

## INTRODUCTION: ARS EROTICA, SCIENTIA SEXUALIS, AND PURITANISM

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I am glad to offer a Holiday Season present to those people who are interested in both Pragmatism and sexuality. Sexuality is ancient to man, while Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that only emerged in the 19th century. It therefore goes without saying that we should start with the former. Almost everyone in European culture is familiar with the theories of Darwin and Freud, which attribute a prominent role to sexuality in both individual life and community. Darwin's theory of evolution, which has had an extraordinary influence on Pragmatism, is based on the principle of natural selection. In his book, *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin introduced the expression of a "struggle for existence" to represent the practice of this selection. It happens not only on the individual level but also on the community level. However, we know that for Freud, libido represented all psychic energy and not just sexual energy, he also made clear that it permeates most of the human activities and lives. It is possible to renounce it, but humanity would cease to exist if everyone did.

We can see, then, that sexuality permeates our lives today as it did in the past, even if it always takes different forms, historically and socially determined. M. Foucault, in his now classic terminology of *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* (cf. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. I), refers to a slice of these manifestations. Nevertheless, R. Shusterman further develops the presentation of ancient manifestations of *ars erotica* in his incredibly thorough and comprehensive book, *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). The general features of Pragmatism's relation to sexuality, including the dominant role of Puritanism, are also discussed in a longer paper by Shusterman, "Pragmatism and Sex: An Unfulfilled Connection" in *The Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society* (2022).

Before we go into the textual details of this issue, we must remember John Lachs (1934-2023), the Hungarian-born American philosopher who was an ardent fighter for democracy and Stoic Pragmatism and an expert on Santayana's philosophy. Krzysztof (Chris) Piotr Skowroński wrote an excellent obituary for us.

With the texts mentioned above, the current issue of *Pragmatism Today* is worth perusing. Reading in the foreground of these texts, one can easily interpret both the Shusterman interview and Pragmatism's relation to eroticism, psychoanalysis, and sexuality in general. Moving on to the specific texts, I would like to point out that the Shusterman interview, by necessity, addresses contexts that the author has always wanted to address about his works above but has not had the opportunity to do so.

Nora Horvath's rich article shows us that Santayana's "philosophy was centered on sensory perception, and although he sought spiritualism through his Platonism, his *The Sense of Beauty* is based on pleasure. His personal life and individual motivations are a vague background to his poetry and theoretical writings, and viewing his creative world as a whole is necessary." Matteo Santarelli analyzes the relationship between Pragmatism and Psychoanalysis. In his opinion, while "the differences between both approaches cannot be denied, I do not believe that they are fundamentally irreconcilable." "In a nutshell - Santarelli says -, the convergencies and divergencies reconstructed in this article could also be taken as an invitation to pragmatists and psychoanalysts to contribute to a social philosophy that "joins regression and progression" (Côté, 2023: 14) to provide a better understanding of social reality and to open unexpected paths to political criticism and action." B. Henning claims that there is an important functional distinction between erotic and sexual experience and that queer theorists have neglected the former in favor of the latter. Dewey's theory of "quality," most explicitly available to us in aesthetic experience, is also responsible for our time experience and how we recognize singular individuals as just who they

are. Erotic relationships, which may or may not be sexual, are oriented to the individual in their qualitative, temporal aspect. The merely sexual is essentially a negotiation of space. Making space for queer eroticism, rather than simply queer sexuality, amounts to a shift in the way we see the possibilities for community formation and familial arrangements. In Mark Tschaepé's opinion, "concepts from queer theory help advance Dewey's philosophy into inquiries concerning oppression and identity, including issues concerning gender and sexuality." On a broad level, Tschaepé encourages a "synthesis between pragmatism and queer theory that proves fruitful for both, as Dewey's philosophy of inquiry helpfully subtends queer projects while queer theory advances Dewey's philosophy into inquiries concerning gender and sexuality."

In the "Varia" section, we can read Elena Romagnoli's revealing article about the relationship between Shuster-

man's and Gadamer's aesthetics. It is worth reading since it is a "little-known influence of Gadamer's philosophy on the development of Shusterman's" somaesthetics. We close our present issue with two book reviews. Alice Dupas wrote a knowledgeable interpretation of Jerold J. Abrams' book, *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art* (Boston, Brill, 2022), and you can read from my quill a short review of Thomas Leddy's fantastic introduction, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, (2012)).

I think everyone is familiar with the words of Terentianus Maurus: "Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli" ("According to the capabilities of the reader, books have their destiny"). Based on this hermeneutic rule, let the texts speak for themselves from now on!