

Other Logics

*Alternatives to Formal Logic in the History of
Thought and Contemporary Philosophy*

Edited by

Admir Skodo



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

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The Self, Ideology, and Logic

F.C.S. Schiller's Pragmatist Critique of and Alternative to Formal Logic

Admir Skodo

1 Introduction¹

Classic philosophies have to be revised because they have to square themselves up with the many intellectual and social tendencies that have revealed themselves since those philosophies matured. The conquest of the sciences by the experimental method of inquiry; the injection of evolutionary ideas into the study of life and society; the application of the historic method to religions and morals as well as to institutions; the creation of the sciences of 'origins' and of the cultural development of mankind—how can such intellectual changes occur and leave philosophy what it was and where it was?²

The eminent British historian Herbert Butterfield viewed the scientific revolution (from Copernicus to Darwin) and the historical revolution (perhaps best exemplified by Ranke) as the two decisive intellectual transformations that created modern Western consciousness.³ They instated two, at times competing and at times complementing,⁴ perspectives by which modern Western man sees, conceives, and constructs himself and the world in which he dwells.⁵ Both revolutions shook and crumbled pre-modern conventions governing the

1 I would like to thank Helge Ax:son Johnson's Stiftelse for a generous research grant that has enabled the research and writing of this chapter.

2 John Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy: And Other Essays in Contemporary Thought* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1910), v.

3 A point later made by Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law, and History in the French Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 6.

4 For a relevant contemporary statement on how the sciences have become historical, see W.R. Sorley, "The Historical Method," in *Essays in Philosophical Criticism*, ed. Andrew Seth and R.B. Haldane (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883), 102–126, 102.

5 Kenneth B. MacIntyre, *Herbert Butterfield: History, Providence, and Skeptical Politics* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2011), 49–99.

legitimacy and boundaries of thought, and in their stead erected new ones. Both revolutions, for example, demolished, by means of superior empirical methods, the dating of the world and the human species propagated by Christian churches and the Bible, and so undermined Christian claims to true knowledge of nature. The scientific revolution, furthermore, queried Christian assumptions about morality, while the historical revolution challenged the Enlightenment belief in the uniformity and unshakeable foundations of man's mental and behavioral faculties, such as man's rationality, consciousness, and historical progress.

In spite of crucial differences, both science and history characterized human life in an immanent frame, that is, by recourse to the earthly origins, changes, developments, and in immediate contexts of things and persons. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, such an immanent frame had substantially gained in purchase, which is readily observable in the higher education, literature, and politics of the time once we recognize that Darwinism, probability theory, statistics, historicism, idealism, pragmatism, and philology belong to the thicket of the two revolutions, as do nationalism and the industrial organization of society.⁶

Broadly speaking, there were two ways in which philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could adapt to these two revolutions. They could either join ranks with one, and go to intellectual war with the other, or they could combine the two in a single systematic scientific-historical-philosophical worldview. More often than not, historicism, positivism, and analytical philosophy became traditions aligned around the first type of response, while idealism and pragmatism followed the second trail: Dewey's passage above attests to precisely this fact.⁷ This second type of response is also evident in some thinkers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries whose thought resolutely refuses to sit easily in any disciplinary category or intellectual tradition, such as Nietzsche.⁸

The latter attitude (combining the two revolutions), however, was only possible during a time when the natural and human sciences were in principle

6 See e.g. the studies in *European Intellectual History Since Darwin and Marx: Selected Essays*, ed. W. Warren Wagar (New York and London: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).

7 Cf. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), especially 139–160.

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Nietzsche and Science*, ed. Gregory Moore and Thomas H. Brobjer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

open to contributions from scholars trained in one form of science (human or natural), but aspired to utilize insights from and even make contributions to the other. But from roughly the second quarter of the twentieth century, the human and natural sciences were beginning to comprise specialized and technical research disciplines, and could be practised legitimately mainly by those that had undergone rigorous specialized training in a controlled and controlling institutional setting such as a university or research institution, and usually including a doctoral program, publications in specialized technical journals, and participation in seminars and conferences.⁹ Dewey's passage had, within the span of a few decades after its publication, begun to sound quaint among philosophers, and the question he asked at the end of it no longer acted as a legitimate philosophical question.¹⁰ Yet, roughly between the last three decades of the nineteenth and the first three decades of the twentieth century it was fully possible to evince a holistic philosophy fuelled both by the scientific and the historical revolution.

These six decades not only witnessed the pinnacle of the scientific and historical imaginations, but saw too the birth of the modernist artistic imagination. It is commonplace to separate both science and history from art, and argue that the former denotes traditions in philosophy and social science (for example, logical positivism, analytical philosophy, philology, and psychoanalysis), while the latter term captures the literature and art of the time (for example, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Marcel Duchamp, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and André Gide), with little or no overlap between them. And while the former imaginations look for certainties in morals, order and perfection in nature, and clearly patterned change in history (whether cumulative or disjunctive, reformist or revolutionary), the latter finds morals to be fragile and duplicitous constructions, erratically revolving around a fundamentally fractured and indelibly aesthetic nature of the self, whose psychic volatility and social malleability render a vision of reality as essentially fluid. This chapter will question this separation, the reason for which will be explained shortly.

Among the pragmatist philosophers, there was one in particular who embodied a philosophical attitude similar to that of Dewey, and to some extent Nietzsche (it is no coincidence that he has been analyzed as a thoroughgoing

9 William H. Sewell, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 2–4.

10 The contemporary revival of classical pragmatism, not least the thought of Dewey, did not mean the revival of the *historical* Dewey. It was rather geared to find new languages for contemporary philosophical perspectives in analytical and continental philosophy.

Nietzschean).¹¹ But unlike most other pragmatists, that philosopher was attentive to the anti-foundationalism of the modernist artistic imagination. Perhaps that is the reason why Bertrand Russell dubbed him the “literary” wing of pragmatism.¹² The philosopher in question is the Briton F.C.S. Schiller (1864–1937), who held positions at the universities of Oxford, Columbia, Cornell and Southern California. This chapter examines Schiller’s philosophy of logic, in which, arguably, his greatest achievements lay.¹³

The foregoing narrative sets the stage for Schiller’s philosophy of logic, for Schiller believed that logic was the only science that had remained impervious to the innovations wrought by the two revolutions. He thus exclaimed that “[logicians] have trusted that their traditional scheme of instruction would weather this storm [Schiller’s and others’ critiques of formal logic], as it has survived the revolt of renascent literature against Medieval Scholasticism *and the nineteenth-century revolt of science against dogma and tradition* [emphasis added].”¹⁴ Schiller also recognized that the modernist scientific imagination was influencing the modernist artistic imagination: “A new science, moreover, has slowly risen into prominence in the shape of Psychology, *which has already exercised some influence on literature* [emphasis added].”¹⁵ Schiller went so far as to opine that “aesthetics can perform the functions of ethics.”¹⁶ Psychology’s influence on literature, Schiller believed, was for the better, and logic too would be better off if it made room for the insights of psychology, and its further exploration in modernist literature.

This chapter argues that the conceptual resources provided by the two revolutions, and the modernist artistic imagination, allowed Schiller to challenge what he perceived as the orthodoxies of formal logic. The argument of this chapter is a historical one: it seeks to unearth a specific historical mode of thinking about logic. In emphasizing the difference of Schiller’s logic from the way we today think about logic, the chapter aims to show that Schiller’s logic, though foreign from the perspective of today’s philosophical culture, was meaningful and legitimate in its own historical setting. The specificity

11 George J. Stack, “Nietzsche’s Influence on Pragmatic Humanism,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 20 (1982), 369–406.

12 Bertrand Russell, “Dr Schiller’s Analysis of *The Analysis of Mind*,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 18 (1922), 645–651.

13 Mark J. Porrovecchio, *F.C.S. Schiller and the Dawn of Pragmatism: The Rhetoric of a Philosophical Rebel* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), 145–162.

14 F.C.S. Schiller, *Formal Logic: A Scientific and Social Problem* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1912), viii.

15 Schiller, *Formal Logic*, 396.

16 F.C.S. Schiller, *Social Decay and Eugenic Reform* (London: Constable and Co., 1932), 66.

of this mode lies in the following conceptual themes, to be explored below: (1) Schiller analyzed logic in the context of a holistic philosophy of life that takes for granted the primacy of the concrete, historical, and social self; (2) human thought, including logic, has no fixed foundations, and the presuppositions of logic acquiesce to radical change; (3) A true logic, therefore, must own up to (1) and (2), which means that logic must be humanized, acknowledging that human thought is radically plastic, and infused with non-logical elements that influence logical thinking, such as irreducibly conflicting ideologies, values, and a variety of practical purposes; (4) formal logic denies (1), (2), and (3), and constructs the tenets of logic based on empirically false, historically meaningless, and practically useless assumptions, and is therefore structurally flawed as both a descriptive and normative science of thought.

2 The Self and Logic

Schiller's philosophy of logic was pitted against three types of formal logic: the logic of text-books used in higher education, resting on logical principles such as the law of identity, the law of contradiction, and syllogistic deduction; the logic of British absolute idealism, especially that of F.H. Bradley; and the symbolic logic of a rising group of philosophers including Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore. Schiller believed that, notwithstanding their differences, these logics shared an aloofness from engaging with concrete or actual thinking, and so their formal nature was sufficient to label them all as formal logic.

For Schiller, but for other pragmatists of his time as well, philosophical inquiry could never be, and should never aspire to be, purely philosophical (in the academic sense prevalent in Schiller's time). The subtitle of Schiller's book *Formal Logic* is telling as to his own view on the scope of Logic: *A Scientific and Social Problem*. A constant line of attack from pragmatists in the early twentieth century was that formal logicians did not recognize the historical, social, and practical aspects of logic. This line of attack carried illocutionary force in the early twentieth century because it came from internal criticism, that is, academic logicians themselves had since the early twentieth century begun to see insoluble problems to formal logic, and most of these Schiller knew personally, e.g. Alfred Sidgwick, Bernard Bosanquet, C.S. Peirce, and John Dewey. Schiller himself was a teacher of formal logic at the prestigious Oxford and Cornell Universities. That every truth, every logical operation, every logical principle, rested on some concrete practice, conceivable or actual, was a fairly conventional presupposition in this period. It was a socially recognized

way of dealing with new dilemmas.¹⁷ As such, it allows us to grasp a historically distinctive mode of thinking about logic.¹⁸

As is the case with the other pragmatists of his time, such as Dewey, understanding Schiller's logic properly requires embedding it in a broader philosophical project. Schiller was an iconoclast, and as behoved an iconoclast, he followed the way of pragmatism to one extreme, which he called "humanism." The core of this humanism can be unearthed in Schiller's first book, *Riddles of the Sphinx*, published in 1892, where Schiller was committed to viewing the person or the "Self" as

[...] the most indispensable of all postulates, it is the Alpha, the starting-point, and it would not be surprising if it turned out also the Omega, the goal of philosophy. [...] all acts of knowledge are performed by selves, the whole of our cognitive machinery, principles, axioms, postulates and categories, are invented by and modelled upon selves.¹⁹

As this passage shows, Schiller's humanism was philosophically radical in that it rendered the study of any form of thought essentially anthropological. The self, according to Schiller, comes not just with the ability to reason logically but also with the capacity to develop, change, imagine, feel, dream, desire, control, deliberate, imagine, choose, co-operate, invent, force, joke, die, deceive, act, and much more, all of which are connected, all of which have grown and developed through evolution, and from the particular chains of experiences a self has undergone since its birth within a specific historical culture. Such is the process human selves, including logicians, call their lives. Philosophy, for Schiller, was ultimately the study of life in its actual and conceivable totality.

17 John Passmore, "Some Critics of Formal Logic," in *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 156–173. This is an explanatory historical context in which Wittgenstein's later philosophy ought to be embedded.

18 For a good historical approach to American pragmatism see David Hollinger, "William James and the Culture of Inquiry," and "The Problem of Pragmatism in American History," in *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 3–23, 23–44.

19 F.C.S. Schiller, *Riddles of the Sphinx: A Study in the Philosophy of Humanism* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1910), 142. See also F.C.S. Schiller, "Axioms as Postulates," in *Personal Idealism: Philosophical Essays by Eight Members of the University of Oxford*, ed. Henry Sturt (London: Macmillan, 1902), 47–134; and F.C.S. Schiller, *Logic for Use: An Introduction to the Voluntarist Theory of Knowledge* (London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd, 1929).

Issuing from this conception of philosophy is the view that the philosophical study of logic must take into account everything that falls within the purview of the concrete self, because it is the thinking of such a self that simply is the content of logic. But because the logician can only conduct such a study from the vantage point of a concrete self (the logician is inescapably a concrete self), logic can never arrogate formal or other perfection, completeness, universality, and uniformity.

According to Schiller, there is no ultimate reality or ideal beyond human experience, and human experience is not in need of it: “The intellectual cosmos also neither has nor needs fixed foundations whose fixity is an illusion.”²⁰ Schiller draws a methodological consequence from this belief that he intends to act as the searchlight of pragmatism: “it is a *methodological necessity* to assume that the world is *wholly plastic*, i.e. to act as though we believed this, and will yield us what we want, if we persevere in wanting it.”²¹ This consequence, in turn, has profound consequences for the nature of “axioms,” or the most fundamental principles of thought that guide human thinking: “We conceive the axioms as arising out of man’s needs as an agent, as prompted by his desires, as affirmed by his will, in a word, as nourished and sustained by his emotional and volitional nature.”²² In more elaborate terms, the self:

[...] thinks with his whole heart and personality, that his feelings enter constantly and copiously into his reasonings, that his nature selects the objects of his thought, and determines his aims and his motives and his methods and the values he assigns to his objects, while his education and history determine the meanings and associations of the instruments of his thinking, viz. the words he uses.²³

If the foundation of logic is the self, then that foundation is radically malleable, or “plastic,” since everything about the nature of the concrete self is provisional. It is with these presuppositions that Schiller both criticizes formal logic

20 Schiller, “Axioms as Postulates,” 57. Though I do not mention it in this chapter other than in a cursory manner, the advances in the physics and biology were important in persuading Schiller into taking this stance. Concepts such as “matter,” “force,” “causality,” “origin,” and “substance” took on whole new meanings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and these meanings allowed for indetermination or worse. See especially Schiller, *Riddles*.

21 Schiller, “Axioms as Postulates,” 61.

22 Schiller, “Axioms as Postulates,” 86.

23 Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 101.

and professes an alternative humanist logic. If there are no fixed and universal standards for logic, what is there? What, if anything, ensures the validity and objectivity of truth, deduction, induction, and the like? What should stay, if anything, and what should go, of formal logic?

One example of Schiller's method at work suffices to tease out some answers to these questions, since it branches out to most of his key concepts and arguments. I have in mind Schiller's ingenious criticism of the syllogism: if it is true that "all men are mortal" and that "Socrates is a man," then it necessarily follows that "Socrates is mortal."²⁴ Both its truth and the necessity of its validity have been taken for granted since Aristotle, and so if it can be shown that it is a bad form of reasoning, an important step will have been taken toward its reform, and the reform of formal logic in general.

Schiller's first line of attack is conventional for that time—namely, that the conclusion begs the question, for the truth of the major premise *depends* on the conclusion: for the logician, or any other thinker for that matter, to *prove* that "all men are mortal," he must know that Socrates is mortal *prior* to the proof, because Socrates falls within the premise "all men are mortal." This of course, uproots the concept of proof from its force in the syllogism. The best line of defence the logician can put up, according to Schiller, is to postulate that the premise is not based on empirical observations. It is rather a universal, or a law of nature, the conclusion of which is a particular instance. But this retort does not convince Schiller, for it assumes that the universal is absolute, applicable to any particular, for any purpose, by anyone and in any context, while Schiller's point is precisely that a particular, a specific purpose, a particular person, and a specific context, constitute thinking.

The absurdity of this postulate is brought out in the alternative, highly value-laden, and socially circumscribed premise "all negro slaves are men," the truth of which is necessarily relative to concrete selves.²⁵ Thus, Schiller wrote, "No one in his senses, we shall say, will argue about 'Socrates,' whether a defunct philosopher or negro slave, a tomcat or a character in fiction, and without knowing what the problem is that has arisen about him."²⁶ This example shows well the rationale of the pragmatist dictum that truths are species of values and judgements with practical origins, desires and consequences; and that treating truths in mere propositional form is therefore nothing more than a pastime of philosophers in ivory towers.

24 F.C.S. Schiller, "Are All Men Mortal?," *Mind* 44 (1935), 204–210.

25 Which he might have owed to Bradley: Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, 158.

26 Schiller, "Are All Men Mortal," 207.

Schiller's counter-premise exemplifies his firm belief that that differences in value "seem to be ultimate and irreconcilable." And this allows for rhetoric and power to enter the scene as procedures by which truth and validity can be made.²⁷ Moreover, because logicians too are selves who assign values and meanings to concepts and practices, "the logicians themselves continue to differ widely as to the nature, the function, the value, and even the existence, of their science."²⁸ Hence, Schiller argues for a comprehensive value-pluralism, and the next section will discuss how the recognition of that pluralism leads Schiller to adopt a principle of toleration.

For the moment, is important to take note of the fact that Schiller arrives at his pluralism and principle of toleration for reasons that can only be understood historically. Schiller believed, much like the other British and American pragmatists of his time, that he was living in an age that had just come out of a historical period in which "monism" or "absolutism" of values reigned supreme (the Victorian era), but which had to give way to an acceptance of pluralism, since social, political, and scientific reality had thoroughly discredited that reign. In Schiller's own words: "History has declared against intolerance, and in practice we have all to confess nowadays that there is truth beyond the limits of the beliefs we hold, because they seem to us the truest."²⁹

These discussions of the Socrates syllogism, and a host of other discussions on the elements of logic, pose, according to Schiller, grave problems for formal logic due to a generic fact—namely, "the abstraction from meaning" in formal logic.³⁰ But this abstraction, which formal logic took to be a virtue, proved fatal to formal logic because it left the meaning of its words and sentences, its, as it were, raw material, hopelessly ambiguous or indeterminate. The reason why formal logic leaves every word and sentence indeterminate or ambiguous is that they have a wide range of potential meanings and contexts, and mere "verbal," or formal, meaning (such as "Socrates," "man," and "all men are mortal," in the classical syllogism) does not entail a particular meaning. Determination and disambiguation of meaning can only be achieved by the contextualized linguistic acts performed by selves. In Schiller's words, "real" meaning "always arises in a particular situation, and it is always *personal*; i.e. it is what men mean when they *use* words to express and convey *their* meaning."³¹

27 Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 99.

28 Schiller, *Formal Logic*, vii; F.C.S. Schiller, *Humanism: Philosophical Essays* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1912), 49.

29 Schiller, *Formal Logic*, 406.

30 Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 50.

31 Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 54.

However, in expressing meaning persons are always communicating their experience of the world to other persons, which explains why the “the meaning of words then becomes *social*, without ceasing to be personal.”³² This character of meaning affects the character of truth, for truth, just like meaning, is a value continuous with the living self:

Like the other values also the career of a truth is profoundly influenced by man’s social nature; it has not merely to commend itself to its maker for the nonce, but to continue to give him satisfaction and to continue to seem the right remark for the occasion. Now this it will hardly do, unless it succeeds in winning recognition also from others, and is judged valuable, ‘good’ and ‘true’ by them. Should it fail to do so, the penalty is in every case the same, viz. condemnation as ‘false,’ rejection and supersession by a *better* ‘truth.’ Hence so long as it lasts it is being tested and, it may be, contested.³³

The validity and objectivity of concepts and principles, at bottom, stand and fall with social edifices, which in turn stand and fall depending on the interactions and communications between different selves. “Axioms,” for instance, are at bottom practical postulates regimented by working social practices. For Schiller, the history of thought and the study of evolution in the early twentieth century provided ample evidence that this was the case.³⁴

Schiller’s most daring suggestion for a reform of the syllogism was to treat it as a mode of inquiry for solving concrete problems for concrete selves. The practical use of the Socrates syllogism could, for instance, arise if it addressed a problem concerning Socrates. Schiller offered one: “a ‘problematic’ Socrates has turned up and there are doubts about him. He is under grave suspicion. Is he a man or a ghost?”³⁵ This question might not make sense to philosophers today, but if we understand it historically, we will find it be yet another example of the historical specificity of the philosophical problems deemed legitimate by leading philosophers in the early twentieth century. The reason why Schiller felt he could pose such a question in the context of a discussion of logic was the fact that he was a life-long devotee to psychical research, and the fact that

32 Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 63.

33 Schiller, *Riddles*, 132–133.

34 See especially Schiller, “Axioms.” For a contemporary questioning, akin to Schiller’s, of the idea of progress see A.S. Pringle-Pattison, *The Philosophy of History* (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

35 Schiller, “Are All Men Mortal?,” 207.

in the early twentieth century psychical research was as contested as it was hailed by prominent psychologists and philosophers. Schiller succeeded Henri Bergson as the President of the Society for Psychical Research in 1914, of which William James had been the President before Bergson.³⁶

Questions like this one thus preoccupied some of the most fascinating philosopher of the early twentieth century. And they were accepted as admissible in philosophical discussions.³⁷ Such questions could arise when some people, called “mediums,” claimed to somehow be in contact with people long since deceased, and could act as channels through which the spirits or ghosts of the deceased could communicate with the living. A philosophical question, then, would be, can we trust that this or that medium is telling the truth when he or she claims Socrates is communicating with us, is and if so how? According to Schiller, in order for this to even count as a problem, the meaning of words such as “personality,” “self-identity,” “mortal,” “truth,” and “validity” must be radically different than the one implicit in the standard form of the syllogism, or in any formal logical system.

Whether the syllogism can actually be revised to meet these requirements and how, was, unfortunately, something Schiller never explored. His own humanist logic was far from systematic. Still, apart from exemplifying a contingent mode of thinking, he did point to some aspects of human thinking which lucidly evince that formal logic is sorely lacking in describing and regulating them; and he did point the way to directions conducive to adequate solutions of those problems.

So far we have seen Schiller radically humanize truth, meaning, and inquiry. We need not inquire further into the other logical concepts and theories he found wanting and attempted to revise, such as the law of identity, induction, and the correspondence theory of truth.³⁸ This section has already established just to what extent Schiller was ready to go in analyzing logic in its concreteness.

36 See e.g. Renée Haynes, *The Society for Psychical Research, 1882–1982: A History* (London: Macdonald, 1982); *Philosophy and Psychical Research*, ed. Shivesh C. Thakur (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976); William James, *Essays in Psychical Research* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986).

37 Mark. K. Porrovecchio, “The Curious Case of F.C.S Schiller,” Society for Psychical Research, [<http://www.spr.ac.uk/main/article/curious-case-f-c-s-schiller>, accessed Jan. 4 2012].

38 For a pithy discussion on these matters, see Reuben Abel, *The Pragmatic Humanism of F.C.S. Schiller* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

3 Logic and Ideology

Schiller's logic requires historical understanding, since it might present itself, from the perspective of our dominant philosophical cultures, not least contemporary pragmatism, *solely* as a response to a widely disseminated purely philosophical "Formal Logic."³⁹ A philosopher may focus solely on the "purely" philosophical aspects of Schiller's logic, but it comes at the cost of judging *irrelevant* what Schiller and his fellow pragmatists deemed *essential*. Contemporary pragmatism often neglects this insight from historical research, and treats historical instances of pragmatism as contributions to today's philosophical problems, such as metaphysical realism, the nature of truth, scientific explanation, logical formalism, and multiethnic democracy.⁴⁰

In doing so, contemporary pragmatism loses sight of the fact that some of the crucial divergences in Anglo-American pragmatism in the first half of the twentieth century can be attributed to the competing political ideologies to which its proponents were committed. In debates between pragmatists, a pragmatist could take a radically different stance on philosophical issues depending on the particular intersections between his philosophy, his political beliefs, and other non-logical forms of thought.

Bertrand Russell's response to Schiller's criticism of Russell's logic, and Max Eastman's review of Schiller's own logic accent these dissimilarities. Russell, the major British intellectual and logician, called Schiller the literary wing of pragmatism (Dewey being the scientific and James the religious). Schiller was a major critic of Russell's formal logic. But in one response to Schiller, Russell avowed that rhetoric rather than logic often serves to steer the nature of a debate on logic, thus partly accepting one of Schiller's main points about the nature of logic: "He [Schiller] and I are agreed, I think, that it is impossible to produce logical arguments on either side of the questions which divide us;"

39 Abel, *The Pragmatic Humanism*; Douglas McDermid, *The Varieties of Pragmatism: Truth, Realism, and Knowledge from James to Rorty* (London: Continuum, 2006); John R. Shook, "F.C.S. Schiller and European Pragmatism," in *A Companion to Pragmatism*, ed. John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 44–54; Ahti-Veikko Pietarinen, "Remarks on the Peirce-Schiller Correspondence," in *Transatlantic Encounters: Philosophy, Media, Politics*, ed. E.H. Oleksy and W. Oleksy (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011), 61–70.

40 See e.g. Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism: An Open Question* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); Richard J. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); James Johnson, *The Priority of Democracy: Political Consequences of Pragmatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

since they rest on “different logics,” the only effective retort must therefore be “of the nature of rhetoric rather than logic.”⁴¹

Eastman was, along with Sidney Hook, one of Dewey’s best pupils and in the first four decades of the twentieth century a Marxist, indeed one of the most prominent Marxists in America of that time. It was by no accident, therefore, that Eastman inculcated Schiller on account of the *conservative* principle underscoring his revision of formal logic. Such a principle, according to Eastman, will render it “*impossible* for anyone to build up a logic of science and of practical life [emphasis added],” since it acknowledges that formal logic *works* practically, and so fulfils the pragmatist criterion of truth. Instead, according to Eastman, one must take a *revolutionary*, “democratic,” “system-wrecking,” and transformative leap in logic.⁴² True logic, for Eastman, had to be revolutionary, whereas for Schiller, according to Eastman, it must be conservative. What logic was and what it was supposed to do differed between Eastman and Schiller on account of their political ideologies. Schiller was indeed a political conservative, but of a very idiosyncratic kind; and he did attempt to justify that conservatism with his philosophy. Yet, it is far from clear, as will be shown below, that Schiller’s philosophy is straightforwardly conservative.

In any case, such ideological disputes as that between Eastman and Schiller are not relative to the 1920s and the 1930s. It is important to recognize that contemporary pragmatism harbors ideological content as well. And perhaps we may learn something from pragmatist logic of the interwar years in recognizing this fact: the difference between early twentieth century pragmatism and contemporary pragmatism is that the former publically avowed the incapability of ideology, while the latter does not. For instance, the ideological content of Morton White’s pragmatist philosophy of science is inscribed as a formal feature of philosophy that, moreover, attempts to appropriate historical authority in the name of ideological neutrality: “According to holistic pragmatism, scientists’ warpings are carried out with concern for the elegance or simplicity of the theory they adopt and with the intention to warp the heritage conservatively—that is, by engaging in what James calls minimum modification of it and what Quine calls minimum mutilation of it.”⁴³

How was Schiller’s logic connected to his ideological beliefs? Schiller, as already mentioned was a conservative. He was also part of the British eugenics

41 Russell, “Dr Schiller’s Analysis,” 651.

42 Max Eastman, “Mr. Schiller’s Logic,” *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods* 9 (1912), 463–468, 464, 465.

43 Morton White, *A Philosophy of Culture: The Scope of Holistic Pragmatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 2.

movement, and co-founded the Eugenics Education Society in 1907. These two commitments will help us situate Schiller's logic in his ideology, and vice versa.⁴⁴ According to Schiller, at the turn of the nineteenth century, two working "truths" had been shown to have reverted into "truth-claims," in desperate need of new concepts, postulates, experiments, verifications, adjusted desires, and changed purposes. First, the social-Darwinist doctrine of the "survival of the fit" had been seriously questioned by the success of democracy and social reform in Britain: the "unfit," in brief, were surviving, and that fact seriously challenged the postulate that the "unfit" are doomed to perish. Second, the so-called higher races, the fit stock, which Schiller identified with the English nobility, were seen as degenerating, and so losing power in society, which Schiller took to mean an oncoming racial suicide.⁴⁵

Now, in philosophical terms, according to Schiller's humanist logic, we attain knowledge by an ongoing process of inquiry whereby "truth-claims are professed and put to testing and experiment," which at some point "verifies" the truth-claim, and gains "social recognition" as a "truth," which implies the sidelining of other truth-claims as "falsities." However, it is always the case that the "truth-claim character persists into the 'truth.'"⁴⁶ This fundamentally unstable foundation of truth had revealed itself in interwar Britain, instilling in Jeremiah-type conservatives and eugenicists like Schiller a prophetic sense of looming crisis.

In Schiller's view, then, the truth-claims about man professed by left-wing progressives had proved themselves as possessing efficient causality, and so were becoming truths, while the truths of the aristocratic superiority were turning back into truth-claims. There had arisen a contest between these incompatible truths, in which logic, if it was to have any role to play in the pressing problems of the day, had to take sides, for it was implicitly already on some side.

Logical principles, for Schiller, were tied to other extra-logical spheres of thought, such as biological principles. For instance, on occasion Schiller argued that heredity marked the boundaries of our thinking: "Heredity, which seems to render our moral, intellectual and physical characteristics more or less dependent on the action of our parents and ancestors, limits, if it does not

44 See e.g. G.R. Searle, *Eugenics and Politics 1900–1914* (Leyden: Noordhoof International Publishing, 1976).

45 F.C.S. Schiller, *Tantalus or the Future of Man* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1924), 47–48.

46 Schiller, *Logic for Use*, 105–106.

destroy, our freedom and our responsibility.”⁴⁷ Thus, the quality of thinking, health, beauty, and strength which nature indifferently and callously distributed across the human stocks coincided with social strata.

However, at the same time, Schiller was committed to viewing thought as essentially historical and voluntary. Those commitments qualified Schiller’s biological determinism and he argued that hereditary qualities are not absolute or fixed. The very fact that biological facts and laws have meanings and truths proves that they are inescapably value-laden, and so ongoingly determined by concrete selves. In the end, for Schiller, it is not some abstract conservative or eugenical principle or fact that is decisive for practice. All such principles and facts “are meant for the guidance of moral agents, with whom the decision must remain.”⁴⁸ Biological truths, therefore, were no less exempt from agency, irreconcilable differences, debates, inquiries, and contests than were ideological ones.

This complicates Schiller’s logic, and his commitment to conservatism and eugenics, for it shows that Schiller’s logic supervened on his ideological views: *both eugenics and conservatism were in the first place forms of social inquiry and therefore ought to be regulated by humanist logic.*⁴⁹ Thus, the pressing social issues of the day had convinced Schiller that conservatism, ironically, must change, even take on a new, revived, character, radically different than the conservatism of the Tories and the House of Lords.⁵⁰ And eugenics must be experimental and progressive, for that is the mode in which truth-claims are applied and put to practical use. Moreover, because every truth-claim and truth is social in nature, eugenics too “would have to be backed by a powerful, enthusiastic, and intelligent public sentiment.”⁵¹ And because eugenics would be a trial-and-error experimental practice, just one out of many competing practices, and not internally coherent at that, according to Schiller, it “will

47 Schiller, *Riddles*, 231–232.

48 Schiller, *Social Decay*, 34–35.

49 Schiller, *Social Decay*, 27.

50 This was a common theme to the “aristocratic revivalism” of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it was justified in different, sometimes radically different, ways. One of these ways was that of Oscar Levy, a Jewish-German intellectual who successfully introduced Nietzsche into England. See e.g. Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002).

51 Schiller, *Tantalus*, 59.

regard the *toleration* of differences of opinion as among the cardinal principles of a sanely progressive social order.”⁵²

All these provisions notwithstanding, Schiller did believe that eugenics had become necessary in mass society: the “higher” races should be encouraged to breed more (positive eugenics) while the lower ought to abstain from breeding (negative eugenics). Moreover, he seemed to be disgusted by the “lower” races, calling them weeds, hordes, masses, imbeciles, and the like. Still, for the reasons just stated, Schiller felt that the criticism from the prominent intellectuals J.B.S. Haldane and Bertrand Russell, saying that eventually political dissent would be labelled degenerate and eugenics perverted into arbitrary exercise of power, was incorrect. He was quite ready to accept the possibility of the *failure* of eugenics, if the British public should *will* it. This acceptance signals a fairly strong commitment to the strictures of Schiller’s humanist logic.⁵³

There could, for Schiller, be no starker contrast to his own humanist logic than formal logic. Schiller modelled the structure of his logic on the value-pluralism of the society of his time together with the historically situated concrete self. He intended for that logic to accurately describe the social function of thinking for such selves, on the one hand, and aid in refining such thinking for social uses, on the other. Formal logic, in contrast, had or would have, devastating social effects, according to Schiller. First, since the “ideal of formal perfection is *Fixity*,” formal logic postulates the existence of fixed and permanent truth, and since such a vision of truth entails impermeability to change, formal logic conceives of change as sign of imperfection, a symptom of falsity. The practical effect of this postulate serves “to commend Formal Logic to the blindest and most intractable sort of conservatism.” Second, since the ideal proof of a formal logical operation is meant to arrive at certainty, the effect of this ideal is that it debar thought that is risky, and outlaws thought that is probable. This is pernicious, according to Schiller, to the best scientific and everyday life practice, where decisions are made, problems solved, questions answered, leaps taken, through endless series of concrete situations riddled with uncertainty, or at best, probability. Third, since the concept of truth in formal logic is absolute, it is conceived to be true regardless of any, and in every, actual and possible circumstance; a truth is *necessarily* true in formal logic. This means that “‘Necessity’ is as evidently the tyrant’s plea in logical as in political absolutism and neither has any use for the freedom of human activity.” The fourth, and final, reason for why formal logic has deplorable social

52 F.C.S. Schiller, *Eugenics and Politics: Essays by Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller* (London: Constable & Co., 1926), 60.

53 Schiller, *Eugenics*, 29.

effects owes to the fact that formal logic not only postulates absolute truths, but *one and only one* system of thought that is able to carry that truth, and that is formal logic. For this reason, formal logic cannot abide by the plurality of views containing truth: “The absolute system of immutable Truth is *one*. Not more than one view, therefore, can be true.”⁵⁴

4 Conclusion

This chapter has underscored the historical contingency of the philosophy of logic. Focusing on F.C.S. Schiller’s pragmatist logic has allowed history to weigh in on the nature of logic, for Schiller’s logic clearly reveals, in more ways than one, that extra-logical contexts are crucial for understanding the function and place of logic in concrete human life. The encounter with Schiller serves to remind us that philosophy in history can appear as *very* familiar and yet *very* foreign from the perspective of the present. On the one hand, Schiller’s value-pluralism and anti-foundationalism certainly chime well with many of today’s leading philosophical and historical perspectives, and can easily act as a source of conceptual inspiration to them. On the other hand, what must surely baffle these perspectives is Schiller’s commitment to eugenics, conservatism, and psychical research. It is clear that Schiller’s logic does not make much sense unless it is understood in these various contexts. Another way of expressing this conclusion is to say that philosophy too leads a life in history.

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