

***Loving Immigrants in America: An Experiential Philosophy of Personal Interaction***  
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Daniel G. Campos's *Loving Immigrants in America: An Experiential Philosophy of Personal Interaction* is a fun read. This is important to say at the earliest possible moment in this review because there are few fun philosophy books. Some philosophy books use paradoxes to create an atmosphere of curiosity or try to make introductory problems of philosophy "interesting." Many of these books fulfill their intention, some more so than others, but Campos's *Loving Immigrants* is a book that could be read in any secondary, post-secondary education classroom, or a public library book club. The book is composed of fifteen chapters, a Prelude, and Postlude. Overall, it goes beyond the specialist in any domain of philosophy, but its Prelude, which is a term adopted from music composition—and not an introduction—frames the book in Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of personal development and positions it in the landscape of contemporary American Philosophy.

Campos's book goes to the heart of what it means to be an immigrant, especially an immigrant of the Americas. He draws from his experiences, which include leaving Costa Rica, where he attended the University of Costa Rica, as a young 17-year old to study in the United States of America (USA) at a university in Arkansas (12). Throughout the interrelated essays in the book, Campos describes his changing relationships, friendships, and struggles among Latinos, USA Southerners, and international folk of diverse places. His life and teaching experience at Brooklyn College in the City University of New York is front and center in several spots of the book as can be discerned from many of his reflections on journeys, stories, and circumstances from time spent in Brooklyn.

Another piece of Campos's academic life is important to bring up because of its importance for justifying the writing style of the book. Campos identifies himself with classical Pragmatism, especially the works of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James (2-3). His Pragmatist framework is codified in his essay "Understanding Immigration as Lived Personal Experience" in *Pragmatism in the Americas* (2011), edited by Gregory Fernando Pappas, which is placed in part 3 "Pragmatism as a Resource in the Hispanic Experience of the Twenty-First Century." Campos's description of his personal experience and the interpretation of Peirce in his "Philosophical Prelude: Playfulness, Love, and Personal Growth" in *Loving Immigrants* is consonant with his 2011 essay on the topic of immigration as a process of personal development. This personal development in immigrating has 3 levels: "The experience of immigrating is lived at the level of (1) affects, (2) relations to places and peoples, and

(3) evolving aims, ends, and purposes” (2). At the level of affect, two notions of love were operative for Campos. First, “...*resistant love* or even *resilient love*,” resembling María Lugones’s *loving resistance*...” was invoked when hurt and pain required healing (4). Secondly, “...this loving attitude was nourished and clarified philosophically by Charles Peirce’s understanding of *agape* as cherishing-love” (4). For levels 2 and 3 of Peirce’s personal development relating to immigration, reading the essays in *Loving Immigrants* is essential.

At this point some philosophical readers might still be asking themselves, so, what is the argument? I will let Campos explain his lack of argumentation in the book. “Regarding the writing style, I do not argue but narrate and reflect. There is a predominance of narrative content because I cannot argue others into understanding my experience; I can only convey and reflect upon it, so that a critical dialogue can ensue” (3). Moreover, the book’s aim is to adhere to the “admonition” from William James that books on ethics must be closer to literature than something dogmatic because, as Campos states, “...ethical inquiry is experimental, fallible and ongoing through communal dialogue” (3). If in a section of your ethical theory class you wish for students to learn about ethics from a descriptive, rather than prescriptive philosophical position, then this book could help you along in that endeavor.

*Loving Immigrants* is a welcome addition to the field of American Philosophy. To see its value from another vantage point, let us do a brief comparison with a book of similar aim. I have chosen Dwayne A. Tunstall’s (2013) *Doing Philosophy Personally: Thinking about Metaphysics, Theism, and Antiracism*. Two topics of interest for both Tunstall and Campos are racism and religion, except that they think about them from different starting points (Gabriel Marcel and Lewis Gordon for Tunstall; C.S. Peirce and María Lugones for Campos) and have divergent writing methods (argumentation for Tunstall and narration for Campos). Both want philosophy to reflect and integrate itself into everyday life to better our cultures and societies.

The figure of the “caring saunterer” is the “central motif” of the Campos’s book (1). By extension, I suggest the caring saunterer is the lens through which to best understand Campos’s experiential philosophy of personal interaction. Campos acknowledges a debt to an essay by Henry David Thoreau where the saunterer plays a role, but Campos develops the caring saunterer through his experiences of “...reading American literature in the South, playing association...*fútbol*...churchgoing, and Latin dancing in the United States” (1). This book may be *too* personal to be philosophy and is instead a memoir disguised as philosophy, some might want to object to *Loving Immigrant’s* methodology in this manner. However, the theory of personal development from Peirce undergirds the framework Campos relies on to convey his love of immigrants and notions of love from Pierce and Lugones were used to justify the attitude toward life conveyed by Campos. The book is replete with philosophical ideas, criticism, and reconstructions of argumentation, but the stuff of everyday life is integral to the philosophical core of it.

Campos depicts gentrification and those involved. The most apparent characters involved in gentrification for Campos are the hipster-type. An instance involving the hipster-type in the book is the following. "Chapter 5: Americans On the Road: Kerouac, Anderson, and Guevara" states that in the novel *On the Road* (1976), "...protagonist narrator, Sal Paradise, was a hipster. I was living in Brooklyn, and hordes of gosh darn hipsters, or worse, hipster wannabes, were gradually invading and gentrifying my neighborhood of Eastern European, Central Asian, Latin American, and Bengali immigrants. The early pages of *On the Road* were then a painful read about a hipster traveling westward, without sense or reason, in his very own *gringolandia*" (67). Campos eventually comes to a new understanding of Kerouac's book, though remains ethically critical of Sal Paradise's actions in the novel. Campos comes to think of Sal's actions considering Americana philosopher Douglas Anderson. "According to Anderson, American experiences on the road, such as some of those *sought* by Kerouac's Paradise, may be *sensibly mystical*...The experience undergone by Paradise and Moriarty at the concert is thus sensibly mystical...Though the experience was not immediately transformative, years later Sal, as he writes, is struggling but still trying to work out the meaning of *that* experience" (69; emphasis in original). A few pages later, Campos continues, "Was my initial reading of Kerouac's *On the Road* too narrow and damning? I think so, as I failed to see what motivated the characters' despair and lostness and thus to understand Kerouac's point...Subsequent understanding does not prevent me from reflecting ethically about Sal's actions, but it does keep me from hurling any stones..." (72).

Earlier, "Chapter 2: An Inclination to Listen," Campos recalls an altercation between a young man and his friend Niall when exiting a train in Brooklyn. Campos says, "The *gringo*, a young guy in his early twenties wearing a hoodie, jeans, and work boots...drew a quick inference based on ethnic stereotypes, and, guessing we were white folks...complained in a loud voice, "God, what the [expletive] is this? Where the hell am I? Isn't this the United States? Did you see all those people?" (10). Campos's friend Niall, who has a noticeable Irish pronunciation, confronted the gringo by bumping him as he exited the train, which escalated to exchanging insults between Niall and the gringo. Campos pulled Niall away as the guy yelled obscenities and taunted them (10).

From chapters 2 and 5, it seems the hipster-type and gringos coalesce in a kind of person who chooses their actions without regard or little regard for others, especially when relocating to a new space. These people also seek adventure in their chosen destinations, but do not want their spaces to be too unfamiliar. If their situations are too unfamiliar, they respond with aggression or carelessness. However, this reconstruction of the people encountered is severely lacking in context and does injustice to the emotional journey that Campos narrates for his reader. The context which is missing is Campos's method of narration and reflection as opposed to argument. You cannot read one page or one paragraph of Campos in *Loving Immigrants* and think you have figured out the rest of an essay or the book. One small part of the book is singular and may not be indicative of the rest, and this reflects immigration itself: one bad experience or

insulting comment should not create total negativity in your objective assessment of an entire people or culture.

The power of the writing shines when Octavio Paz's notion of solitude is outlined and applied to the immigrant experience. Considering cities and the movements of people today, immigrants are often strangers in lands populated by entrenched others. Campos has felt solitude at various points in his life in the USA. The second to last chapter of *Loving Immigrants* "Chapter 14: Dancing out of the Labyrinth: From Solitude to Communion" quotes analytical passages from Paz. In those passages, Paz theorizes about the nature and experience of solitude. While Campos finds much to agree with in these passages from Paz, he thinks Paz's theory of solitude is "...too strong..." since Campos understands us "...to be *relational* beings rather than solitary ones by constitution" (232; emphasis in original). For Paz, solitude is fundamental of the human condition. For Campos, relationality is fundamental of the human condition. Even though the origin of solitude may be of a different source for them, Campos finds Paz's recommendations from solitude toward community and communion useful on account of their impact on experience. Campos says of one of the relevant passages he quotes of Paz, "I can make sense of this passage as a description of how I sought to achieve personal wholeness by cultivating relations to others in *la Yunai* [the USA] and thus restoring a sense of communion. Dancing with Liliana, Julio, Maria, and the others, and talking about it...I restored my sense of being...connected with others in the South" (232-33). For Campos, narrating his experience of escaping through dance and communion, what Paz poetically describes as the "labyrinth of solitude," is his way of illustrating philosophical differences and commonalities between himself and Octavio Paz.

*Loving Immigrants* helps us understand emotional responses to ideas and difficult situations. This is dangerous, but needed territory to cross for a philosopher. Historically and institutionally, reason and logic are the hallmarks of great philosophy; while this statement is contentious, I hold it is closer to truth than not. Instruction about logic and reason has been philosophical, while instruction about culture and anecdotal encounters is theory, raising awareness, or catharsis. Reflective and narrative essays about personal encounters of racism and xenophobia as well as reporting one's interiority as the constant movement of spacial and psychological boundaries can have a desirable effect on academic philosophy. Certainly, this has a resonance with public audiences and would be useful for classrooms where we have philosophers-in-training.

Campos provides for his audience an opportunity for their philosophical reading to be more like a rollercoaster, rather than standing on solid ground. *Loving Immigrants in America: An Experiential Philosophy of Personal Interaction* necessitates reading with sympathy and patience. You will not know the full story, unless you read the full story, because the essays are stories.