to manifest nature's presence. Whereas action was essential to
the humanist synthesis, there is nothing now for the individual
to do but play the role assigned by nature." (p. 100) Jacobson
situates this shift in perspective in Emerson's growing realiza-
tion that human activity does not determine the nature of thought
and reality.

... Emerson's shift away from the primacy
of Man derives from his recognition that thought and
action are not reciprocal, as he thought in his early
period, that rather, thought and action represent two
quite different ways of viewing and understanding the
essential fact of human being in nature. Importantly,
Emerson privileges the perspective of intellect ... (103).

One of the key themes in Emerson's later thought is the idea
of fate. Jacobson characterizes his conception of fate this way:

It [fate] has no place in the field of
nature's presencing dynamic. Rather, fate is the limit
that stands around the presencing activity that is
nature -- stands around nature as what we may do.
Properly speaking, fate has no existence. It is not.
Fate is the condition of presence and Being and the
limit of the dynamic of revelation and concealment.
(p. 177).

Fate forms the backdrop against which human thought and activity
must be understood. The human role of unlimited interpreter of
nature is transformed into one of obedience to a dynamic source
of which cannot be comprehended.

This book, in my estimation, contributes in an important way
to a deeper understanding of Emerson as not only a primary inspi-
ration for the development of pragmatism, but also as an antici-
pator of important strands of post-modern thought. As such, it
is much more than a welcome addition to Emersonian scholarship.
It demands the careful attention of anyone who seeks to gain
insight into the development of American philosophy in the nine-
teenth and twentieth century.

Tom Curley Le Moyne College

AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM AND ASIAN RELIGIONS. Arthur Versluis.

The deaths of John Weiss in 1879 and Ralph Waldo Emerson and
Samuel Johnson in 1882 mark the end of what might be called the
"American Transcendentalist Era." By the turn of the century,
American Transcendentalism, at least as a movement of sorts,
dissolved into anthropocentric rationalism, universalism and free
religionism. Taking up where Arthur Christy's pioneering 1932
study The Orient in American Transcendentalism left off and
among numerous more specific studies of the role of Oriental thinking in American Transcendentalism, Versluis' volume elegantly tracks American Transcendentalism's relationship to Oriental philosophy from its roots in the late eighteenth century, when the British empire in India provided the West with a direct connection to the East and the first translations of Eastern teachings into Western languages, through its dissolution at the close of the nineteenth century.

Among the American Transcendental writers discussed at some length by Versluis are Bronson Alcott, William Alger, Orestes Brownson, Lydia Child, James Freeman Clarke, Moncure Conway, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Octavius Frothingham, Samuel Johnson, Herman Melville, Elizabeth Peabody, Henry David Thoreau and John Weiss, though by no means is Versluis' coverage encyclopedic. For example, Frederic Hedge, John Dwight, Jones Very, Convers Francis, George Ripley and Christopher Cranch are only given passing references, while Sylvester Judd, Charles Newcomb and James Marsh are not even brought up in the course of the book. Many other American Transcendentalists are missing as well. Versluis' efforts seem to be aimed toward providing a general overview of the Oriental influences on American Transcendentalism, rather than a complete picture.

Versluis rightly explains that many of the thinkers that he collects under the term "Transcendentalist" had sharply divergent views, and recognizes that some might object to his classification of this grouping of thinkers under the same heading. He attempts to justify his classification by arguing that all of these writers would agree that "truth can be intuitively perceived by higher Reason", and that this "intuition precedes and invigorates all religious awareness, and that it can penetrate the various forms of world religions, extracting from them their essence" (12), therefore, each of the writers that he discusses are in some sense Transcendentalists. He roughly breaks these American Transcendentalists down into four types: Emersonian (Emerson, Thoreau); Fourierist-Anticapitalist (George Ripley, John Dwight, Convers Francis, Charles Dana, George Curtis); Christian (Peabody, Clark); and Religion of Humanity (Frothingham, Conway, Weiss, Johnson, Alger). Nonetheless, these general types of Transcendentalism are real fluid, and call for many qualifications, thus making them ultimately not very useful or revealing.

The discussion of the various Transcendentalists and their relation to Asian religions is pretty much even handed. Of the writers he chooses to discuss, one gets a good working sense of how their Transcendentalism can be viewed in relation to Oriental teachings, as well as of the general shape of their Transcendentalism itself. Every Transcendentalist discussed is also somewhere or other assessed vis-a-vis the work of Emerson and Thoreau. This makes the volume especially attractive to American philosophers who might be interested in learning how Emerson and Thoreau's Orientalism compares to that of others, as well as how their Transcendentalism compares with that of other Transcenden-
talists. This continual referencing back to Emerson and Thoreau coupled with the fact that a full one-fifth of this volume is exclusively devoted to the role Oriental philosophy played in the development of their thought makes the rhetorical center of this book the impact of Asian religions on Emerson and Thoreau.

His chapter on Emerson and Thoreau's Orientalism is the strongest in the book, and is copiously indexed and commented upon with almost three hundred footnotes. Versluis calls Emerson and Thoreau's Orientalism a "literary religion," by which he means that they used Asian religious doctrines "stripped" of their "cultural and practical implications," rendering them "as merely ethical strictures" (78). Emerson is found the more guilty of the two of literary religion because Thoreau at least attempted to "live" Asian scriptures on Walden pond—"Thoreau's Walden is an experiment in literary religion made actual" (79).

One of better aspects of this book is that it wisely extends beyond particular Transcendentalist writers by overviewing the attitudes toward Orientalism in other aspects of American culture. This helps us to put Transcendentalist Orientalism in some type of cultural context. Not only does Versluis explore the reception of Asian religions in a number of Transcendentalist journals such as The Western Messenger, The Present, The Harbinger, The Spirit of the Age, The Cincinnati Dial, The Radical, The Index, Journal of Speculative Philosophy and, of course, The Dial, the journal co-edited by Emerson and Thoreau, but he also goes into its portrayal in popular magazines and books. He traces general attitudes toward the Orient concurrent with those of the American Transcendentalist's as they are reflected in general-interest magazines like North American Review, Christian Examiner, Atlantic Monthly, and Appleton's Journal. He classifies Orientalism which disparages Asian religions, cultures and peoples as "negative" and that which regards Asian religions, cultures and peoples as valuable, and reflecting perennial truths as "positive." Both types of Orientalism are found in American Transcendentalism and America at large. His review of popular magazines with respect to their "positive" or "negative" Orientalism reveals another dark chapter in the history of American racism, and is quite provocative.

All in all, Versluis does a fine job of suggesting some ways in which the Transcendentalists might have been influenced by and reacting to Eastern teachings. At times, though, he finds it difficult to determine with any certainty whether the origin of a passage or idea is from the East or from the West. Is this the influence, say, of Buddhism that we see in this passage or Neo-Platonism? This is not a problem particular to Versluis' study, but one endemic to influence studies in general. His chapter on the first meeting of East and West in Germany and England is particularly helpful in citing the European Orientalist roots of American Transcendentalism. This volume gives us a splendid panoramic view of the reception of Oriental thought in American Transcendentalism and culture, and should become a major source-book on such matters. And, aside from the embarrassing fact that
this Oxford University Press book is riddled with typos, it has the added merit of being well written and organized. American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions will be quite useful to American philosophers wishing to situate Transcendentalist thought in relation to Oriental philosophy and its reception in nineteenth century America.

Jeffrey R. DiLeo Indiana University, Bloomington


His name is not well known in philosophical circles, but to his students, he is fondly remembered as a teacher and mentor. Although the name of John William Miller fails to ring a bell even among those who haunt the library shelves devoted to American Philosophy, this thinker has exerted a tremendous influence and holds a point of view which is unique and worthy of further study. This collection of essays brings to light the intellectual activity of a philosopher who worked behind the scene on the stage of American Philosophy.

Joseph P. Fell's initial essay serves to introduce the reader to Miller's life and legacy. Miller labeled his thought as "historical idealism" and described it as a type of idealism which renounces the ahistorical character of its predecessors. Particularly occupied with the epistemological and ontological unity of persons and things, the core of his philosophy centers around the historical act as disclosing an environment or context; moreover, he insists that we live by the environment as revealed in our activity.

Interested in the interaction between humankind and nature, Miller offers his concept of the "midworld" as his most original contribution to philosophical thought. Venturing beyond the idealist versus realist controversy, Miller views the ideal and the real as mediated in the functioning object. This middle ground of the actual possesses both real and ideal traits which are the prerequisite characteristics from which opposing dualistic conceptual schemes are sustained. In the contemporary search for a nondualistic approach toward the cosmos and self, Miller's concept of the midworld of functioning objects merits the appraisal this slim volume heralds.

Robert E. Gahringer's essay warns us that when approaching Miller's work, it is essential to keep in mind that he addresses the philosophy of Philosophy. Unlike ordinary notions, philosophical concepts function as principles that make other ideas possible. Philosophical concepts are "constitutional" in all thoughts and activity. Neither accidental, ahistorical, nor eternal, our conceptual schemes arise from the way they operate in our lives. As such, they are subject to constant reassessment and revision. Thus the task of the philosopher is not to