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NOTES

1. Joseph Margolis. "Dewey's and Rorty's Opposed Pragmatisms," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 38.1–2 (2002): 118.

2. Tom Rockmore. "On Classical and Neo-Analytic Forms of Pragmatism," *Metaphilosophy* 36.3 (2005): 267.

Richard P. Mullin

The Soul of Classical American Philosophy: The Ethical and Spiritual Insights of William James, Josiah Royce, and Charles Sanders Peirce

Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007. xviii + 169 pp.

Sharing William James' conviction that "no one of us can get along without the far-reaching beams of light [philosophy] sends over the world's perspectives" (qtd. on xi), Richard Mullin's new book seeks to communicate the ethical and spiritual insights of William James, Josiah Royce, and Charles Sanders Peirce to a non-specialist audience. Mullin follows the pragmatists he studies by dropping the traditional, dualistic notion of "soul" while insisting upon the importance of carefully attending to the following issues classically treated as pertaining thereto: the self, free will, moral values, community, and our relationship with the Transcendent (xi). With the pragmatic conviction that "the only propositions that we really believe are those that we are willing to act upon" (xii), Mullin shows his readers how classical pragmatism offers resources for teaching us how to *believe* in these things by *acting* freely to construct communal relations that exceed our economic interests in order to provide our lives with meaning.[1]

Mullin's study is organized into three parts by philosopher: 1) James establishes the basic philosophical framework and receives the most attention in the first six chapters; 2) Royce comes in to thicken James' sense of both reason and the social as they pertain to ethics and religion in the next four chapters; and 3) Peirce returns readers to the origins of pragmatism to make a case for its continuing value as both a comprehensive intellectual worldview and a way of life in the final three chapters. Mullin's readable presentation of the philosophical bottom lines of these pragmatists does run the risk of leading amateur readers into wrongly thinking that they understand a pragmatically re-constructed concept (e.g. *soul*, *will*, or *God*) when in fact they are importing traditional, less philosophically sophisticated ideas. Mullin might have warned his readers of this potential pitfall at key places in the text, but he has at least managed to avoid the more common error of insulating the practical upshot of a philosophical discussion in technical jargon. Instead, Mullin situates himself much like James' moral philosopher,

attempting to weave the ideals and relations of the pragmatists discussed into a moral republic while locating the broad meaning of life in the melioristic struggle against the deficiencies of reality as it currently stands in the name of more inclusive ideals.

Chapter 1 supplies an outline of James' pragmatism as a method of approaching meaning and truth that works to overcome the splits between science and religion as well as philosophy and everyday life. Chapter 2 goes on to outline James' radical empiricism as a superior alternative to materialism, dualism, and idealism. In Chapter 3, Mullin explains how James' theory of free will "can serve as both a motivator and a program for becoming more free" (21). Mullin does an excellent job of conveying the flavor of James' reflections on the relation between moral philosophy and religious faith in Chapters 4 and 5, although readers may be left thinking that James emphatically denied The Absolute while doing little to erect an account in its place. Mullin's reflections on James' "religion of democracy" could be better supported through an explicit engagement with the later James' rich philosophical theology, especially *A Pluralistic Universe*, which is only mentioned in passing.[2]

Mullin's final chapter on James conveys the practical thrust of James' religious thought: 1) the universe is open-ended, 2) our actions can make a difference in its moral character, and 3) the possibilities for improvement are grounded in the nature of the universe itself. Mullin goes on to provocatively suggest that Jamesian spirituality is like getting out of bed: "Our naturally stronger propensities invite us to remain in our present condition; to prefer comfort and pleasure . . . Spirituality by contrast means change, effort, giving up immediate pleasure . . . Our present condition may be like a warm bed; spiritual development invites us with all of the comfort of a cold floor in a nineteenth-century New England winter" (59). Mullin does not claim that studying James' philosophy makes the strenuous flights of the human spirit probable or easy, but it does help make them possible (63). The execution of Mullin's study thus fits with his Jamesian understanding of theory as something that should "release the flow of thought in the service of meaningful action" (45).

Mullin begins Part II on Royce with the claim that the juxtaposition of James and Royce is one of the most fascinating in philosophy (67). By outlining the metaphysical idealism of Royce's *The World and the Individual*, Mullin draws the lines for the classic battle of the Absolute between James and Royce. Yet Mullin's James sounds much like Royce when discussing the relationship between religion and community, and Mullin's Royce is consistently approached in Jamesian fashion. Royce's metaphysical views are taken up as differences that make a practical difference. This way of interpreting Royce is refreshing, although Mullin does not always clearly draw the connections between metaphysics and life for his readers. A discussion of *The Problem of Christianity*—where the practical upshots of Royce's metaphysical views are much clearer—

would be welcome and also transition well into Chapter 8 on Royce's concept of the self as an ethical task.

Mullin's juxtaposition of Royce and James is fascinating, since Mullin rightly rejects caricatures of their philosophies by insisting that James is interested in the metaphysics of community and that Royce seeks to make sense of the uniqueness of the singular individual. Mullin uses Royce to take us from a popular understanding of the self as something substantial, or at least ready-made, to an understanding of the self as "a task that requires strenuous moral effort to achieve" (83). In this way, the ethical construction of the Roycean self parallels the ethical construction of the Jamesian universe, although Mullin does not sufficiently develop this parallel between their late philosophies. He might have profitably compared and contrasted James' notion of striving to create increased intimacy with and in the universe with Royce's notion of loyalty to the Universal Community.

In Chapter 9, Mullin explores the potential relevance of Royce's philosophy of loyalty for addressing the ethical problems of the twenty-first century. Mullin agrees with Royce's claim that loyalty constitutes a necessary condition for both individuality and community, so that loyalty is a prerequisite for any other good (91). Of course, Mullin is aware that many loyal acts are blind and dangerous when it comes to being loyal to loyalty, which is where Royce's philosophy can be of great help. Mullin is absolutely right to claim that "the application of Royce's interpretive thinking to our contemporary ethical problems, such as stem cell research, abortion, and euthanasia would force all sides in unfamiliar areas. Each of us faces the challenge of remaining loyal to our own cause and yet trying to find a more inclusive loyalty that does not destroy the loyalty of our opponents" (101).

Mullin also reasonably goes on to ask "whether Royce has anything to say to those who do not share his metaphysical idealism" and wisely turns to James for an answer. In this case, Mullin does a fine job of reconciling rather than merely juxtaposing the insights of Royce and James by explaining how Royce's philosophy can be profitably taken up by those who wish to struggle for social unity without committing themselves to Royce's metaphysics. Such persons only need to be willing to believe with James that the Absolute is a worthy *cause* in the sense of an eventual goal rather than something pre-existent and already realized. Thus, Mullin brings James and Royce into the contemporary struggle to bring about reconciliation between warring ideals by developing sophisticated attempts to interpret interests that are undoubtedly at odds now in light of higher ideals.

In this context, Mullin's discussion of Royce's *The Sources of Religious Insight* in Chapter 10 is one of the most valuable parts of the book, especially since this work receives scholarly attention too rarely. Mullin uses it to draw the philosophies of James and Royce together into a synoptic

view by claiming that Royce brings James's subconscious religious desire for unity to consciousness (115). While this is valuable way of interpreting the relation between James and Royce, it does seem to depend upon a division between the two thinkers that may not obtain to the same extent if their later works received more attention, which would necessarily lead to reciprocal considerations of how James might be read as the fulfillment of certain tendencies in Royce. For instance, Royce's increasing willingness to admit that his metaphysics was a postulate that led him to speak "as one wanderer speaks to another who is his friend, when the way is long and obscure,"[3] might be read as the fulfillment of a Jamesian tendency towards openly admitting the tenuousness of all overbeliefs while simultaneously insisting upon their importance.

Peirce figures least in Mullin's book, and it never becomes entirely clear why the book ends with Peirce.[4] Mullin begins Part III with a chapter that looks at the origins of pragmatism by giving a standard account of "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." However, Mullin's real interest in Peirce lies with how he can be seen as supporting James' and Royce's insights into the social nature of the individual self as an ethical task. Mullin's second chapter on Peirce therefore explains how Peirce's rejection of nominalism supports his view that "I do not completely constitute myself; my neighbor, to some extent *is* myself, and I *am* my neighbor's self" (128). While Mullin draws most of his account of Royce from Frank Oppenheim's work,[5] Mullin's Peirce appears mostly through the lens of Vincent Colapietro, who explains how the Peircean self is realized and revealed in its communication with others.[6] The work that Mullin began by using Royce is picked up by using Peirce, who explains how growth towards increasingly inclusive communal ideals constitutes genuine self-development (132).

Thus, ethical and spiritual development become the purpose of human life and the subject of Mullin's final chapter, which begins with the disputable claim that Peirce consistently maintained that philosophical ethics "cannot and should not try to deal with issues of vital importance . . . it cannot be scientific and should not pretend to be" (133). Arguing against what he takes Peirce's position to be, Mullin claims that philosophical ethics can deal with vital interests scientifically, since Peirce's ideal of keeping theoretical science free from the wayward influences of vital interest is on target precisely because this is the best way to ensure positive results for our vital interests. Mullin quotes Peirce as follows: "In this way, the eternal forms that mathematics and philosophy and the other sciences make us acquainted with, will by slow percolation gradually reach the very core of one's being . . . this they will do not because they involve truths of merely vital importance, but because they are ideal and eternal verities" (qtd. on 136).

Just as Mullin might have more closely interwoven the accounts of Royce and Peirce on the self and community, he might have drawn more

connections between Peirce and James on the continuous creation of a more intimate universe as our ethical task, with James emphasizing the fact that our ideas about the universe must be beneficial to be true and Peirce emphasizing the fact that they must be true to be beneficial.[7] Rather than construct a dynamically shifting conversation between the three pragmatists, Mullin alternates from using James, to using Royce, to using Peirce as a mouthpiece for his ethical and spiritual vision of how we ought to go about working for social unity. To be sure, this greatly simplifies Mullin's account in ways that will help non-specialist readers keep things straight, but the trade-off is a missed opportunity to show these pragmatists as a genuine community of mutual interpretation.

Mullin's overarching claim is that we can contemplate the ethical and spiritual insights of the pragmatists in such a way that "in a slow, indirect, but inexorable manner, the ideals of philosophical ethics touch and affect vital interests" (148). However, Mullin's book probably places too much faith in this slow process of percolation through which concepts will be transubstantiated into habits for his readers. Given Mullin's understanding of philosophy, whose worth depends upon "throwing light upon our actual lives and giving us a direction and vision to live by" (149), Mullin's book falls short of his self-assigned task. Of course, this should come as no surprise, since the actual always falls short of the ideal. More importantly, if one is the sort of pragmatist that Mullin describes, then his book implicitly serves as a call for the pragmatist community to pitch in on the massive task Mullin has set himself: bringing philosophy back to the public discussion of the vitally important relationship between ethics and spirituality. While Mullin may not have satisfactorily shown how James, Royce, and Peirce provide "the basis for a unified vision of contemporary reality in a way that the great ancient and medieval philosophers did for pre-modern times,"[8] he has certainly scattered some of what James called "the far-reaching beams of light without which we cannot live" (152).

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NOTES

1. Given these themes, the fact that Dewey is not included may seem strange, but Mullin rightly notes that in comparison, Dewey's work "already receives adequate and deserved attention" (xiv).

2. For two excellent articles that link James' moral philosophy and philosophical theology in *A Pluralistic Universe* and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* respectively, see David C. Lamberth, "Interpreting the Universe after a Social Analogy: Intimacy, Panpsychism, and a Finite God in a Pluralistic Universe," in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, ed. Ruth Anna Putnam (New York:

Cambridge University Press, 1997) and Michael R. Slater, "Metaphysical Intimacy and the Moral Life: The Ethical Project of *The Varieties of Religious Experience*," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 43, no. 1 (2007).

3. Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, ed. Frank M. Oppenheim and John E. Smith (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 40.

4. Mullin openly admits that a good case can be made for keeping the three pragmatists discussed in chronological order (110). His only explicit justification for including Peirce third is that Peirce's "national and international influence emerged later than that of James and Royce, and continues to expand" (120). Implicitly, it seems that the turn to Peirce is an attempt to synthesize the ethical and spiritual insights of James and Royce by returning to their source.

5. Mullin depends heavily upon *Royce's Mature Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). He is also indebted to Oppenheim's more recent *Reverence for the Relations of Life: Re-Imagining Pragmatism via Josiah Royce's Interactions with Peirce, James, and Dewey* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

6. Vincent Colapietro, *Peirce's Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).

7. Peirce's call for the development of Reason through concrete embodiment, or "to execute our little function in the operation of the creation by giving a hand towards rendering the world more reasonable whenever, as the slang is, it is 'up to us'" (qtd. on 139) echoes James' consistent claim that we co-operate with the higher powers in the continuous creation of the universe. James' claim can also be understood as mirroring Peirce's claim that the creation of the universe "did not take place during a certain busy week in the year 4004 B.C., but is going on today and never will be done" (qtd. on 139).

8. Mullin makes a similarly reaching comment in his preface when he talks about having given lectures on pragmatism in both Slovenia and Slovakia, where university administrators were surprised to learn that American pragmatism is compatible with Christianity. Mullin writes: "I told them that this misunderstanding prevails among Americans as well. I suggested to my hosts that the work of James, Royce, and Peirce coming from outside the Catholic tradition, could serve to revitalize Catholic philosophy in a way analogous to the way the works of Aristotle did in the thirteenth century" (xv).

Piotr Gutowski

Między monizmem i pluralizmem. Studium genezy i podstaw filozofii Johna Deweya

Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2002, 264 pp. (Between Monism and Pluralism. A Study of the Genesis and Foundations of John Dewey's Philosophy)

Agnieszka Hensoldt

Idee Peirce'owskiego pragmatyzmu i ich renesans w XX-wiecznej filozofii język