

Albert R. Spencer. *American Pragmatism: An Introduction*. Polity 2020. 224 pp. \$69.95 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781509524716); \$24.95 USD (Paperback ISBN 9781509524723).

Albert Spencer's *American Pragmatism: An Introduction* in a captivatingly complex take on pragmatism as it was, as it is, and as it can be. Readers will find much to consider in this highly readable book. Spencer includes a short preface laying out the framework for the book. That is followed by a brief preface. The body proper is comprised of an introductory chapter, followed by five additional chapters. The author also provides an extensive bibliography and a detailed index.

'An Introduction to American Pragmatism' is an interesting way to frame the chapters that follow. In successive order, Spencer discusses the contested nature of defining pragmatism, and its contours as a philosophy invested in notions of place, no less in conceptualizations of the embodied and the experiential. Within those sections, it becomes clear that he is working on a project that has a political/critical dimension. To wit, Spencer argues the introduction 'hopes to liberate the future of American pragmatism' by, in part, working to 'decolonize' it (11).

The first two chapters are the most decidedly introductory (in a good way) of the book. 'Fallibilism and the Classic Pragmatists' focuses on Charles S. Peirce and William James. Spencer does well in demonstrating their points of commonality, particularly their shared belief in the conditional and revisable nature of concepts (45). He is equally clear in recounting the different directions they took. Peirce focused more on the objective, as seen in his *pragmatic maxim*. James pointed towards the more subjective aspects of experience, especially in his conceptualization of *radical empiricism*. 'Meliorism and the Chicago Pragmatists' focuses on John Dewey and Jane Addams. Like the previous chapter, Spencer notes the differences and points of contact in working to 'engage and describe concrete social problems' (89). For Addams, this was done with the concept of *sympathetic knowledge* and the establishment of the charitable Hull House. For Dewey, it was in sloughing off the errors of Hegelianism, developing concepts like the reflex arc, and developing progressive approaches to educational reform. Spencer celebrates the more thoroughly *lived* practices of these two classic pragmatists, while also clearly articulating Dewey's debt to Addams.

'Pluralism and the Harvard Pragmatists' breaks with the organization of the previous two chapters to introduce several figures—George Santayana, W.E.B. DuBois, Horace Kallen, and Alain Locke—who served to apply pluralism as a way to combat 'ideologies that supported discriminatory practices' (118). The section on Santayana notes the tension between his largely conservative thinking and his more expansive views of individual spirituality and cosmopolitanism (125). The section discussing DuBois is by far the longest in this chapter. Spencer frames this as a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of adding DuBois to the canon. He ultimately argues in the affirmative, suggesting the continued resonance of DuBois's concept of *double consciousness* (133), no less than his recognition of the difficult and tentative path to 'racial equality' (140). The final two sections focus on how two of James's students, lifelong friends Kallen and Locke, expanded the cultural and democratic contours of his pluralism. The former argues against the myth of a monolithic culture, preferring to view America as an interactive 'choir where distinct voices contrast and complement one another' (146). The latter urges a form of democracy 'that relinquishes white supremacy at home and abroad, thereby allowing for the full participation of individuals' (152).

'Verification and the Analytic Pragmatists' provides a brief discussion of classical pragmatism's declining fortunes in the mid-1900s before turning to a discussion of three philosophers—Clarence Irving Lewis, Willard Van Orman Quine, and Richard Rorty—who adapted and expanded pragmatism's reach as against, and in support of, analytic philosophy. Spencer notes that Lewis's