As an alternative to the standard western view of sensation as atomistic and acontextual, Reed offers "occlusion," a relatively simple fact of primary experience that enables us to determine whether experienced objects are real or only apparent. "From an ecological perspective, experience is ... not so much something one has as it is a process of learning in which one engages." (p. 105) Neither representationalism as such not the selected information offered up by television are adequate descriptions of how we have our primary experience—which is really not a matter of my just having an image that correctly matches the one you have, but rather of my experience fitting in with yours. "What we need," then, for Reed, is for people to learn how to fit and work together." (p. 115) Unfortunately, we are making our schools and workplaces into little Cartesian prisons." (p.116) This modern degradation of experience, which saps so much hope, can be countered by the occlusionist view of perception— which is tied to activity and hence is anticipatory in nature. This is the fundamental value of primary experience. As prospective, it lets loose hope, "containing within it glimmerings of paths to possible futures." (p. 145) "This emphasis in expanding the domain of experience, both within the individual and among individuals, is Dewey's greatest legacy." (p. 160)

A few caveats are perhaps in order. First, it may be more difficult than Reed indicates to distinguish primary from secondary experience. In addition, the quest for "pure experience" can be notoriously difficult, as William James noted. Going further, does what counts as primary or secondary experience itself varies from context to context?

It is important to note that Reed does not want to reject secondary experience altogether—only to keep it from usurping the role of primary experience altogether. Indeed, he uses a form of secondary experience, viz., a text, to inform the reader of the importance and necessity of primary experience. This review functions in a similar manner. Hopefully, it can serve in a directive and not merely descriptive fashion, i.e., point beyond itself toward Reed's "original" text, and, ultimately, toward primary experience itself.

Reed's excellent book provides a concrete illustration of how American pragmatism can be applied to everyday contemporary situations. It works well in the classroom, and makes for interesting reading. As such it is highly recommended.

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PRACTICING PHILOSOPHY, PRACTICALISM AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE.

The seven essays that comprise the latest book by Richard Shusterman (Professor of Philosophy at Temple University and Directeur de Programme at the Collège Internationale de Philosophie in Paris) were composed for various occasions over the
previous five years and extensively reworked to highlight the practice of philosophy. As he states in his Introduction ("The Philosophic Life, A Renewed Poetics of Philosophy") "this book . . . has three primary aims. To reanimate interest in the philosophical life -- not only for theoretical study but for actual practice. To demonstrate the merits of the aesthetic model of such a life. To explore and develop the value of contemporary pragmatism both for showing the importance of philosophy as an area of living and for providing strategies to practice it better. These aims explain the book's structure" (11). Following an introductory study, "Profiles of the Philosophical Life" (Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Foucault), the three parts deal with "Ethics and Politics" (Dewey, Rorty, Putman, and Cavell), "Art, Knowledge, Praxis" (Habermas, Rorty, and Goodman), and "Embodiment and Ethnicity" (Dewey, Rorty, and Alexander). The unified whole is a clearly written and convincingly argued case for philosophy as primarily a lifestyle, as a search for truth not for its own sake but for the ameliorative care of the self and the society in which the self is situated. In various ways (including a discussion of rap) this book is a continuation of his innovative Pragmatist Aesthetics (1992).

His colleagues, both in and out of academic institutions, are being encouraged by Shusterman to reconsider the Socratic admonition to employ philosophy to know the self. Indeed, he is encouraging his fellow humans to do the same, for there are degrees of "philosophical self-care" and in democratic living the philosophical life must be made possible for more and more people (n. 8, 211). In my opinion no more important clarion call could be made. To the footnote (7, 198) that deals with the reasons there has been a decline of the idea of philosophy as a special way of life, I would like to add, to his observation of medieval Scholasticism's subordination of philosophy to theology as its "handmaiden", a further observation. Even before this subordination Christians interpreted philosophy as a way of life as an alternative religion. This required them to condemn the morally exemplary lives of philosophers (based on reason and experience) as immoral when compared with the morally saintly lives of believers (based on faith even if it contradicted reason and experience).

"Since the art of living must be a practical art," and "Pragmatism's emphasis on the practical" are seen by Shusterman as "the revival of a tradition that saw theory as a useful instrument to a higher philosophical practice," pragmatism -- despite its limitations -- forms the focus and guiding orientation of his book (5). "Pragmatism, as I conceive it after Dewey, offers a distinctive way of defending the aesthetic model of philosophic life . . ." (6), for "to inspire emulation, the philosophic life should be beautiful . . ." (59). Shusterman's admiration for Dewey stems from Dewey's chiding "his professional colleagues for shirking the duty of bringing philosophy to bear on 'the living struggles and issues of its own age and times'" (20). Moreover, "[i]f philosophy is to be conceived not simply as a life-practice but as an aesthetic life-practice, then the traditional opposition of practical/aesthetic must be transgressed. Pragmatism . . . provides the best philosophy for challenging . . . this opposition . . . (131, italics in the original).
To this reviewer the most innovative part is the third and last, composed of two chapters, "Somatic Experience, Foundation or Reconstruction?" and "Next Year in Jerusalem? Jewish Identity and the Myth of Return." The penultimate chapter, along with section III of the first chapter, brings in the long controversial issue of the theoretical and practical influence on Dewey of F. Matthias Alexander, body therapist and founder of the Alexander technique. To the major published work on Alexander (by F. P. Jones), given in note 13 (233), I would add the unpublished doctoral dissertation (for the University of Toronto, 1959), "Fredrick Matthias Alexander and John Dewey: A Neglected Influence" by Eric David McCormack. This chapter also continues Shusterman's discussion of aesthetics and bodily experience, an area he terms "somaesthetics". It was begun in Pragmatist Aesthetics and has been developed still further since the book under review, in a most interesting essay entitled "Somaesthetics and the Body/Media Issue" (Body & Society, Vol. 3, no. 3, September 1997, 33-49). Quoting from that essay: "Somaesthetics is devoted to the critical, ameliorative study of one's experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (aisthesis) and creative self-fashioning. It is therefore likewise devoted to the knowledge, discourses, practices and bodily disciplines that structure such somatic care or can improve it" (34).

The last chapter not only exemplifies Shusterman's general call for the employment of philosophy in self examination, but also illustrates this employment in a concrete manner by applying it to himself, to his own Jewish identity. In his words: "After advocating philosophy as a self-critical art of living by studying the thought and lives of others, it seems appropriate to conclude by applying this philosophical vision, at long last, to a central, still unresolved problem of my own. To shirk this exercise would contradict the whole pragmatic thrust of the book" (14). In my experience, philosophic interest in identity is only found in certain circles in Latin America and among certain Hispanics in the United States. See, for examples: Jorge J. E. Gracia and Iván Jakasic, eds. Filosofía identidad cultural en América Latina (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1983), Leopoldo Zea, "Identity: A Latin American Philosophical Problem." The Philosophical Forum 20 (1988-89), 33-42, and Ofelia Schuette, Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). Perhaps Shusterman's essay will encourage other philosophers to extend their reflections to this neglected theme, too long left to psychology and sociology.

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Antón Donoso


Anthony Cook, Professor of Law at Georgetown Law Center, presents a compelling argument about the nature of the collapse of the progressive liberal agenda following the Civil Rights era that he connects to the coincident disintegration of the legal realism movement. Cook generalizes this disintegration as the loss of a normative