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Title:

Individuality: the Emersonian Background of the Bergson-James Controversy

Abstract

Emerson's thought played an important and well recognized role in the development of American pragmatism, but the role exerted by the Transcendentalist in some other philosophical European contexts was even more direct and incisive. On some circumstances, the "adventure" of Emerson's seminal ideas carried out a journey *to/from* Europe whose "rebound effect" on the American context is useful to evaluate. The widely attested influence of Emerson on Nietzsche sets an expressive example of this outward/inwards journey; other plain indications suggest now to reconsider the Emerson-Bergson relation and the peculiar outcomes that this relation produced in James' pragmatism. In this paper, the controversy between William James and Henri Bergson is considered as from the topic of individuality and the very similar way in which the two philosophers theorized its *temporalistic* and *pluralistic* constitution. Both of them have been deeply influenced by Emerson, even though in different measure and sometimes with different – if not diverging – philosophical results. Nevertheless, just their common referring to Emerson can contribute to a better understanding of their controversial relation and of the consequences of this relation on the development of James' ethical and "political" thought.