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
begin with the problem of arguing toward a real world, rather, as philosophers we begin in the world and our problem is to maintain the modes of its apprehension and of our existence and practical effectiveness within it.

In James A. Diefenbeck's contribution we learn that Miller was committed to the authority of the present, immediate, as well as limited acts of embodied agents. Our world of objects is not an independent existence but is, instead, generated by the acts of agents. One way of putting this priority of the act is to say that our acts are "unenvironed," that is to say, our acts are generative of the environment rather than being determined by it. Miller's aim is to establish the act in its historical dimension as a fundamental category of thought without which the self as agent cannot know itself. Miller's exploration of how we control our acts in an orderly fashion decrhes any use of an independent empirical world or a transcendental static absolute as a crutch. Necessity, truth and the absolute are to be located within activity's own dynamic process as it expands and develops itself. To the scholar of American Philosophy, Miller's emphasis upon the act as a philosophical category raises interesting comparisons to that of G. H. Mead's.

Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. examines Miller's pedagogical style for insight into his thought. Miller was careful to portray the various types of worldviews, however alien, as plausible. This approach, while inviting criticism, is instructive because it encourages respect for unfamiliar ways of thinking and thus avoids the path toward violent confrontation. One type of thought leads to another, and this succession of philosophies with an emphasis upon the transitions from one to another is hailed as a unique contribution. The instability and subsequent self-revision inherent within any school of thought is what Miller means by "fatality" and this notion of Miller's might provide an intriguing alternative to Alasdair MacIntyre. There is also an interesting contrast between views of control and views of knowledge.

V. M. Colapietro points out that all knowledge is embodied and inseparable from its symbolic vehicle to Miller's way of thinking. Neither our world nor our thoughts can be bifurcated from the media used to express them. The world is simultaneously actual and precarious. Its reality lies not in its brute impartiality to our ends, but rather in its connective bond to our behavior, while its dangerousness lies within its awesome (and sometimes awful) power. Both the character of self and world are at risk in their interaction. Demarcate nature from our activity and we are left with academic trivia or dogmatic mystery. The world is neither meaningless chaos nor permanent and finished, it is open to both dissolution and stability. As Miller would say, it is "constitutionally" incomplete. We have a hand in its continued formation since both self and nature are subject to revision through action.

R. S. Corrington's critical essay dealing with Miller's
concept of the midworld is a welcomed component to this collection for two reasons. First, he is more critical (although a sympathetic critic) of this important concept as he locates its proper place in relation to nature while calling for a wider metaphysical view. Second, Corrington is more explicit about the obvious parallels between Miller's thought and John Dewey's philosophy; however, like his compatriots (with the exception of Gary Stahl) in this volume, his view of Dewey's thought suffers from the long established oversimplification of Dewey's view of instrumentalism and the habitual aspect of the human self. A more thorough investigation of the similarities between these two American thinkers would form the basis of a fruitful essay.

Stephen Tyman locates the crux of Miller's moral theory within the Kantian tension between the absolute as well as abstract moral law and the natural, contextual drive of desire. Miller steers a middle course between Scylla and Charybdis by placing reason and good in the perpetuation of those conditions which render the interconnected and integral activities of the self as possible. Evil exists in the choice to follow those desires that inhibit the conditions required for the maintenance of life-promoting values. Thus, as Tyman points out, Miller's moral philosophy bears as much resemblance to Aristotle as to Kant and represents the best of both traditions.

Gary Stahl tells us that Miller objects to the fundamental sundering of inner agent from outer fact in all its forms (mind/body, subject/object, organism/environment, etc.), arguing instead for process as the fundamental category of metaphysics. Neither self nor world are intelligible when separated from one another. The central tenet of Miller's moral theory is the incomplete and finite character of both self and world which arise together inseparably interlocked.

Brockway's intriguing essay on the no man's land between philosophy and economics into which Miller ventured is followed by two highly readable and personal accounts given by Elias and Strout of Miller as teacher, friend and lifelong interlocutor. Strout relays a vignette in which Miller prophesies about the clearing up Vico's legacy in around twenty-five years which later proved to be the case. This book serves a similar role for Miller's own work. Read it now and stay ahead of the game!

C. Anthony Earls
Southern Illinois University


Twas in this book, the Truth got told,
With Ancient Lies a 'fallin'.

One man perceives, how we've been conned:
That man is Barry Allen . . .