In the fifth section, the authors focus on the aesthetic dimension of pragmatism. Armen Marsoobian is critical of the restricted value of Dewey’s formal theory of art. Dewey’s representational theories of art fail to capture the meaningful content of the work of art, and this aspect of art expresses and informs human experience. Thomas Alexander, argues that there is a crisis in our culture since art does not communicate with the community, in a way that will make life more meaningful to the individual and society. Art and community must have an intrinsic relationship with each other; however, our culture isn’t literate enough in the humanities to appreciate art. The crisis of art results in the crisis of self-actualizing individuals.

In the sixth section, the authors examine the role of metaphysics. The pragmatist tradition deconstructed and reconstructed metaphysics to influence human experience. For John Ryder, there are no absolute foundations for knowledge, nor is there direct, immediate knowledge of the self. Thus, Cartesian doubt is impossible since the inquirer always operates within a given context. Human experience is conditioned and perspectival; thus, ultimate realities beyond the natural world are therefore rejected as mythical. Neither are there any objective observers observing an independent and causally determined world. Gary Calore examines time from a naturalist and pragmatist reconstruction of metaphysics. Calore argues that no two moments express the same world, since the world can never be re-experienced in exactly the same way. Thus, time creates change, flux and growth in human experience.

In the last section, Robert Carrington examines the six future themes of metaphysical inquiry within pragmatism. First, anti-Cartesianism reinforces the notion that mind and nature forms an integrated whole. Second, the community will be closely interrelated with the individual. Third, Darwin’s biological principles will be interrelated with metaphysical reflection. Fourth, teleology will change to accommodate the Darwinian revolution. Fifth, science will reconcile the dichotomy between nature and value. Sixth, experience will be reconceptualized so that it is in and of nature.

The book provides a coherent sense of some of the pragmatic themes of the past, present, and future. The authors made these issues both lucid and interesting to the reader. The book is insightful, and it is a valuable contribution to the literature on American pragmatism.

Irene S. Switankowsky

University of Waterloo


Richard Rorty has taken a new tack in the direction of his "conversation" with the American intellectual community. Instead of repetitively making the case for the
marginal status of Philosophy within the project of liberal democracy (as he did in his *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* text), Rorty has turned to the work of constructing homilies for the American Civil religion. Rather than offer novel readings of contemporary analytic thinkers which always tend to stress their similarities with postmodern Continentalists like Derrida, Rorty is busy trying to stir up an appropriate level of national pride within the breasts of the post-1960's, jaded, leftists. He begins the text of Achieving *Our Country* with just this focus: "National Pride is to countries what self-respect is to individuals...Too much national pride can produce bellicosity and imperialism...But ...insufficient national pride makes energetic and effective debate about national policy unlikely." (p. 3) Rorty never leaves the substance of this remark all throughout his sermon. He feels that the American Left is too preoccupied with theory and intellectualizing and not enough engaged in the task of improving the conditions of the working folks and those minorities who still await their share of the American Dream. We intellectuals need to help address concrete problems and this requires, in part, focusing on good old-fashioned governmental action. The American Left is moribund because it lacks "agreement on a concrete political platform" (p. 98).

But how do we get the self-obsessed intellectuals energized to focus on the plight of everyday Americans. We need to read and be inspired by the right scriptures. At one place in his text, Rorty remarks that nobody "has yet suggested a viable alternative to the civic religion of which Whitman and Dewey were prophets" (p. 101). The texts of these thinkers are the correct source of the religion because "Whitman and Dewey tried to substitute hope for knowledge" (p. 106). It might seem odd to lump these two thinkers together but for Rorty it is all very natural. Both celebrated the core values of democracy and both were suspicious of the authority of classical ideals. We intellectuals need to be inspired. We need to get misty-eyed about America and her promise. Rorty is calling for us to be inspired by the democratic and reformist possibilities implicit in our way of life. He, of course, is not advocating militarism or oppression. It is no accident that the last chapter of his text is entitled "The Inspirational Value of Great Works".

What should we say about this homily? Of course, on the one hand, Rorty is saying something that any reader of the *Nation* has known for some time. The Left is marginalized from any concerted attempt to bring about a greater democratization of this society. Certainly, the academics are self-absorbed. But, is Rorty correct about the solution? Should we focus primarily on inspiring people by means of classic texts of American Democracy? Also, are these the only texts from which we should preach? First, it is not all that clear that our only work ought to be inspiration. Perhaps, as just one example, something can be learned from writers such as Heidegger concerning the flaws of our modern technologically-obsessed world. We may even gain insight be re-reading Marx in the context of late twentieth-century global capitalism with all its attendant risks. Rorty excoriates all this. But, primarily, his beef is with those who look to such thinkers for a grand, Total, answer to the problems that challenge us. I think he is right is his suspicion of this. However, as in so many other cases, Rorty proverbially throws out the baby with the bath water. As a thinker much influenced by the postmoderns of which Rorty speaks, I concur in his American suspicion of totalizing
theory. On the other hand, there may be ideas of great concrete value in these works, which could help us address the problems of everyday people. For example, being sensitive to the alienation of the Hispanic "Other" in our culture might help me better understand the plight of certain migrant workers. Indeed, reading Levinas, for example, might even help me be more effectively inspired by the texts Rorty cites. After all, as Cornel West has pointed out, some of classic American pragmatists were not all that attuned to the difficulties of being African-American or Hispanic.

Another question that should be addressed is whether or not the inspirational texts Rorty cites are the only ones useful for the liberal project. Here there is definitely a problem. Consider the history of the American Civil Rights movement. Central to the effort to inspire Dr. Martin Luthur King's followers to challenge American Apartheid were the texts of the Bible. Indeed, an argument could be made that without the tradition of the Black Church and its focus on the prophetic texts of liberation within the Hebrew Bible, the civil rights movement would have had less of an impact. Of course, Rorty is uncomfortable with this fact. He wants to hear no "thus saith the Lord...." Yet, it is the case that many of the materials of traditional religion contain powerful resources for promoting the very reforms Rorty seeks for our liberal society. He shuns this material because of the metaphysical baggage of traditional religion. However, it is not at all clear that this baggage must obstruct our appeal to the moving words of an Isaiah, for example. After all, Forty speaks of reinterpreting philosophy in a contingent way. Why not do the same to religion? Indeed, I would argue that is something that King already started to do. He did not worry about the metaphysical case for the existence of god. Rather, he called us to repentance. He wanted us to realize the lesson of the Prophets that no matter how pious we are, if our brother suffers at our hand then the good Lord will turn his face from us. Now, it is the case that many of the elite in our society care not at all for the words of the Good Book. Hence, an appeal to the prophetic materials of the Bible may have little practical value with them. However, it is widely known that most Americans are still religious in some sense -- even if they do not go to Church or Synagogue. The words of the ancient prophets on behalf of the widow and the orphan may then still have great weight. Many of those who marched with King did not attend Church -- yet, they were moved by his appeal to those ancient words.

I think Rorty's book is well worth reading. He makes a strong case that the post-1960's Left needs to engage in a more concrete way with the situation of the disenfranchised of this post-capitalist society. His chapter on "Movements and Campaigns" nicely reinforces this point with the argument that we should be suspicious of movements and work rather for campaigns that target specific, concrete, needs. I was reminded here of my experience, during College years, with campus efforts to push the administration into divestiture of its funds from those companies that then still did business in apartheid South Africa.

Certainly, this is an appropriate lesson we should draw from the pragmatists, which also aptly resonates with Rorty's criticism of the Left's traditional fascination with Marxism. Here, one is reminded of the treatment of Orwell in his Contingency text. I
also think it is valuable to have philosophers engaging in discourse that speaks more
directly to the larger concerns of the body politic. Although I think there is more than
just homiletic work to be done, I do recommend this text as a worthy contribution to what
I hope will be a revival of the Liberal ethos.

Keith Burgum
Felician College

*Trancendental Utopias: Individual and Community at Brook Farm, Fruitlands and
$32.50.

When one reflects on the history of transcendentalism in the United States, the
figures who immediately come to mind are Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David
Thoreau. In *Trancendental Utopias*, Richard Francis focuses upon those who attempted to
put into practice transcendental ideals. Although Thoreau is an integral part of this group,
his utopian experiment is treated only briefly at the end of the book. A substantial portion
of Francis' text is devoted to Brook Farm and Fruitlands.

Francis states his main purpose this way:

My overall intention is to establish the depth and intensity of social concern
felt by members of the transcendentalist movement, and to shed light on the
belief that underlies and unifies its apparent eclecticism, contradictoriness,
and obscurity: he doctrine of repetitive order, of the consistency of
consistency, of the universal law of series... All these thinkers shared the
belief that we have to address ourselves to and perfect the microcosm,
thought they disagreed about what that might be; and that when we have
done so, a new social order will crystallize around it. (34)

The central issue the transcendentalists sought to resolve was the relationship between an
essentially fixed nature governed by immutable law and a flowing historical process. By
seeing history as itself governed by the universal law of series, George Ripley and Bronson
Alcott were able to bring together the forces of history and nature.

Francis devotes three chapters to the experiment at Brook Farm. Brook Farm came
into being in 1841 and lasted almost six years. Francis asserts that the founder of Brook
Farm, George Ripley, was the central figure in the American transcendentalist movement.
"But the person who, more than anybody else, gave it [transcendentalism] coherence and
provided it with a succession of institutional manifestations was George Ripley." (pp. 39-
40) Ripley was committed to the project of establishing a community that would
concretize the ideas of Charles Fourier about the law of series and the best of
transcendentalism. The common tendency to see transcendentalism as a form of
individualism misses the mark in terms of Ripley's utopian experiment. After establishing
the connection between Fourierism and transcendentalism, Francis points to such features