Reviews

Reviewer, James Jakób Liszka, University of Alaska, Anchorage. Vincent Michael Colapietro. *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989. xxi + 141 pp. $14.95 (paper).

Those unfamiliar with the varieties of pragmatism may share Bertrand Russell's sentiments: "I find the love of truth in America obscured by commercialism, of which pragmatism is the philosophical expression." First time readers of Peirce are always surprised to find that his philosophy expressed the converse of the norms which dominated the capitalist fever of his Gilded Age. Lewis Mumford is delighted that "it was those [like Peirce] who stood outside the circle of the Gilded Age that then came to be seen as more important than the dominating figures." In fact, Mumford insists, "...his philosophy was what his own age deeply needed." Peirce was clear that the bourgeois sense of community—the view that the community was a place of competition for rewards and a means of individual fulfillment—was devastating for moral progress and the search for truth. The "Gospel of Greed," as Peirce called it, should be replaced with the "agapistic" sense of evolution, which suggests progress can only be made when every individual merges his individuality in sympathy with his neighbors. Peirce had an explicit communitarian view of community—that is, the view that the community serves a purpose greater than any combination of the individual purposes of its members. The Self—in this vision—achieves fulfillment through service to the worthy ideals of that community. This, in combination with Peirce's ostensibly negative characterizations of individualism and the Self, have created a backlash among even scholars sympathetic to Peirce. Peirce went too far in denigrating the Self; moreover, such characterizations lead to certain anomalies and inconsistencies in his work.

Colapietro's book, *Peirce's Approach to the Self*, hopes to correct this image of Peirce by showing that, despite his communalism, there is a genuine and positive appreciation of the Self, and this characterization of the Self can also resolve the apparent anomalies in Peirce's own ideas. Colapietro's strategy is to use Peirce's semiotic, as applied to the notion of the Self, in order to help Peirce out of the complex of anomalies. The first two chapters are devoted to solving theoretical problems that would prevent such an application. Peirce scholars such as Beth Singer and Justus Buchler have claimed that Peirce's theory of sign is not truly general, in the sense that it would not apply to all possible signs. Their worry,

then, is that it might not apply to notions such as the Self. However, the complaints about the theory really center on Peirce's insistence that all signs must be referential, that the triadic relation, sign-object-interpretant—is inviolable and irreducible. There are many apparent cases of non-referential signs: musical sounds, abstract art, commands. Colapietro weakly defends Peirce by saying that such counterexamples are either cases of "insufficiently complete signs" (12), or by showing them really to be cases of referential signs (a musical note refers to a composer's idea).

The second theoretical concern is more relevant. Umberto Eco's claim that the subject of semiosis is not essential to semiosis seems to prevent an application of theory to the subject or the Self. This seems to me however, to be a bogus problem. Both Eco and, of course, Peirce use the valuable notion of the interpretant to ensure against any form of subjective idealism, that is, the claim that the subject in some sense constitutes the sign process. But there is no ostensible reason why the Self or the subject could not be an object of semiotic analysis for that reason.

Colapietro follows this aspect of the study with a rather irrelevant chapter on the relation between semiotic and psychology. Chapter Four is an outline of the development of Peirce's notion of the Self. This is the crucial part of the book, yet as Colapietro admits it is only an expositional outline. Colapietro claims that there are three phases in Peirce's concept of the Self. The first coincides with the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* articles (1867-68); the second around 1891 with the *Monist* papers; and the third in the later writings on pragmaticism. Through these three phases, the notion of the Self changes from one defined as the organization of ideas to one understood as the unity of habits (in accordance with the themes of pragmatism). But these three phases also express the tension between the notion of the Self as a negation apart from the community, and the Self as the focus for the expression of the goals of the ideal community, namely, concrete reasonableness. This tension is centered on the notion of "self-control," or what is generally called autonomy. How is it possible to have a community which is infused with the ideal of concrete reasonableness, with its concomitant ideas of critique, evaluation, correction and the like, yet insist that the individuals within that community are negations apart from it? This, as astute commentators such as Richard Bernstein have noted, seems to be the greatest anomaly in Peirce's concept of the Self. How do we resolve the communalist sense in Peirce (the agent as relatively passive in wedding itself to the ideals and goals of the community) with the Enlightenment concept of self-control or autonomy (the agent is in active control of rules which governs its behavior)?

Colapietro suggests that Peirce suggests this tension is resolved in the following way: our ability to exert control over ourselves ultimately rests upon our ability to open ourselves to the very real effort of truly attractive ideals (92). But, although this is Peirce's claim, it is not quite precise enough to solve the tension

adequately, and Colapietro needs to unpack this position more fully. This tension is only apparent because its resolution depends not on the adoption of just any sort of ideal, but the *right* sort of ideal; if the choice is concrete reasonableness, there is no problem; if it is otherwise, then there is a problem. The choice of concrete reasonableness as an ideal demands that we become critical and autonomous. Self-control is precisely the goal of such a community. There is no contradiction in saying that the Self is nothing apart from the community and saying, therefore, that in a community infused with Enlightenment ideals, the Self will aim towards self-control (since that is after all exactly the ideal of an Enlightenment Community).

The final chapter of the book attempts to relieve Peirce of the image of a nay-sayer to things such as reflection, imagination, personal fantasy and the like. Given his attack on Cartesian subjectivism and James's individualism, Colapietro wants to show that Peirce is still balanced in his view of the Self. Despite Peirce's pseudo-behaviorist approach to the Self, Peirce recognizes the power of consciousness and the efficacy of inner life.

Peirce scholars may be interested to read the book because it does help focus many of the crucial questions and tensions concerning Peirce's concept of the Self and its relation to the community; however, they may be disappointed in the sketchy characterization of Peirce's concept of the Self. Similarly, those generally interested in what Peirce might have to say about the Self will find this book somewhat helpful, but it is not the definitive study of Peirce's idea of the self. Finally, although Peirce's semiotic is helpful here, much space is wasted on theoretical issues that are not germane to the problems with Peirce's concept of the Self.

Reviewer, Michael Sullivan, Vanderbilt University

John J. Stuhr. *John Dewey*. Nashville: Carmichael & Carmichael, 1991. $14.95 (two tapes).

"Philosophy recovers itself," wrote John Dewey, "when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men." John Stuhr's *John Dewey*, narrated by Charlton Heston and released on audio tape in the *Giants of Philosophy* series by Carmichael & Carmichael, is itself an important step in this recovery process. It presents Dewey's challenge, the challenge to use intelligence to enhance the quality of individual and community life, on a new medium, to a broader audience. The innovative use of audio tape makes Dewey's thought accessible to the community at large in addition to the academy—a feature that is particularly appropriate to Dewey's philosophy which always sought to engage the

concerns of the general population.

Stuhr's account of Dewey's philosophy like his previous anthology, *Classical American Philosophy*, is clear, superbly organized, and illuminating. In a brief monograph, Stuhr brilliantly draws together the wide ranging themes that occupied Dewey his entire life and filled over thirty-five volumes of collected works. Throughout, Stuhr makes an obvious effort to write in order to be narrated, and, as a result, Heston's oral presentation, which is characteristically rich and engaging, comes off masterfully. The appearance of this new resource constitutes a valuable contribution to the growing discourse on John Dewey.

The primary concern of Dewey's philosophy is the application of critical reflection and intelligent method to problems encountered in experience. Accordingly, Stuhr emphasizes the special character of the relationship between experience and philosophy in Dewey's work. "[Dewey] stresses that philosophy is a human activity; it's something we *do* and *undergo*, just as we drive a car, talk with friends, fall in love, or stay up all night with a sick child. But philosophy also is a reflective, purposeful activity. It responds to life's problems and seeks to solve them. This means that a philosophy is situated *in experience; experience* supplies the problems of philosophy." In contradistinction to other philosophers who attempt to describe experience by chopping it up into subjective and objective components, hypostatizing abstract distinctions, such as subject/object and mind/body, Dewey maintains that our primary experience is best characterized in the way it is experienced, as an active ongoing unity of organism and environment. To elaborate this central but difficult point, Stuhr discusses in detail seven key characteristics of Dewey's notion of experience: Experience is: (1) *unstable*, always changing; (2) *continuous*, events are connected in and through time; (3) *historical*, events have beginnings, middles, and endings; (4) *qualitative*, each event has its own unique, "ineffable quality"; (5) *reflective*, the causes of experience can be investigated; (6) *meaningful*; and, (7) *irreducibly social*, experience owes its meaning to its situatedness in a social setting.

Dewey believed, Stuhr notes, that traditional philosophers have allowed allegiance to traditional philosophical problems to obscure the importance of new problems emerging from new realities. The problem for Dewey, Stuhr explains, isn't that philosophers are bad problem solvers, rather they are working at solving the wrong problems. Instead of focusing critical attention on pressing problems that have been produced as the result of rapid and widespread cultural change, philosophers, by and large, have gone on pursuing antiquated concerns. Meanwhile, the development of industry and technology has outpaced the development of thought. Our values are no longer in accord with the external conditions of our lives. Dewey diagnoses the situation as follows: "It is evident enough that the rapid industrialization of our civilization took us unawares. Being mentally and morally unprepared, our older creeds have become ingrowing; the more we depart from

them in fact, the more loudly we proclaim them. In effect we treat them as magic formulae. By repeating them often enough we hope to ward off the evils of the new situation or at least to prevent ourselves from seeing them...;" Dewey wants, Stuhr tells us, to recover and reconstruct philosophy, to ground it in the actual problems of experience rather than mere "academic puzzles."

By explicating Dewey's notion of philosophy as method Stuhr provides an excellent explanation of how this recovery and reconstruction can be undertaken. Philosophy must become an intelligent method of inquiry into experience—an inquiry capable both of locating our most significant problems and of experimentally testing potential solutions to those problems. In this way, Stuhr explains, philosophy joins other empirical disciplines which enable individuals and society to "more regularly and fully predict consequences, and to reach [their] goals." More importantly, the projects of philosophy and democracy converge around the task of empowering individuals and the larger community to guide themselves in their own self-formation and growth. So, as Stuhr points out, Dewey's philosophy not only develops intelligent methods of inquiry to apply to social problems, but also participates in the active reconstruction of democratic society which occurs in such applications.

On the second tape, Stuhr discusses Dewey's vision for the democratic reconstruction of culture. Dewey believed that culture, like individualism, is not something "ready-made," but something that must be achieved. It is a social product that cannot thrive without the creation of appropriate social conditions. Hence, Dewey's unequivocal concern and support for an education that would provide individuals with the tools to realize their full potential and participate actively in the democratic reconstruction of their community. In good pragmatic fashion, Stuhr finishes his monograph with an examination of Dewey's concrete criticisms and suggestions for specific practices such as art, religion, and, of course, democracy. Stuhr's discussion highlights the fact that the test of philosophy, any philosophy, according to Dewey is the results that philosophy yields in practice. "Thus there is here supplied," wrote Dewey, "a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy which is offered us: Does it end in conclusions which when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealing with them more fruitful?" The value of Dewey's philosophy, on its own terms, Stuhr insists, must not be found merely in the reading of it, but also, and primarily, in the actions that accompany it. It is the extent to which we respond to Dewey's "challenge" and incorporate intelligent method to enrich the quality of our lives that will, in the end, reveal the value of Dewey's philosophy.

There is more to this message than a new media, and more to Stuhr's project than simply making yet another philosopher more accessible to the public. Dewey labored much of his life, Stuhr reminds us, not to make philosophy practical, but

to make practice more philosophical, more intelligent. A first step toward that end is the development of intelligent cross disciplinary, cross cultural, and cross community discussion. This fine monograph on John Dewey's philosophy anticipates and fosters such discussion—returning Dewey to his rightful place among such giants of philosophy as Aristotle, Kant, and Hegel, and, most importantly, returning philosophy to the problems of human beings.

Reviewer, Darnell Rucker, Skidmore College

Larry A. Hickman. *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology*. Bloomington and Indiana UP, 1990. xvii & 234 pp. $29.95 (cloth).

After pointing out that Dewey provides no single definition of technology, Larry Hickman writes in accurate Deweyan style, "But in at least one important sense technology can be said to be the appropriate transformation of a problematic situation, undertaken by means of the instrumentalities of inquiry, whatever form those instrumentalities may take" (44-45). Hickman's book argues for reading Dewey's entire corpus as a critique of technology and especially for recognizing that scientific inquiry in that corpus is a form of technology utilizing as instruments ideas, theories, and logical structures. Dewey's remark late in life that he might have avoided some misunderstanding had he used "technology" rather than "instrumentalism" to characterize his thought prompts Hickman to find Dewey's work from 1891 on readily translatable into the nomenclature of technology. That translation is used to clarify and unify Dewey's philosophy for the reader and to correct the narrowness (as well as the deterministic bent) of most philosophies of technology.

In calling science a form of manufacture (115), Hickman emphasizes the point that Dewey stood Aristotle's hierarchy of the sciences on its head. Modern science could emerge only when it became technological—productive—instead of merely abstract. Contemplative value is aesthetic and the product of craftspeople, not of philosophers detached from all practical concerns. Hickman states Dewey's genetic method in the language of technology as that method is exhibited in his logic, aesthetics, and social and political theory, in order to demonstrate the instrumental importance of the concept of continuity (as opposed to the dualisms that continue to muddle our thinking) and the instrumental power of Dewey's whole philosophy for our technological age.

Hickman's scholarship is wide-ranging and is used to compare Dewey with such recent theorists of technology as Carl Mitchum, Albert Borgmann, Langdon Winner, and Jacques Ellul; and to reply to some prominent critics of Dewey, including Lewis Mumford, C. Wright Mills, Max Horkheimer, and Bertrand

Russell; and to assert the depth and originality of Dewey's work in relation to that of such disparate modern icons as Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Rawls, and Nozick.

Because of the persistent misinterpretations of his ideas, no matter how carefully he tried to state and restate them, Dewey considered a succession of possible terminological changes. The major shift he actively incorporated into his writing was that from "pragmatism" to "instrumentalism." But that shift did not have any marked effect: "pragmatism" remains the most common tag for Dewey, as for the other classical American philosophers. In his discussions with Arthur F. Bentley from 1932 to 1950, Dewey yielded to Bentley's insistence that he replace "interaction" with "transaction." And Dewey expressed a regret that he had not used "culture" instead of "experience" in his important book *Experience and Nature.*

C.E. Ayres, one of Dewey's most perceptive followers did work out with considerable thoroughness the implications of Dewey's philosophy as a philosophy of technology—worked it out especially for science, economics, and industrial culture. (Hickman says [2] that among Dewey's disciples only Ayres and Sidney Hook saw that instrumentalism is a critique of technology.) Dewey was aware and approved of what Ayres was doing; and it is interesting in connection with Hickman's thesis to note that Dewey remarked in a letter to Bentley (June 7, 1944) that Ayres thought that "instrumental" is less subject to misapprehension than "technological," the reverse of the view Dewey was then entertaining. The fact remains, however, that unless readers share a philosopher's purpose and pay honest attention to what is *said* and to the *uses* of key concepts in different problematic contexts, changing words will not produce enlightenment for those readers. Ayres well may be right about "technological" (which *was* his key term), given that, despite the growing scholarly interest in the philosophy of technology since Dewey's day, "technology" generally continues to be a narrowly construed name for the worst aspects of a business culture or for a crude mechanistic view of the world.

In a society (and, increasingly, a world) that is unphilosophic in the full sense of that negative term, it is inordinately difficult to get anyone other than a handful of isolated academics to consider, much less to understand, the utility of a radical theoretical conception of the human situation, no matter how meaningful that conception may be. Dewey's early and continuing perception was that the only hope lies in education, since the actual reconstruction he saw necessary is not the work of theorists but of the concerned women and men in the myriad useful jobs of any civilization. That hope, of course, rested upon the possibility of a new understanding, at least on the part of educators, of the individual-social relationship, an understanding that fully realized selves become persons in *some* regard, *agents* of their communities. He did not see much evidence of any such understanding, but he spent his life trying to show it to teachers, philosophers, citizens.

Hickman's book is a continuation of that effort in the spirit of John Dewey. One only can wish this new effort a new audience whose making, acting, and thinking in positions of technological influence might be altered by that spirit.

Reviewer, Eugene Mayers, California State University, Hayward.

George R. Lucas, Jr. *The Rehabilitation of Whitehead: An Analytic and Historical Assessment of Process Philosophy*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989. xiv & 216 pp. $44.50 (cloth); $14.95 (paper).

George Lucas explains in his preface that while his ambitious new study is "devoted to the contemporary significance and vitality of the thought of Alfred North Whitehead, [it] likewise aims at countering the relative neglect [of Whitehead's philosophy] in the current mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy," and in the preface he also expresses the hope that the study may serve "to expand the influence of [Whitehead's] seminal ideas beyond the narrow reach of a small but devoted cadre of Whiteheadian disciples" (xi). Although the study's objectives seem thus clearly enough stated, it is yet necessary that they be considered in relation to the goal of rehabilitation, Lucas's ultimate purpose. For rehabilitation does not mean for Lucas the establishment of an orthodoxy. Rather he intends by the term to designate a state of affairs in which the ideas of the philosopher so honored are viewed as constituting a store of penetrating thoughts and concepts that may prove suggestive to present-day philosophers in the prosecution of their own inquiries—a condition evidently obtaining in the case of certain scientists Lucas later refers to, who, while they do not follow Whitehead, yet acknowledge his influence and view his ideas as "a rich historical source for novel philosophic insights" (199). It is with that sense of the term in mind that Lucas speaks of a call for rehabilitation "not as a call for discipleship but for renewed stimuli toward authentic philosophic investigation" (204), and it is as directed to Whitehead's rehabilitation in that sense that the contents of Lucas's book are to be understood.

Following the opening chapter and Lucas's affirmation of a speculative, systematic metaphysics as basic to philosophy, Parts One and Two proceed with the "historical assessment" and a sketch of the schools of process philosophy. Lucas distinguishes four such schools: (1) the evolutionary cosmological, begun in the eighteenth century but continuing down to the present; (2) the European Romantic *Naturphilosophie*, influenced by the earlier movement, and, in turn, an influence on Hegel; (3) the twentieth century realist, particularly as developed by its American followers in revolt against "right-wing Hegelianism," a revolt in which, Lucas points out, both pragmatist and personalist philosophers participated; and (4) Whitehead's process rationalist. Lucas concludes the account with

an examination of the relationship of Whitehead's school to each of its predecessors.

The historical background complete, Part Three presents the study's "analytical assessment" and, with it, material particularly relevant to the question of Whitehead's rehabilitation. Thus, aiming to alter the attitude of the mainstream to Whitehead's philosophy, Chapter VIII presents a considerable number of instances in Whitehead's writings which either anticipate or contribute to the discussion of topics generally thought to be the peculiar province of present-day analytic philosophers. Next, aiming o move the "devoted cadre" closer to the mainstream, Chapter IX identifies an impressive number of discussions, by members of the present generation of Whitehead scholars, criticizing or developing more satisfactory approaches to fundamental doctrines in Whitehead's system. Finally, concerned to show the implications of Whitehead's thought for science as well as for philosophy, Chapter X presents an informed analysis of certain contemporary developments in physical and cosmological theory that Lucas also uses as a base from which to advance his ideas concerning the future of both process philosophy and philosophy itself. It is in Chapter X, for example, that Lucas describes, "as precisely the perspective that philosophers in general should come to adopt in their assessment of Whitehead's significance," the view of Whitehead as "a rich, historical source for novel philosophic insights" held by those scientists referred to earlier; and it is,likewise in Chapter X, in its concluding paragraph, that Lucas avers his belief that "the future of philosophy depends on the recovery of a pluralistic, systematic, post-analytic metaphysics—and the future of metaphysics, in turn, lies in a commitment to the fundamental importance of a comprehensive philosophy of nature" (199). To this conception of a future philosophy, the study's brief Conclusion, that follows Chapter X, suggests the interesting possibility of its incorporating certain elements of contemporary Continental philosophy.

Perhaps the most serious reservation that one might raise concerning Lucas's study relates to the likelihood of its promoting the rehabilitation to which it is directed. For even should the mainstream philosophers be persuaded of the continuity of their thought with Whitehead's, there would yet remain doubt, given the gulf between their analytic approach and Whitehead's speculative metaphysics, that they would be led to find, either in his style or substance, resources they would wish further to develop. Likewise, the likelihood of the other two groups affecting the majority is subject to doubt, the small numbers and the isolation of the "devoted cadre" counting against their influence, and, despite the prestige attaching to science, the majority's lack of interest in cosmological speculation counting against the influence of the scientists.

Yet, regardless of the success that may or may not attend Lucas's efforts at rehabilitation, there can be no doubt of the very considerable contribution to

contemporary scholarship that his study represents, a study that has, by its unique combination of analytical and historical methods, amassed a remarkable range of materials. By treating process as a point of view that has steadily developed in a period of over two centuries, it succeeds in grounding Whitehead's version in a well-established tradition that, it seems to suggest, has yet the distinct possibility of further development. At the same time, with its survey of Whitehead's contribution to issues of concern to contemporary philosophy, it succeeds in confronting the mainstream with evidence it would seem hard to ignore, and with its compilation of developments in Whiteheadian scholarship, in challenging the "devoted cadre" to expand their interests and techniques to keep pace with the ever-increasing demands of present-day philosophy. Finally, by including in its purview, a consideration of issues in contemporary physics, it succeeds in presenting perhaps the strongest evidence documenting "the scope and vitality" of Whitehead's thought, as well as in affording Lucas the opportunity to present a well-considered answer to the much-debated question as to the future of philosophy.

Taken in toto, Lucas has in relatively brief compass, not only produced a scholarly work of great breadth and insight, but has, in addition, fashioned a vision as to the future of philosophy to which today's philosophers of whatever orientation might be well advised to give serious attention.

Reviewer, William Gavin, University of Southern Maine

Cornel West. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism.* Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1989. 279 pp. $44.95 (cloth); $16.95 (paper).

In the present text West offers his own retelling of the history of pragmatism and the reasons for its renaissance, his own "restructuring of the problematic," so to speak. Admittedly selective rather than comprehensive, he sees himself as critically outlining the beginning, development, decline and resurgence of American pragmatism, and offers his own addition, "prophetic pragmatism," to this narrative. West's fundamental argument is that "...the evasion of epistemology-centered philosophy—from Emerson to Rorty—results in a conception of philosophy as a form of cultural criticism in which the meaning of America is put forward by intellectuals in response to distinct social and cultural crises" (5). In short, American pragmatism is of importance precisely to the extent that it did *not* become pre-occupied with an exclusive and elitist methodology.

This much being said, what is of most interest concerns who is foregrounded and who de-emphasized in the narrative. As might be expected, Emerson is an important thinker for West; he defies disciplinary classification, and is like Marx

in that both stress "...the dynamic character of selves and structures, the malleability of tradition and the transformative potential in human history" (10)—though the opposition for Emerson is personal stagnation rather than class exploitation. West approves of Emerson's fascination with "power, provocation, and personality" (10), but asserts that any understanding of his concept of the person is "inseparable from his understanding of race" (28)—and here Emerson is found wanting. His "...conception of the worth and dignity of human personality is racially circumscribed" (34). None the less Emerson does succeed in *evading* modern philosophy, with its quest for certainty and its emphasis on professionalism. James and Peirce receive shorter shrift in West's narrative, especially when one remembers their usual priority in most histories of pragmatism. Both do avoid or evade foundationalism, but their respective emphases in pragmatism (Peirce on the logical and James on the individual) does not fit West's social/political agenda well. Also West worries that James's "...pre-occupation with continuity minimizes disruption and precludes subversion" (65). By contrast, Dewey receives extensive attention; he too evades epistemology as the main issue in philosophy, and functions instead as cultural and social critic. West foregrounds Dewey's essay on Emerson, in an effort to show that Dewey himself knew that Emerson was *evading*, and sees Dewey as "...first and foremost an Emersonian evangelist of democracy who views the expansion of critical intelligence as requisite for the more full development of human individuality and personality" (100). He faults Dewey for being too optimistic, for being inadequately aware of the Marxist tradition, for assuming the relative homogeneity of the human community, and for offering, as a result, education and discussion as the primary vehicles via which one achieves creative democracy.

A somewhat surprising list of players makes up what West calls "the mid-century pragmatic intellectual," viz., Sidney Hook, Lionel Trilling, Reinhold Niebuhr, C. Wright Mills, and W.E.B. Du Bois. West sees the common problem for these thinkers to be "...the waning powers of willful persons against stubborn circumstances" (113), and views their writing as tragic, ironic, and to some degree pessimistic. He traces Hook's odyssey from Deweyan Marxist to cold war social democrat as an indication that pragmatism is in a deep crisis. He views Mills' "biologization" of Dewey's thought as incorrect, and charges that Mills' pessimism over the possibility of social change unfortunately results in his over-emphasizing the importance of the vocation of being an intellectual. Du Bois not only agrees with Emerson's emphasis on overcoming problems; more importantly, he raises the very issue of how it actually feels to be a problem, i.e., to be an American of African descent; furthermore, he provides American pragmatism with an international perspective which highlights the plight of the wretched of the earth (148). Niebuhr creates a Christian pragmatism, emphasizing a tragic perspective. Ultimately for West it is unsuccessful, with the Christian sense of self

overcoming the pragmatic part. Trilling, too, winds up in pessimism, elevating circumstances over the person, and turning, incorrectly, from the political to the psychocultural. His outlook is ultimately claustrophobic.

In West's story, pragmatism is rejuvenated through the work of Quine and Rorty. Quine gave pragmatism academic respectability after the war; his rejection of the analytic/synthetic distinction does constitute an *evasion*, but his behaviorist psychology constitutes a foundationalist residue. Goodman goes much further, as does Sellars with his rejection of the "myth of the given"; though neither can actually be called a pragmatist in West's opinion, the upshot of their endeavors is grist for the pragmatist mill. Rorty is dealt with in some detail by West, as obviously a competing narrator with a different tale to tell about pragmatism. He traces Rorty's emphasis on pragmatism from 1961, but views the publication of the essay entitled "The World Well Lost" as constituting the beginning of Rorty's later pragmatist period, since Dewey's influence here is explicit. West views Rorty's distinctive neopragmatism as "a move back not simply to American pragmatism, but, more fundamentally, to Ralph Waldo Emerson, in that we are left with no philosophically authoritative traditions with which to recreate and redescribe ourselves and the world" (203). But West charges that Rorty's postmodernist bourgeois liberalism has problems from an ethical point of view, which of course is the one West is advocating. From such a perspective, Rorty's position has no consequences at all, at the "macrosocietal" level. At the "microsocietal" level Rorty's outlook does make a difference, i.e., it "...has immense antiprofessional implications for the academy" (206). Leaving aside the question of the validity of this new form of dualism on West's part, he terminates this chapter by claiming that "...Rorty's limited historicism needs Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Beauvoir, and Du Bois..." (209), and by asserting that "...it is impossible to historicize philosophy without partly politicizing (in contrast to vulgarly ideologizing) it" (207). As an alternative, or rather an extension, West in the last chapter offers "prophetic pragmatism," a political and cultural criticism which will "...recapture Emerson's sense of vision—his utopian impulse—yet rechannel it through Dewey's conception of creative democracy and Du Bois' structural analysis of the limits of capitalist democracy" (212). He offers some threads of the beginnings of an outline of prophetic pragmatism here, critically comparing his stance with the work of Ungar, who occupies the space between Dewey and Gramsci and is too much of a "supertheorist"; and with the work of Foucault, who is preoccupied with one form of power only, downplays human agency, and devalues moral discourse.

West's way of dealing with the "tragic sense of life" found here is to note that "tragic" is a term with different meanings, depending on the context, i.e., it is a social construct. As such, "tragic" does not *per se* rule out personal agency. There is a dimension of the tragic in prophetic pragmatism in that it realizes there is little

chance of ridding the world of all evil; yet prophetic pragmatism "...is a kind of romanticism in that it holds many experiences of evil to be neither inevitable nor necessary"... (228). Prophetic pragmatism, as West sees it, does indeed want to "make a difference."

West had made a similar case in opposing the passivity and pessimism of mid-century pragmatist thinkers in an earlier chapter. There, while noting that a tragic sense of life "...is indeed a defensible response to the battered hopes and dreams, the heart-tearing atrocities and brutalities of this century," West insists that "...this response in no way *necessarily* entails privatistic quietism, cold war accommodationism, academic professionalism, or individual martyrdom" (180). Apathy emerges as an issue which he takes seriously and deems extremely dangerous—one which he will fight against vehemently. For West, as for William James, even if one cannot prove for sure that life is a "real" fight, it "*feels* like a fight." The Introduction to West's book describes the author as being "in the heat of battle," and as having "no other choice but to fight" (8). This theme serves as an indication as to why the book is itself so provocative and enticing. The text constitutes a battle waged by the author for the soul (mind) of the reader. The "pragmatic upshot" of the battle is not yet determined, but West's text constitutes a sustained foray that will have to be taken very seriously indeed.

Reviewer, Nicholas F. Gier, University of Idaho

Charles M. Sherover. *Time, Freedom, and the Common Good: An Essay in Public Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989. xiii & 314 pp. $59.50 (cloth); $19.95 (paper).

In his first two books Charles Sherover devoted himself to the question of time. In this book he applies his philosophy of time to social and political philosophy. The result is a thorough critique of the social atomism of thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Mill. In his response to this liberal tradition, he draws on the works of philosophers as diverse as Aristotle, Machiavelli, Burke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and T.H. Green. Sherover discusses Aristotle's concept of polity and proposes three principles of polity: membership, temporality, and freedom. Against the social atomist, he agrees with Aristotle and many other contemporary thinkers that human nature is primarily social and relational. This means that society and political organization are natural to humans, not something artificial. Sherover's special contribution is his emphasis on the temporal character of human nature and society. Western philosophy has been dominated by a substance metaphysics, one which removed both relational and temporal qualities from fundamental realities: God, persons, or atoms. With regard to freedom, Sherover supports Green's concept of positive liberty, and he demonstrates ably how negative

liberty, connected as it is with social atomism, fails as a constructive view of human freedom.

It was quite natural for an early modern philosopher such as Hobbes, profoundly influenced by the new science, to take the concept of atoms as a way of viewing individuals in society. The analogy was quite seductive and continues to be used in current political philosophy, especially in libertarian circles. It offers a view of autonomous individuals moving about in the empty space of society, freely choosing their own religious, cultural, economic, and political affiliations. Regardless of how attractive it might be, Sherover believes that social atomism fails to preserve the essential values of community and tradition. It also perpetuates an abstract view of human reason and rights, which is not cognizant of the exigencies of time and culture, and can lead to unworkable utopias, or even worse, the terrors of the French and Russian Revolutions.

Social atomism also violates the three principles of polity. The Epicurean atom has only accidental, external relations, so the social atom is seen as self-contained and self-sufficient, an entity unto itself. Sherover's principle of polity assumes a relational self, not an isolated self. He argues that "the idea of the social does not arise from our separate selves: it is itself what enables these separate selves to develop" (21). Social atomists have no way of making mere members of society into true citizens. Furthermore, they cannot speak of a common good, but only a simple sum of individual goods. The government's role is then reduced to adjudicating competing claims to these goods.

The atom is also timeless: history and temporal succession do not affect its essential nature. We, on the other hand, are temporal creatures, who live in communities that are shaped by history and tradition. An atom is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but human beings are essentially shaped by their times and the way they choose to use their time. The problem with utopian thinking, implies Sherover, is not so much that it is *utopos* (no place), but that it is *achronic* (out of time). Sherover describes the function of governments as controlling—"by laws, regulations, institutions, and procedures—the time of their citizens. A command society systematically regiments their temporality for those ends deemed important by its governors. A free society strives to keep the temporality of private citizens as open as possible" (131).

Finally, social atomism violates the third principle of polity, a positive freedom, fostered by an enlightened but limited government, which enables people to fulfill their potentials. Negative liberty, the simple freedom from constraint, is empty of content and positive relations or virtues. "To tell an illiterate person," says Sherover, "that he is allowed to read is rather empty liberty; to teach him how to read is to provide a positive freedom or opportunity enabling him do so" (117). Theoretically, proponents of negative liberty can find no problem with the homeless or jobless; indeed, they would have to declare that these people are

"free." Practically, Sherover rightly observes that systems of public education, housing, health, and transportation— essential for free societies everywhere— cannot be justified by negative liberty.

Sherover proposes that we return to an organic world-view, one which conceives of human society as a living body (98-99). In its Greek and medieval versions, community and tradition were indeed preserved (sometimes oppressively), but time was subordinate to the eternal. While I agree that we are better served by organic analogies, Sherover does not acknowledge any of their inherent problems. If Sherover is committed to equal opportunity (he firmly rejects guaranteeing equality of result), then he has to acknowledge the fact that many organic systems are hierarchical: e.g., the brains are more important than the liver and the liver more important than the feet. It appears that organic analogies are better support for "command" societies such as Plato's *Republic* rather than Sherover's democratic commonwealth.

In demonstrating Mill's inconsistencies—I agree that there are many—Sherover overlooks Mill's turn to organic analogy in Chapter III of *Utilitarianism*. Waxing quite eloquently about the need for "social feelings" and the "desire to be in unity with our fellow-creatures"—virtues which Sherover believes the state should instill—Mill says that "social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than as a *member of a body*" (my emphasis). Mill continues in a thoroughly collectivist mood, even suggesting that this "feeling of unity...be taught as a religion" with "all the psychological power and the social efficacy of a religion." Finally, the libertarian Mill comes to life and warns us of the excesses of this program, which might "interfere unduly with human freedom and individuality." Not only is Sherover unaware of the threats to freedom in organic views, he also does not address the problems of Green's concept of positive freedom, which has inspired some to demand equality of results.

To be fair, Sherover does stress the concept of balance of powers. He praises both Montesquieu for his original insights on this principle and our founding fathers for their wisdom in embodying it in our constitution. Sherover criticizes the simple majoritarianism of the liberal/utilitarian position and the shortcomings of parliamentary democracy. He faults them for failing to see that the greatest danger in government is not executive power, but legislative tyranny. Recent critics of American executive power, Sherover implies, fail to see the wisdom of our founders.

I am surprised that Sherover did not at least mention virtue ethics in his reconstruction of social philosophy. The proponents of this view also believe in a social self, propose an embodied reason and concrete rights, reject mere legalism, and return to tradition and community.

Readers may find Sherover's style somewhat dense in places. This occasional obscurity appears primarily in his own original analysis, for his expository sections are quite lucid. I also stumbled over "words" such as "liberalist," "de-equalize," "fundamentality," "lastingness," and "futural time." I also noted several misprints and mistakes, such as 1668 for the Glorious Revolution rather than 1688 (60). I was also irritated by Sherover's sexist language. We will not have the sort of society he envisions until we address that great portion of the population who are still oppressed by language and tradition.