

The Philosophy Contribution of F. C. S. Schiller

Miao Chunrong^{1,a}

¹*School of Marxism, Harbin Normal University, Hexing Street, Harbin, China*
^a*43352931@qq.com*

Keywords: F. C. S. Schiller, Philosophy Contribution, Pragmatist.

Abstract: Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller was born on August 16, 1864, in Schleswig-Holstein, on the Danish border. He spent most of his life at Oxford University in England, so we used to call him an English pragmatist. Schiller has written more than a dozen works and hundreds of papers, laying a solid theoretical foundation for the establishment of pragmatic philosophy. It can be said that he, Peirce, James and together with Dewey constitute the early trend of pragmatism. The main purpose of this thesis is to sort out F. C. S. Schiller's theoretical contributions to philosophy, prepare materials for his further revival, and add reliable arguments for putting F. C. S. Schiller back into the camp of pragmatism.

1. Introduction

Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller was born on August 16, 1864, in Schleswig-Holstein, on the Danish border. His father, of German descent, was a merchant in Calcutta who educated his three sons in England. After Rugby School, Schiller went on to Oxford and Balliol, where Master Benjamin Jowett, T. H. Green, Edward Caird, William Wallace and Edward Nettship pioneered the new idealism of Britain in the 1880s. Schiller won the first prize in Classical Moderate Literature and the first Prize in Great Literature, and in 1887 was awarded the Taylor Scholarship in German, where he received a Bachelor of Arts. After teaching German for a year at Eton, he returned to Oxford to study for a master's degree. In 1893 he came to Cornell as a lecturer in logic and metaphysics, and did additional postgraduate work. He failed to take a PhD at Cornell, but was offered a long-awaited doctorate at Oxford and Corpus Christi College in 1897, where he became assistant tutor, tutor, senior tutor and then fellow, in the process earning him a PhD at Oxford in 1906. From 1900 to 1926, Schiller served as treasurer of the Mind Society. He was president of the Aristotelian Society, president of the British Society for Psychological Research, and a fellow of the British Academy (1926). In addition to traditional philosophical questions, Schiller maintained a keen interest in three other areas: psychological research, educational reform, and eugenics. While maintaining the legitimacy of scientific research into psychological phenomena, he also maintained a reasonable personal skepticism. He proposed university reform, away from the classics and pure logic, and toward scientific and applied disciplines. In the field of eugenics, Schiller was also a strong advocate of various eugenics "reforms." He was one of the founding members of the English Eugenics Society, serving as its vice-president in 1909 and on its council in 1910-11, 1916 and 1936. In 1912 he attended the first International Congress of Eugenics. Schiller retired from his teaching post at Corpus Christi University in 1926, but he remained a senior research fellow until his death. It was also that year that

he began his relationship with USC, beginning as a special guest lecturer and later becoming a professor and honorary Doctor of Laws at USC. From 1926 to 1935, he spent part of each year at Oxford and part at USC. After 1935, Schiller married a fellow faculty member and lived in Los Angeles throughout the year until his death on August 9, 1937.

2. Theoretical Contribution

F.C.S.Schiller's contribution to pragmatic philosophy can be summed up in the following seven aspects: Creating the humanistic dimension of pragmatism with James; Introducing the theory of evolution into pragmatic philosophy against the powerful trend of absolute idealism; Human activity participates in the generation of reality; the uncompletion of reality and the generation of knowledge; Establish the methodological status of the hypothesis and the practicability of logic; Metaphysics and personalism of pluralism; Value pluralism and evolution.

2.1. With James, Schiller pioneered the humanistic dimension of pragmatism

Follow Schiller's own tracing of the term humanism. "The first and earliest indication of the meaning of 'humanism' is found in a fragment of literary history. All things that passed through the aging of medieval Christianity enjoyed a great advantage, otherwise we would have lost it. ... This is Rome, the Latin language, which survived the Roman Empire because it was the language of the Christian Church. ... Italian scholars of the 15th century clamored for a return to a purer Latin. Under the leadership of Laurentius Valla they called themselves 'humanists'." ^[1]

From the above, it can be seen how accidental the first use of the word "humanism" was, almost in the field of literature and linguistics, to play a role, and to this day the professor of Latin is called the "professor of humanities". We can hardly be content to keep the word confined to the history of literature, and to prevent it from serving philosophy. The two specific contexts of literature and philosophy reduce the danger of the word being confused. So far, literary and philosophical humanism have remained separate.

Humanism has come to be a term in the philosophical sense as a result of its application by modern philosophers, although several predecessors of philosophy have used the adjective "humanist" occasionally to describe an attitude that places the human problem as a central concern of philosophy. But Schiller chose humanism carefully to express his endorsement of Protagoras' famous dictum, to emphasize the philosophical value of man, and to distinguish it from the other two philosophical attitudes, absolutism and naturalism (which now most often calls itself "behaviorism"). Humanism is used in the sense of opposing the absolutist and naturalistic dehumanizing tendency to abstract from the human person and exclude it).

Shortly after the appearance of Schiller's Humanism (1907), a well-known absolutist, J.S. Professor Mackenzie adopted the name "Humanism" as his own version of the absolutist doctrine, and then in 1922 Lord Haldane gave the title of one of his books The Philosophy of Pragmatism. Years later, younger Christian pastors in the United States found God so weakened in their preaching, so impenetrable and boring that He might as well have been abandoned. So, they abandoned theism and called it pure humanism. Schiller's humanistic doctrine is used in a philosophical sense, as distinct from theological humanism. Schiller's humanism is not about theology, but merely about logic and knowledge.

The fifth use of humanism is of American origin, and the scope of its application is educational, for it is under this banner that Professors Owen Babbitt and Elmer Moore rallied their followers to the classical type, and it can be seen as a development of Renaissance "humanism."

The above exploration of the meanings of various "humanism" and the specific situations in which they arise can help us evaluate the definition of humanism in Schiller's philosophy: "A philosophy is

properly called 'humanism' when it regards as its central concern the problems of human life and experience and the problems of the real world, through which we believe ourselves to be connected. As has been explained, this definition takes the humanist definition to the opposite of absolutism and naturalism. The latter fails to recognize the full scope of these issues and experiments; Vainly for a partial solution. Absolutism comforts itself by the inherent defects of man but by imaginatively detailing the perfection of an imaginary absolute man."^[2]

It can be seen that Schiller intends to take humanism as a balance point between absolutism and naturalism. But this is not the ultimate goal, Schiller is ultimately going to use the term to describe the new philosophy of the time, the pragmatism that James is developing. "I soon discovered that 'pragmatism' is a very bad name and suitable for the mean-spirited to bother with it. I had to explain it for half an hour. ... James took over 'pragmatism' from his friend Peirce... But when I wrote to James and suggested replacing it with 'humanism', he replied too late. The word 'pragmatism' has caught on and cannot be eradicated. Of course, the enemies of the new idea have adopted it with joy, for they see at once that the word is bad and stupid."^[3]

Therefore, some scholars think that Schiller has broken away from the family of pragmatism from the literal sense of humanism, and it is a misunderstanding of Schiller's thought to expel him. James did not expel Schiller, but regarded him as his most qualified successor. Dewey did not give the order to leave, and Schiller himself did not insist on breaking off his relationship with pragmatism like Peirce.

Kenneth Wenttrauth has an insightful view that pragmatism can serve as a bridge between the two groups. He argues that pragmatism contains the seeds of both perspectives; Peirce's analytical precision, James and Schiller's existential concern for the human condition, and so did Dewey. For example, the theory of verifiability of meaning, which is key to analytical philosophy, can find its legitimate foreshadowing in instrumental or pragmatic theories of meaning and truth. And existentialism's emphasis on freedom and choice, on a human-centered ontology, can be seen clearly in the humanism of Schiller and James. F.C.S. Schiller was the main English representative of pragmatism, defending its principles, and the audience for his theories of pragmatism was mainly European. During his time at Oxford, Schiller engaged in sharp and controversial debates with absolute idealists, especially Bradley, and with realists, especially Bertrand Russell, about the proper role of reason in determining the nature of reality, personality, and value. Schiller embraced the nascent theories of evolution, voluntarism, and individual idealism that arose in the United States, England, France, and Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He described himself as "humanist" and proposed a philosophy that placed particular emphasis on individual consciousness and free will in order to theorize about what is true, good, and just. "Man is the measure of all things" is the essence of Schiller's pragmatism theory. His great achievements are distributed in religion, psychology, education, history and almost all philosophical fields, including epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, metaphysics and ethics. For Schiller, what matters most is the nature of meaning in relation to thought, language, logical reasoning, knowledge and truth. This idea is reflected in other works such as *The Riddle of the Sphinx: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Evolution of a Caveman* (1891), *Humanism: Essays on Philosophy* (1903), *Studies in Humanism* (1907), and *Plato or Protagoras* (1908).

2.2. Introducing the theory of evolution into pragmatic philosophy against the powerful trend of absolute idealism

Schiller's closest Allies were William James, Henry Sturt, Alfred Sidgwick, and Giovanni Papini. The common bond of their scholarship was a belief in human power and the reality of an open universe in which man wielded his power to create a human world. Schiller devoted an early career

to exploring the implications of evolution for philosophy, anonymously publishing, at the age of 27, *The Riddle of the Sphinx: An Investigation in Evolutionary Philosophy* (1891). The popular book, which was published in three editions, laid out his lifelong quest to build an anti-mechanical materialist and non-skeptical relativism in which revisable knowledge based on human interests is achievable. There are also strong signs of Nietzschean influence in this work; Of all the major pragmatists, Schiller goes furthest in this direction. In James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890), he subsequently discovered a biological theory of consciousness as an interactive process of growing in an environment of selective perception. Both James and Schiller followed the original philosophical implication: that all thought must serve the organism's efforts to survive in a mutable and malleable world. Schiller quickly expanded on James's doctrine of "believing in the will," declaring truth to be something of proven value and formulating a subjectivist version of James's stream of consciousness theory, declaring that reality can only be what the individual mind knows it to be. Schiller argued for the ontological finality of the creative individual mind because it is the truest knowable thing, and argued that individual value must always be the final judge of all knowledge. It was precisely in turn-of-the-century British thought that the powerful wave of absolute idealism was resolutely resisted by a group of self-described "individual" idealists. Schiller was among its most prominent opponents. Along with six other Oxford personalists, Rashdahl and Schiller contributed essays to Henry Stead's edited *Personal Idealism* (1902). Stead was notorious for his open contempt for the rationalism inherent in absolute British idealism. This attack was supported by Schiller, who argued in his book *Axioms* as postulate that scientific and logical principles are constructs that humans impose on reality for practical purposes. Schiller later devoted a book, *Formal Logic* (1912), to decrying the pernicious effects of deductive logic as the only way of thinking. In addition to promoting social authoritarianism, deductive rationalism in philosophy encourages the false view that logical principles are superhuman entities that stand on judgments about actual mental processes. Schiller's position on the psychological nature of logic brought him into agreement with Alfred Sidgwick. These ideas are also reflected in Schiller's "Is Mr. Bradley Becoming a Pragmatist?" (1908), "The Psychology of Mr. Russell" (1922) and other books and papers.

2.3. Human activity participates in the generation of reality

Freed from the strict strictures of the universe conceived by any rationalist methodology, both as a basis for materialist determinism and as a basis for absolute teleology, Schiller (like James) rejoices in the "open universe", as the real possibility of individual evolution moves towards greater harmony in both the social and natural worlds. For the European intellectuals of the first decade of the twentieth century, "pragmatism" meant that James and Schiller (Charles Peirce and John Dewey were largely unknown), and it was their shared vision of the freedom of human power growth that excluded many but inspired a few, including Giovanni Papini. Together with Giuseppe Prezzolini, Papini led a humanist movement in Rome that drew its inspiration largely from an uneasy mixture of James, Schiller, Bergson and Nietzsche. Prezzolini's radical voluntarism led to his "man-god" philosophy: the novel's pragmatic superman whose will asserts himself as the omnipotent change-maker of the world in which he finds himself. Neither Papini nor Schiller has gone that far, and Schiller really remains a co-operative but quasi-independent partner in human endeavor. Although natural processes cannot be determined in isolation from the results of man's transformation of the world (how could we possibly know nature before this transformation?) Will, indeed, impose certain limits on the enterprise of our partial freedom. These ideas are also reflected in Schiller's *Realism, Pragmatism, and William James* (1912), *Humanism: Essays on Philosophy* (1903), and *Studies in Humanism* (1907), among other books and essays.

2.4. The uncompletion of reality and the generation of knowledge

Reality is to be understood practically as unfinished, still in the process of growing, stimulated by human activity towards a definite form. Human creation is not merely a rearrangement of existing raw materials. All of our creations, including knowledge, transform reality into something truly novel, thereby creating truly new realities and increasing the amount of existence. The maxim that matter (or energy, etc.) can neither be created nor destroyed is nothing more than a convenient fiction successfully imposed on the world for the sake of some limited scientific inquiry, and cannot be regarded as absolutely governing all relations with the universe, as any such principle can be. The best term to describe reality is the Aristotelian concept of "matter", which denotes the uncertain potential of objective nature that can only be known if human interaction has creatively established reality. The subjectivity of the origin of knowledge cannot sink individual idealism into solipsism or panpsychism, because knowledge is created within this broader human concrete environment. Central to this metaphysical view is a post-Kantian empiricist epistemology that places Schiller in the position of positivists such as Ernst Mach, Henri Poincare, and Rudolf Carnap, as well as pragmatist empiricists, particularly John Dewey and C.I. Lewis's ranks. Schiller's version of pragmatism was proclaimed in "Axioms as postulate" and elaborated in several essays in *Humanism* (1903) and *Humanistic Studies* (1907). Pragmatic empiricism cannot endorse the psychological passivity of positive experience, denying that inductive generalizations of atomic facts in turn construct further experience. In order for meaningful facts to exist, the mind must impose its own principled order on experience, leaving only the limited efficacy of implying higher order principles for induction. Kantianism, while rescuing the normative character of principles from the clutches of positivism, mistakenly elevates their necessary role to a transcendental and universal status. Conversely, if thinking is an active biological process, then its own habits control our habits of behavior, which in turn may track natural processes of cooperation. To the extent that successful cooperation can be reliably established, our mental habits are "validated" as (unreliably) correct. Both the conformist theory of truth, espoused by the realist, and the coherent theory of truth, espoused by the absolutist, vainly attempt to legislate a priori the nature of truth, and both reap the inevitable skeptical consequences. These ideas are also embodied in Schiller's books and essays such as *The Logic of Use: An Introduction to Voluntaristic Epistemology* (1930) and *Our Human Truths* (1939, compiled by his widow).

2.5. Establish the methodological status of hypotheses and the usefulness of logic

Mental habits are both "axioms" and "postulates": they are regular, normative, social, and transformable. Regularity implies stability without rigid fixity or universal domination; As Schiller observed, laws of thought are not natural laws without exception, because even philosophers can contradict themselves. He or she is able to recognize his or her error due to the normativity of mental laws. Most psychological laws are socially normative in a twofold sense: the most universal laws (e.g., there is an external world and this world exhibits consistency) have their evolutionary roots in our common humanity, while more laws have their historical roots in a person's cultural evolution. To the extent that mental laws are subject to reflective scrutiny (to the extent that their operation produces more failures than successes), an opportunity arises to consciously change them. In this sense, this opportunity establishes their status as "hypotheses," and their status is contingent and entirely dependent on the persistence of man's trust in them. In the first chapter of *Humanistic Studies*, Schiller asserts that the significance of a rule lies in its application; Many broader implications of this pragmatic approach to rules were explored in Schiller's work long before Wittgenstein's endorsement.

The higher-order axioms of logic and the mathematical sciences remain epistemologically necessary as structured experiences, even if they are only incidentally supported by the scientific

community. Schiller argued that logical necessity is simply the psychological certainty that results from our beliefs about the meaning of terms, and that valid syllogism is simply an exercise in evasive questions. As all scientific advances have shown, true learning requires changing the meaning of terms in light of new experience. Meaning is neither an inherent property of objects nor a static relationship between objects, but an attitude adopted by the subject towards the object. Giving meaning and giving value are actually the same thing. Understanding the contextual value of a statement, the situational practical relevance, is necessary to grasp and apply its meaning. Propositional theory is the lifeblood of modern rationalism, abstracting all psychological value from the statement to create the illusion of a superhuman truth.

In *Scientific Discovery and Logical Proof* (1917), *Postulates* (1921) and *Logic in Practice* (1929), Schiller constructed a complex philosophy of science based on distinguishing between discovery logic and verification logic, rejecting the notion that facts could be determined independently of leading hypotheses. Schiller developed a theory of the theory-observation relationship, which was his own version of abductive logic, and explained how causal analysis depended on the investigator's choice of relevant factors. It is also worth noting that Schiller agreed with Peirce and Dewey on realism's opposition to nominalism, arguing why pragmatism cannot be equated with positive empiricism or instrumentalism. These ideas are also reflected in Schiller's books and papers such as *Axioms as Postulates* (1902) and *Formal Logic: A Scientific and Social Problem* (1912).

2.6. The metaphysics and personalism of pluralism

No metaphysical truth can be attributed to any law; Whether it is, and according to what laws of mind we should conceive of it, depends on the results of a posteriori experimental science. Science should accept theoretical relativism as an unreasonable expectation that its independent system of hypotheses can be reduced to the principles of any one of them. Metaphysics can at best come up with new hypotheses that attempt to reconcile the principles of science, but these hypotheses are also subject to experimental confirmation. Absolute harmonization is impossible, so metaphysics is necessarily pluralist, because full agreement in metaphysics is hindered by differences in human temperament and values. Therefore, science and metaphysics depend on ethics. These ideas are also found in books and papers such as Schiller's *Personal Idealism* (1902).

2.7. The pluralism and evolution of values

Pluralism is also characteristic of Schiller's moral theory and axiology, which is further developed in his last books. He defined value as an unfettered personal attitude toward an object of interest, forbidding the reduction of value to anything else. Moral laws and religious teachings represent tried and useful beliefs that are amendable in the face of new demands and problems. Schiller, together with James, found a personified God of limited evolution that coincided with moral progress toward universal harmony. Along with Bergson, Schiller argued that nature is the root of evil because its processes resist evolution. This idea is embodied in Schiller's *A Matter of Faith* (1924), *William James and the Will to Faith* (1927), *Is the Distinction between Moral Right and Wrong Ultimate?* (1931), and *Must Philosophers Disagree? And other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1934).

3. Conclusions

To sum up, we can see that the seven aspects of Schiller's philosophical achievements can be summarized into three reforms, including the reform of metaphysics, the reform of epistemology and the reform of ethics. These three reforms of Schiller's philosophy are based on the theory of evolution and the emphasis on the individual. It is on the basis of evolution that the universe is unfinished and

truly unfinished. Under the guidance of this open view of the universe, Schiller keenly saw that the unfinished universe was not created by God, but by man; Schiller's philosophy contains such an understanding that the good, the true and the real are not preexisting entities waiting for us to discover, but the results of human efforts and thinking, which are in the process of being generated, and truth, value, etc. are also generated through human creative activities, and are open and ready to accept the test of results at any time. The generation of these philosophical elements in the process of being generated is obtained by establishing the methodological status of hypotheses. Among these hypotheses, through the activities of human choice, one is chosen as the claim of truth. According to this chosen hypothesis, we act, and in the process of action, human emotions, wishes, desires, purposes, etc., are permeated with each person's different circumstances. Therefore, the pluralism of reality and value, as well as the pluralism of truth and metaphysics are formed in the end. Human purpose and action run through the whole creation process, which further highlights the humanistic characteristics of Schiller's pragmatic philosophy and the dimension of practical philosophy of his philosophy. It is precisely because this world is formed by our participation, and it is precisely in the formation process that everything is not too late and can be corrected. It gives us hope and motivation to conceive of the good life and to build the ideal of a better life into existence, thus making the good life we seek possible.

So John R. Shook said Schiller was "despite recent neglect, the record shows that Schiller was among the most prominent British philosophers of his generation."^[4]

From the above we can see that the pragmatic philosopher who made such a contribution to the field of philosophy, the pragmatic philosopher who wrote and defended pragmatism in the early days of pragmatism, the pragmatic philosopher who in his own life was as famous as James and Peirce, the pragmatic philosopher who was on a par with Russell and Bradley in the polemics, After his death, he seems to have disappeared from the world. 'Schiller's pragmatism is a very specific kind of pragmatism,' Mr. Porovecchio said. His humanism can be traced to James's "subjective-centered treatment of the objective world" and points to what James calls "radical empiricism," the role of individuals in understanding and interpreting the world as they envision it.

James died in 1910, and on the eve of his death anointed Schiller as his successor to pragmatism, so Schiller took up the banner of pragmatism, defending the philosopher's views against competing interpretations. Schiller died in 1937 and soon disappeared from philosophy. When mentioned, Schiller was simply framed as someone who misunderstood pragmatism. When completely ignored, his absence paves the way for a story of pragmatism that is distinctly American-style and largely realist in nature. Both instincts are historically inaccurate, though they are rhetorically valid. Porovecchio hopes to correct the historical narrative about pragmatism that developed from 1940 to the 1970s, defending Schiller's reentry into the pragmatic family. He says that pragmatism without Schiller has proved to be a convenient novel. Pragmatism with Schiller is more honest, more exciting and more useful. Specifically, the conclusion focuses on three issues. The first to be discussed is the mystery that underlies this entire project: the relatively brisk erasure of Schiller from pragmatism's record. Thus, the search for the causes of Schiller's disappearance from the public eye, and the grounds for his revival, is the subject of the next part.

Acknowledgements

I would like to gratitude my doctoral supervisor Mr. Ding Liqun for his guidance, Mr. John.R. Shook and Mr. Reuben Abel for writing a large number of books about F. C. S. Schiller, which have provided me with a lot of reference information, and my family for their support and help in my work. This paper is also a phased achievement of the 2018 National Philosophy and Social Science

Foundation "Ferdinand Schiller's Pragmatic Philosophy Research and Practical Dimension Research".
Project number: 18BZX095.

References

- [1] F. C. S. Schiller (1939). *Our Human Truths [M]*. Columbia University Press, 73.
- [2] F. C. S. Schiller (1939). *Our Human Truths [M]*. Columbia University Press, 77.
- [3] F. C. S. Schiller (1939). *Our Human Truths [M]*. Columbia University Press, 75.
- [4] John. R. Shook, Hugh McDonald (2008). *F. C. S. Schiller a pragmatism and humanism: seleted writings, 1891-1939 [C]*. New York: Humanity Books Press, 21.