passionate phase of action can be or should be eliminated on behalf of bloodless reason. More passions, not fewer, are the answer. "To check the influence of hate there must be sympathy, while to rationalize sympathy there are needed emotions of curiosity."³³

As an American moral educator, Dewey believed that the neglect of the aesthetic and affective factors ("direct sensitiveness") is "the greatest deficiency in our educational systems with respect to character building."³⁴ In this regard he thought that there was something that Americans could learn from Latin culture and societies: "It is a fact, that in their educational systems, both in the school and in the family, there is much more attention paid to the training of feelings, especially in this matter of delicacy, or response to the state of mind of others."³⁵

Dewey was also critical of the kind of individualism that has been portrayed as characteristically American. He criticized the notion of the antecedent and self-sufficient individual who needs to be left alone; for him the individual is social. However, by "social" he did not mean the abstraction of society-as-a-whole (or a social group). For both Mead and Dewey, the heart of the social is found in face-to-face interaction, in particular and unique relationships among individuals. The conditions for a better moral life are created by improving relationships in the classroom, the workplace, and the household. Dewey pleaded for the revitalization of local associations as a necessary condition for the great community.

In its deepest and richest sense a community must always remain a matter of face-to-face intercourse:³⁶ "I am inclined to believe that the heart and final guarantee of democracy is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner . . . and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments."³⁷ In other words, Dewey hoped that America would learn to value the more direct, particular, and intimate forms of association that are already valued by Latin cultures. It should be noted that when Dewey visited Mexico he was impressed by how "the entire family works together" in the creation of works of art.³⁸

Does pragmatism reflect the Anglo-American attitude toward life? According to Patrick Romanell in *The Making of the Mexican Mind*, pragmatism is the intellectual expression of the American "epic sense of life," which he contrasts with the Ibero-American "tragic sense of life": pragmatism "is, in essence, the philosophy of human *achievement*. In other words, it is the theoretical expression of the epic sense of life. As an epic celebrates the life of achievement in action, so pragmatism defends the same way of life in theory."³⁹ This is, again, a misunderstanding of pragmatism as a glorification of action or will, but Romanell does set up an interesting contrast. Does pragmatism center on the epic rather than the tragic? There is no sense in denying that human effort and achievement are an integral part of the pragmatist's view of experience, but I would argue that the emphasis is on an existentialist-vitalist tragic sense of life. Consider what Romanell means by the term "tragic." "The substance of the tragic is not, as the traditional theory of tragedy maintains, the conflict between good and evil. . . . The stuff that all strictly tragic situations are made of is, rather, the subtler *conflict between goods*, as the greatest tragedies of the world make manifest."⁴⁰ Dewey would not only agree with this view of the tragic, but he held one of the most tragic views of moral life in the history of moral philosophy. Let us briefly consider why.

Dewey criticized the tendency in moral theory to conceive a moral problem as a conflict between a few commensurable factors or variables. If behind every moral problem there are commensurable denominators or only one basic kind of moral consideration (e.g., good,

duty, or virtue), then the uncertainty and conflict found in moral problems that so agonize moral agents cannot be as acute as they seem. But Dewey disagreed. He proposed that what is experienced in moral problems is the conflict of radically independent factors or moral forces. Hence, for Dewey, moral problems are extremely acute and can be said in many cases to border on the tragic. As he explains, "The essence of the situation is an internal and intrinsic conflict; the necessity for judgment and for choice come from the fact that one has to manage forces with no common denominator."⁴¹ He acknowledges that we often associate moral struggle with situations where there is a conflict "between a good which is clear to him and something else which attracts him but he knows to be wrong."⁴² But this is a different kind of struggle from that which he takes to be paradigmatic of moral problems. The paradigmatic struggle is "between values each of which is an undoubted good in its place but which now get in each other's way."⁴³ The nature of the uncertainty and conflict proper to these two kinds of moral struggle makes them different. In the first kind, the problem is "How can I get myself to do what is morally right?" or "What means should we employ to minimize this evil and make that good prevail?" It is assumed that what is morally right to do in this situation has been settled, that it is not problematic; it is a question as to the best means for achieving an antecedent non-problematic end. In the second kind of moral struggle, however, there is genuine uncertainty and conflict as to the morally correct thing to do because incompatible courses of action are experienced as morally justified or as making forceful claims on the agent.⁴⁴ These "variables" or "factors" are *good*, *duty*, and *virtue*. Once moral inquiry is initiated, the experienced "moral tension" may be eased or it may not.

It is thus clear that Dewey's faith in the instrumentalities of experience was tempered by an honest realization that our moral life is tragic, and that "when all is said and done, the fundamentally hazardous character of the world is not seriously modified, much less eliminated."⁴⁵ Romannell should rather have considered Dewey's

philosophy as the theoretical expression of the Ibero-American, not the Anglo-American, sense of life.

The points addressed so far concern the spirit and content of pragmatism as a philosophy. One might also consider whether in their philosophical and writing style these philosophers reflected American traits. In this regard, it strikes me as obvious that in James's and Dewey's writings, one does not find any noticeable effort to be efficient, concise, nonredundant, systematic, organized, or precise. While I do not mean to say that they fail altogether to exhibit these traits, in comparison to contemporary analytic (Anglo-Saxon!) philosophers they appear chaotic, inefficient, and redundant. It should also be obvious to anyone who has read James and Dewey without prejudice that they celebrated vagueness and spontaneity, that they avoided an overemphasis on classifications, rankings, and compartmentalizations.⁴⁶

Pragmatism and the Balance of America

I wish to address more directly my main thesis. Dewey and James would agree that the traits I am calling Anglo-Saxon are all good things. Their philosophies, however, are opposed to the exaggeration and narrow interpretation of these traits as they are exhibited in everyday American life.⁴⁷ Sometimes their opposition is evident in their philosophical efforts to redefine these traits in such a way as to not exclude what I am calling Latin traits (Dewey in regard to individualism, for example). But most of the time they simply engage in powerful, bold, and unprecedented defenses of the reality and value of these "Latin" traits. They argue against the devaluation of the affective, the aesthetic, play, concrete relationships, the tragic, the vague, and the precarious. We find in their philosophies a thoughtful appreciation of how and why these things are essential to our lives. It is almost as if the aim of these philosophers was to *balance* America, as if they thought that something could be learned from the culture that originated south of the Rio Grande. No doubt Dewey and James would have objected to the excesses to which Latin culture is prone. The Latin traits can be overemphasized and the corresponding vices are

as bad, if not worse, than Anglo-Saxon ones. Nevertheless, as philosophers sensitive to their environment they emphasized the Latin traits, the ones that needed to be emphasized in North America.⁴⁸

Dewey believed that the Anglo-Saxon exaggerations (vices) were transitional: "We are still in an early stage. . . . Anything that is at most but a hundred years old has hardly had time to disclose its meaning in the slow process of human history."⁴⁹ I am sorry to say that the unbalanced America that Dewey and James criticized still exists. It is still the case that organization, efficiency, and getting ahead at all costs are predominant values, and that many people are lonely. Americans are spending more time at work than they did twenty years ago. In fact, America is the only high-tech (industrial) society for which it is true that the more it progresses financially and technologically, the more people work. To make things worse, it is a country in which, while obsessed with the value of work, many people find themselves performing meaningless work. Quantification is still *the* standard in many aspects of American life. For many Americans better communication means only faster communication and with more people. America continues to be a restless place where one must protect oneself from waiters in restaurants who are ready to remove one's plate if one is not eating. There seems to be no time to rest or to savor the consummations of life. James's essay "The Gospel of Relaxation" is as relevant today as it was ninety-eight years ago.⁵⁰ We Americans are creatures who tend to feel lazy and guilty if we are not productive. We invented the word "stress," and are now spreading it around the world (our number-one export after Big Macs).

Toward a Latinization of America

But let me offer some hope. There are two related events that may affect the character of America and result in a more balanced culture. One is a demographic change, the other a change in the attitude and role of those Americans who are Hispanic (or Latinos). The first is almost a *fait accompli*. Demographics are changing rapidly. More than at any other time in history, the United States is being influenced by Latin culture. This country, once dominated by Europeans,

is fast becoming one in which Europeans are in the minority. This demographic shift could be called the "browning of America." It is likely to create unprecedented problems, especially when the fastest growing ethnic group in America is also becoming the poorest. It remains an open question whether these Americans will ever participate as they should in the political process. There is no doubt, however, that they are leaving their mark in unprecedented ways. In their daily interaction with other Americans they are transforming American culture, redefining what it means to be an American.

In *The Hispanic Condition* Ilan Stavans claims that in America we are experiencing a silent revolution created by Hispanic Americans. These Americans have decided to no longer live quietly and defensively at the margins; they are transforming the culture of America from within. According to Stavans, "we are currently witnessing a double-faceted phenomenon: Hispanization of the United States, and Anglocization of Hispanics."⁵¹ One important cause of this change is that the new generations of Latinos in the United States have decided to embrace their ambiguous identity in an unprecedented way. The new Latina, while recognizing her ties to her siblings south of the Rio Grande, is also saying that she is as American as John Wayne. For the new Latino, living as a hybrid (or "inhabiting the hyphen") no longer causes an identity crisis or lack of self-esteem. As Stavans says, "The hyphen as an acceptable in-between is now in fashion. . . . Indeed, divided we stand without a sense of guilt. Gringolandia, after all, is our ambivalent, schizophrenic *hogar*."⁵²

Let me clarify what I am suggesting. I am not claiming that the gradual "browning" or "Latinization" of America is *the* solution to the excesses of American life. Moreover, there is no guarantee that this will contribute to a more balanced America. The outcome may be a worse situation, given that the cultures that are coming into contact (that is, what has to be balanced) seem to be almost in opposition. Dewey was keenly aware of this. In his notes on Mexico, he wrote: "The contact of a people having an industrialized, Anglo-Saxon psychology with a people of Latin psychology is charged with high explosives."⁵³ In comparing the "Anglo-American institutional

psychology” and the “Spanish-Latin temper,” he said, “The two mix no better than oil and water, and unfortunately there is no great disposition to discover and use any emulgent.”⁵⁴ One must also worry about the human tendency to try to correct an excess with the opposite excess. America is no better off if it simply replaces its present excesses with those that characterize Latin culture. Dewey would agree that what is needed is an intelligent, piecemeal transformation coming from within. This “from within” is important. It is a mistake born of ignorance to suppose that the “Latinization of America” is coming from the outside, that is, from south of the Rio Grande. Latin culture has always been part of America, but it has remained dormant or at the margins. As we begin a new century, the new frontier and challenge of America will be to achieve a complementary and enriching integration between its Anglo and its Latin sides.

In conclusion, if I am correct in my cultural characterizations and in my assessment of pragmatism, then many things can be explained. The reaction of my Colombian student (and why, perhaps, we are both attracted to American philosophy) makes sense. We may even be able to explain why American philosophy is not the mainstream philosophy of America. Perhaps analytic philosophy simply fits better with the obsessive America that Dewey and James criticized. Meanwhile, I am afraid that the rest of the world (including Latin America) continues to dismiss pragmatism as a characteristically “American” product—that is, as a positivistic, narrow form of utilitarianism.

If it is true, as Stavans has suggested, that America as we know it is going to be transformed in a more Latin direction, then I have argued that this is a change that James and Dewey would have gladly welcomed. This transformation may also mean that pragmatism as a philosophy has a future in America. Only then will it be uncontroversial to claim that pragmatism is the characteristic product of American life.⁵⁵

TWELVE

LEOPOLDO ZEA, STANLEY CAVELL, AND THE
SEDUCTION OF “AMERICAN” PHILOSOPHY

Carlos Alberto Sanchez



In *The Making of the Mexican Mind*, Patrick Romanell writes,

The secret imaginative background of American philosophy is, on the one hand, the tragic sense of life rooted in Latin American existentialism and, on the other, the epic sense of life rooted in Anglo-American pragmatism. However distinct these two philosophies of the good life may be . . . they complement each other and share a common faith, namely, *a humanistic attitude towards life, together with an heroic conception of man.*¹

Romanell is optimistic that the virtues of Latin American existentialism and Anglo-American pragmatism are enough for an adequate reconstruction of an American philosophical tradition. While it is fair to conceive American philosophy, including both the Hispanic and the Anglo tradition, as defending “a humanistic attitude towards life, together with an heroic conception of man,” this conception says little about the uniquely “American” aspects of this philosophy.² Similarly, referring to Latin American philosophy as “existentialism” or