This book is the first of two volumes of the proceedings of the international "Frontiers in American Philosophy" conference, held at Texas A & M University in 1988.

This conference, as Robert Burch notes in his brief Preface, was dedicated to novel explorations and new directions for American philosophy. This was--and still is--a large order. While the 32 essays in the volume are almost uniformly excellent, only a handful of contributions really chart new philosophical territory, cross long-standing intellectual boundaries, or explicitly address the issue of philosophical or cultural frontiers. Most focus on familiar major figures and issues in ways that are thoroughly illuminating but only very indirectly or tangentially related to the theme of frontiers of American thought. Of course, whether or not one agrees with this judgment depends in part on just how and where one locates American philosophy's contemporary frontiers. Burch writes, for example, that many of the essays--really only four or five, I think--concern the realism/idealism controversy, and that this is fitting because the development of a middle position in this dispute is "the core meaning" of pragmatism. It seems to me, in contrast, that pragmatism does not articulate or seek to articulate a middle position inside the realism/idealism dispute so much as it undercuts the assumptions on which this whole artificial dispute rests. Pragmatism thus articulates a position outside this entire controversy, a radically empiricist position that remains today at the genuine frontier of philosophy. (This crucial point is best recognized in this volume by Charlene Haddock Seigfried in her first-rate essay on "James's Natural History Methodology: Empiricist or Phenomenological?" It also is the central issue raised by Ralph Sleeper's challenging essay, "Vanishing Frontiers in American Philosophy: Two Dogmas of Idealism," that advocates a transactional, piecemeal, pragmatic "realism").

As Herman Saatkamp notes in the Foreword, the volume acknowledges and celebrates the pluralism and diversity of American philosophy, and makes no effort to define or lobby for a single American ethos. The editors have grouped the essays under assorted tidy headings, but in many respects the breadth of the papers and their multiple interconnections overrun the editorial groupings and make the organization appear rather arbitrary. In an case, the first subheading, "Diverse Themes in American Philosophy," would have been appropriate for the whole volume.

The contents are: Introduction by John McDermott; Diverse Themes in American Philosophy (essays by Hilary Putnam, Joseph Margolis, R.W. Sleeper, John Lachs, Daniel Aaron, and Nicholas Rescher); Whitehead and Mead (essays by Donald Sherburne and Mitchell Aboulafia); Technology and the Public Good (essays by Paul Durbin, Webster Hood, and Marjorie Miller); Metaphysics and Epistemology (essays by Kathleen Wallace, Murray Murphey, and George
Pappas); Social Critique (essays by Kenneth Stikkers, Lynne Adrian, and John Rader); Logic and Methodology (essays by H. S. Thayer, Douglas Browning, and Charlene Haddock Seigfried); George Herbert Mead (essays by James Campbell, William O'Meara, and Jon Moran); Peirce: Unexplored Issues (essays by Irwin Lieb, Nathan Houser, and Vincent Colapietro); Ethical Theory (Essays by Beth Singer, Konstantin Kolenda, and Ruth Anna Putnam); and, Royce: Hermeneutics, Loyalty, and Religion (essays by Jacquelin Kegley, Frank Oppenheim, and Robert Corrington).

As stated above, virtually all of these essays are excellent. They are uniformly learned and thoroughly researched, clearly written, and strongly argued. The book--and, presumably, the second volume to follow--will be very valuable for both advanced scholars and intermediate and advanced students in American philosophy and American studies. (I am afraid, though, that the book's hefty price tag may limit its distribution to libraries, established specialists, and mothers of the contributors). Especially strong are the essays that develop and apply to contemporary problems the philosophies of: Peirce (Miller's "The Principle of Continuity in C. S. Peirce and Contemporary Decision Support Technology," Stikkers's "Charles Sanders Peirce's Sociology of Knowledge and Critique of Capitalism," Lieb's "Pragmatism and the Normative Sciences," and Colapietro's "Peirce's Contributions to Ethics"); Mead (Aboulafia's "Mead and the Social Self," Campbell's "George Herbert Mead on Social Fusion and the Social Critic," and Singer's "Rights and Norms"); and, Royce (Kegley's "Loyalty to Loyalty: A Plan for America Today," Oppenheim's "Major Developments in Royce's Ethics after the Problem," and Corrington's "Hermeneutics and Loyalty"). John Ryder's critical social analysis via Dewey, "Contradictions in American Culture," also merits special notice.

Still, in a short review, it is not possible to do justice to the book's many essays and their many virtues. Instead, I can only briefly call attention to two contributions that especially embody the spirit and theme of American philosophy's frontiers. John Lachs's elegant essay, "The Relevance of Philosophy to Life," thoughtfully examines the obligations of philosophers today and the personal and societal sources of these obligations. Lachs writes "Not many chasms are greater than that between the professed high values and the despicable practice of some philosophers. There is work to be done here by all of us, and by some a staggering amount" (p. 63). This work, Lachs points out, cannot be completed just by giving lectures or writing books because there can be no real unity of theory and practice when that unity is confined to theory alone. Today it is the unity of theory and practice in practice that stands at the frontier of American philosophy.

Finally, to end at the beginning, John McDermott's Introduction, "Roots/Edges," an eight page poem, is a brilliant, moving "walk with Walt Whitman" across America, its history, its psyche, its land--across a new world. In an original style and tone (that invites association with Allen Ginsburg's The Fall of America:
poems of these states, 1965-1971, a book dedicated to Walt Whitman), McDermott closes: "America--ambiguity / Quo vadis. I have not the slightest / idea. / Why go--then? / Precisely. / As the parade goes by-- / Hey Camerado-- / I love you. / They do not answer-- / Hey there--no matter. / When you come, as you will, / to look for me-- / Find me under your boot soles. / I am--will be / the leaves of grass--" (pp. xix-xx). To this, like so much of this book, one must say: Precisely.

University of Oregon

John J. Stuhr


Some issues are so important that we rarely get around to thinking much about them. The relation of war and democracy, including the many puzzles theoretical and practical generated by their relation, is surely such an issue. Peter Manicas has done us all a great service by turning his talents to this theme, and he has done so in a way which will resonate with those of us who tend to think in the grain of American traditions. One of the enduring characteristics of classical American thought has been the idea that the reconstruction in and of philosophic categories and analysis. Manicas endorses this Deweyan historicism, and therefore takes a methodological approach to the relation of war and democracy which is no doubt shocking to many philosophers, and probably to more than a few historians and political scientists. The philosopher must adjust to the notion that the theoretical questions about war and democracy cannot be approached outside a consideration of the historical development of the two, and the ways their mutual relations have influenced each. The social scientist may be equally unsettled by the idea that history raises questions which demand philosophic consideration, so that a history void of philosophy is as flawed as a philosophy that knows no history. If the proof is in the eating, so to speak, then War and Democracy makes a powerful case for the necessary interrelation of history, sociology, political theory and philosophy.

The book is prompted by the necessity of democracy and the ubiquity of war. By the "necessity of democracy" I mean the fact that no serious consideration of political matters over the past few hundred years, and certainly for the present and future, can avoid democracy. Whether regarded as a means or an end, whether feared or admired, whether a threat or an aspiration, democracy touches everything social. The difficulty is that like every great human product, this one raised as many problems as it may solve: is democracy direct or representative; does it require a small scale or may it be large; what is its relation to republics, to justice, to rights; what may we make a bourgeois democracy, liberal democracy, socialist democracy? As if these concerns are not sufficiently intractable, there is the fact that the historical course of the development of democracy has intersected war at nearly every turn: dynastic wars and imperial wars, colonial wars,