

PEIRCE-RELATED RESEARCH

IVAN SARAÏLIEV: AN EARLY BULGARIAN CONTRIBUTOR TO PRAGMATISM

Ivan V. Saraïliev (1887–1969) was a pioneer convert to pragmatism, incorporating the pragmatic viewpoint in his writings as early as 1909. Saraïliev studied in Paris under Bergson and graduated *summa cum laude* from the Sorbonne in 1909. Although he was fluent in French, English, and German, he wrote almost exclusively in Bulgarian. As a result, his achievements remained largely unknown. To make matters worse, his work was heavily suppressed by the Communists after they gained power in 1944.

After his graduation from the Sorbonne, Saraïliev spent a year in England, where he had frequent discussions with F. C. S. Schiller (some of Schiller's letters to Saraïliev have survived). Upon his return to Bulgaria, Saraïliev taught at a Sofia high school for the next eleven years. In 1920, he was appointed assistant professor at the University of Sofia, where he became a tenured professor in 1927. Saraïliev's *On The Will* appeared in 1924 (Sofia: Court Press). That same year Saraïliev returned to Britain, where he met again with Schiller and attended H. W. Carr's course on Bergson. (In 1934, he published a collection of papers on Bergson under the title *Essays. On some Unclear Moments in H. Bergson's Philosophy* [Sofia].)

In 1931, Saraïliev traveled to New York, where he spent a year as a Rockefeller fellow at Columbia University. At Columbia he discussed Peirce with William Pepperel Montague and with Dewey. In his diary, Saraïliev made a special note on the pronunciation of Peirce's name, and in "Charles Sanders Peirce and his Principle," which was published in the Bulgarian journal *Outchilisten Pregled* (vol. 32, June 1933, pp. 725–36) he made sure the readers knew how to pronounce Peirce's name.

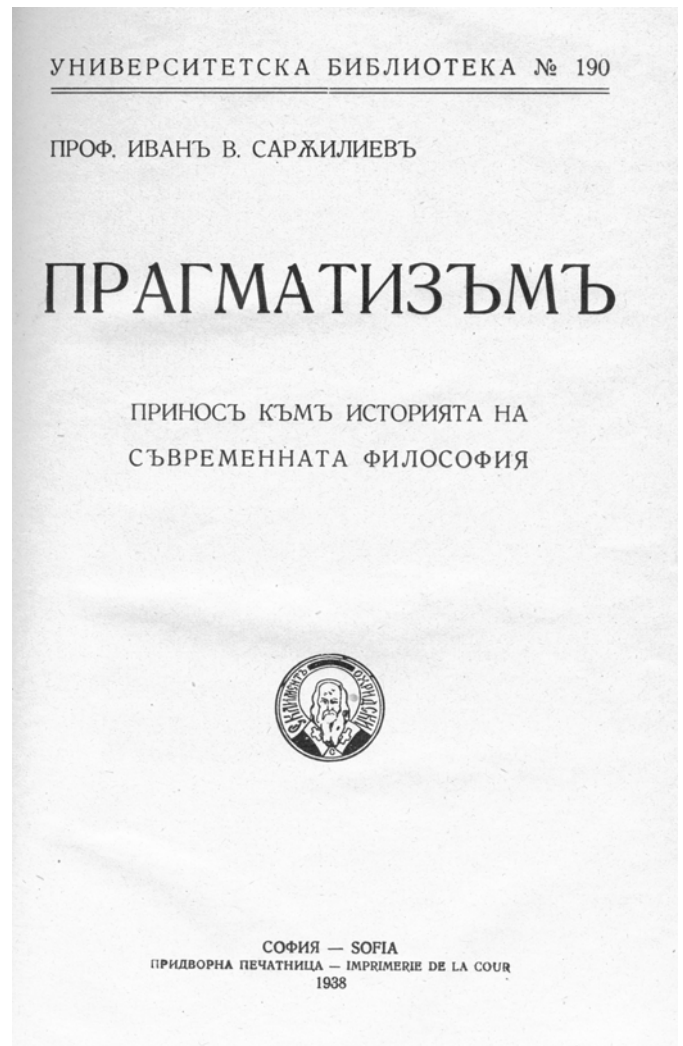
In March of the following year, Saraïliev went to Harvard, where he met Ralph Barton Perry, Alfred N. Whitehead, George Allen Morgan, and James Bissett Pratt. Later that year he visited several other American universities. Upon his return to Europe, Saraïliev traveled first to Italy and met with several Italian pragmatists, and then spent two years in Germany and Switzerland.

In the 1930s, Saraïliev gained recognition among Bulgarian intellectuals because of his debate with a well-known Bulgarian professor, Dimiter Mikhachev, on the dilemma between religion and science. Saraïliev used a pragmatic approach with semiotic influences to defend his view that life is not solely a product of physical causality. He argued that we live in a world of "pre-thought" and that we live and act in accordance with *its* rules and laws rather than with physical ones. Those rules and laws do not contradict modern science but rather complete and prove its validity. Somewhat as Peirce had, Saraïliev sought to unify scientific and religious thought and to show how knowledge of God might be gained through hypothetical (or abductive) reasoning. Saraïliev set out his views on science and religion in two essays published as *Contemporary Science and Religion: Response to a Critic* (Sofia: Chipeff Publishing House, 1931).

In 1944, however, Saraïliev's career came to a sudden halt after the Communists took power in Bulgaria. This brought an abrupt end to his extensive international travels, and immediately isolated him from the international scholarly community. In June 1946, Saraïliev was elected president of the University of Sofia, but because of his unwillingness to cooperate with the Commu-

nist authorities, he was compelled to resign within the year. Then he was asked to give up his pragmatist ideas and to teach Marxism. Again Saraïliev refused and was saved from the labor camps only because of his reputation as a scholar. A few years later, in 1950, Saraïliev was forced to retire, and he spent the rest of his life in almost complete isolation. He was banned from publishing, and his previous publications were blacklisted. Even his name was classified. In 1969 Saraïliev died peacefully but in total obscurity in Sofia. There are few reliable documentary sources on his life, and it is still difficult to obtain any of his books, articles, or papers. Saraïliev was all but erased from history.

This story of Ivan Saraïliev's life and work might not have been told were it not for a pure accident by which I stumbled upon one of his books. The book, entitled *Pragmatism* (in Bulgarian), was published in 1938. *Pragmatism*, with a photograph of the famous Ellen Emmet Rand portrait of William James for its frontispiece, is a remarkable book. It is an important record of Saraïliev's involvement with the European spread of pragmatism and of his extensive travels in France, England, Germany, and the United States. It also provides a vivid snapshot of pragmatism at this critical period in Europe's history.



Title page of *Pragmatism* by Ivan Saraïliev