Trotter believes that the difficulties resulting from the professional identity crisis afflicting medicine can be remedied through Royce’s philosophy of loyalty. Genuine loyalty is an adequate basis for the development of a coherent medical ethics since if a physician is loyal to the profession, s(he) will be loyal to certain attributes of medicine thus defining him/herself in terms of these attributes. In this way, the physician can have an identity that is commensurate with the medical tradition, and the medical tradition itself could also gain in identity. Thus, a physician must be loyal to the medical tradition, the community, and each patient that s(he) treats.

In order to illustrate the need for the overlap between personal identity and public identity, a brief excursus into Royce’s philosophy will be necessary. For Royce, loyalty is a species of love—i.e. the love of community. Communities are defined by ideals, and the ideals that define communities are the cause(s) to which the loyalist is faithful. The cause(s) that the loyalist is faithful to is chosen by that particular person. Loyalty is practical devotion that is expressed in action, and is an expression of habit. Loyalty is a state of character, which becomes habitual over time. Genuine loyalty is expressed in the activities of a whole life. One’s devotion to a cause is the hallmark of one’s personality, unifying one’s emotions, belief structures and moral convictions.

Thus, physicians should be loyal to the ideals defined by the medical tradition, since it provides the higher unity of the community. The medical tradition is faithful to restoring and maintaining health to the patient. The physician-patient relationship consists of a clinical dyad in which the patient initiates the clinical encounter and the physician controls the diagnostic testing, final diagnosis, and therapy. The patient and physician have obligations to the clinical dyad. This obligation arises from loyalty to the general medical community. The loyal physician is a member of a community along with others who are loyal to the same cause. This cause is a complex set of ideals which are received from the moral tradition, and which overlaps with medicine, and sustains the medical tradition. The medical physician must be subservient to the medical tradition in order to restore the instability in medicine, and to give the medical tradition a sense of identity.

Trotter’s book is written for philosophers and medical practitioners who may be unfamiliar with Royce’s philosophy of loyalty. Trotter’s presentation of Royce’s philosophy, and his arguments in favor of adhering to loyalty is very persuasive. Trotter writes in a style that is clear, lucid, and conveys the genuine meaning of loyalty. It is difficult to imagine Trotter being anything except loyal to loyalty. This book has been a joy to read because of the genuineness with which the author approaches a topic that has been mostly undervalued by the medical community.

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Matthew Festenstein's work in political philosophy is informed by his close study of Dewey's work as well as contemporary developments in philosophy. Part I examines Dewey's political philosophy with much attention to its moral core; Part II surveys Rorty, Habermas and Putnam's use of Dewey as well as their contributions to the problems that Festenstein and the later pragmatists think Dewey failed to solve. Throughout Festenstein makes reference, in his extensive endnotes, to a wide-ranging critical discussion. One could use this book as a guide to twentieth century discussions of pragmatic ethics and political theory.

At the core of Dewey's political philosophy, argues Festenstein, there is an ethic of self-realization. One would expect then that Dewey would be a pluralist, proposing a social order that made possible an immense variety of self-realizations. Yet the experimental method he values undermines traditional or hierarchical societies. His liberalism and professed pluralism are in tension. This would not be a devastating theoretical problem if Dewey's teleological conception of human nature is correct. Those who did not value the liberal ideal would simply be out of touch with reality and should not be taken seriously. But with "the loss of that external vindication of practices which had been guaranteed by metaphysical realism" there is a theoretical problem. Now, "from the perspective of the relativist challenge, Dewey's articulated normative framework may appear to be just one moral outlook, historically and culturally parochial, or the projection of a particular moral sensibility" (106). So Festenstein turns to late twentieth century pragmatists, Richard Rorty, Jurgen Habermas and Hilary Putnam, to see how they handle the relativist challenge.

But there is a problem with perspective and interpretation. It is as if Festenstein implicitly expects a tradition that embraces perspectivism to measure up to various universal standards. Yet he explicitly knows this is an unrealistic expectation. After referring to Thomas Nagel's scepticism regarding moral and political agreements, Festenstein concludes:

Yet it [the contested situation in which we find ourselves] is a confrontation. What motivates Nagel's plea for abstention from any claim that truth is on one side is the hope for a higher level of political principles which can be agreed on. However, for this pragmatism, validity does not depend on the hope of higher level agreement. Indeed, I think it is rather fanciful at this end of the twentieth century to imagine that we can achieve such agreement on valid political principles (191).

I would like this study even better if this chastened pragmatic viewpoint had more firmly shaped the entire book. Perhaps it would have done so if the book had been extended and revised.

The extension is needed for the discussions of Habermas, Rorty and Putnam. They are much too cramped to be understandable and persuasive for one who is not fully conversant with the original sources. The revision is needed so that there is a single
perspective that shapes the book. But even if Festenstein had rejected an objectivism that reflects mainstream moral philosophy there would still be a problem with his interpretation of the moral core of Dewey's social and political philosophy, for Festenstein understands this moral core in unduly individualistic and abstract terms. He refers to it as an ethic of self-realization that is grounded in a "teleological naturalism." To his credit Festenstein is aware of Dewey's shifts in thinking over his long career but still he too easily, in my opinion, takes the ethics of the later Dewey to be a continuation of the idealist-informed ethic of his younger years. Dewey is a naturalist and teleology (of a sort) certainly plays a role in his thinking. Moreover, he is concerned with self-realization. But this language is reductionistic. Dewey's self is a social self. One cannot easily isolate this individual from the community and then ask what can be done to realize her, taking her individualism as an unmodifiable value. Festenstein rightly cites as a Deweyan moral criterion the value of growth, but he fails to note Dewey's qualification. It is not just growth, or the growth of the individual; it is growth that leads to growth. Thus, at a key point in the argument (58-62) Festenstein relies on a flawed interpretation of Dewey to generate a serious difficulty in Dewey's thinking. (This is particularly unfortunate for Festenstein in the preceding sections had effectively countered many standard misinterpretations of Dewey's philosophy.)

At one point (p. 59f) Festenstein "clarifies" his criticism by citing a "criticism directed by [Henry] Sidgwick at [T. H.] Green." The example is that of "the 'thoughtful trader [who] knows that wealth will enable him to provide himself and those he loves'" with various goods but who gains this wealth through exploitation. Festenstein thinks that Dewey's ethics cannot handle this objection because the trader's personal growth does not include Dewey's ethic of social obligation. But, once again, Festenstein misses Dewey's qualification (and its objectivity). The issue is not one of privileging each individual's agenda and then noting the incompatibility with a social orientation. Dewey, who was very knowledgeable about Green's moral philosophy, developed an ethical criterion that brought an objective standard to one's interests. As a reflective social self one could test one's desires by their effects on oneself and others. Those that contributed to the well being of oneself and others were moral. That one would be motivated to adopt such a standard was a part of his or her socialization. That it was worthy of continued use could be determined by reflection.

I would be more comfortable with a study that that paid more attention to Dewey in his own terms (but not necessarily in Dewey's language) and was more sensitive to the shifts in Dewey's thinking over the decades. Nevertheless, Festenstein has provided the serious student of Dewey's with a provocative interpretation of Dewey that attempts to engage him in conversation with various late-twentieth century philosophers. I would not recommend the book to someone who is not well-versed in Dewey's thinking. But for one who is, this is a useful book.

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57