of growth. This genetic view is idealistic, Shook contends, in so far as "[k]nowledge itself [is] teleologically understood, in its own proper context, as a growth out of materials that it has actively and intentionally made its own" (p. 25). In addition to emphasizing the significance of this epistemological idealism, Shook devotes his entire third chapter to the importance of Wilhelm Wundt's voluntarism in Dewey's transition from absolute idealism to functional psychology. Besides making a case for the recognition of Wundt's contribution to Dewey's "volitional" view of mind, Shook attempts to debunk the notion that James was the most important inspiration to Dewey's seminal and groundbreaking "Reflex Arc Concept" article in 1896. Shook claims that the source for this article—perhaps the most important early writing of Dewey in terms of its significance for his later work—"can be dated back to much earlier articles written from 1884 to 1886 which Dewey conceived largely through a contribution of Wundtian principles" (p. 72).

In an effort to account for Dewey's eventual transition to "instrumentalism," Shook concludes his book with the chapters "The Logic of Conduct," and The Reconstruction of Epistemology." In the former Shook challenges the perception that Dewey abandoned idealism in favor of pragmatism, arguing that a more appropriate way to frame the transition is to see it as an abandonment of absolutism with respect to his still-intact idealism, and a simultaneous adoption of an "instrumentalist" version of pragmatism. Finally, Shook claims that Dewey's "empiricist epistemology" grounds his instrumentalism by relying on a notion of experience that is at odds with the comparatively subjectivist view proposed by both positivism and transcendentalism. Shook argues that this empirical 'ground' is indebted to a prioritization of a "metaphysics of experience" over and against a "metaphysics of existence" in Dewey's philosophy.

John R. Shook's new book is an important step towards invigorating the discussion regarding the character and import of Dewey's early philosophical influences with respect to their impact on his later philosophy.

SIU at Carbondale Matthew Caleb Flamm

to standard concepts in moral theory, given some kind of framework to apply those concepts and principles to moral problems in the world of business, and asked to analyze “real life” cases in light of what they have learned about moral theory. I am sure that most teachers of business ethics hope that this sort of training will help students develop imaginative, ethically wise ways of making managerial decisions. Why is it then that so many of my own students, when asked for their preferred resolution of a case dilemma concerning insider trading, fraudulent sales practices, volume discounting, bribery, layoffs, or trade secrets will invariably state that the protagonist should report the problem to her superiors or quit! Hardly the creative ethical solution for which I was looking.

Most teachers of business ethics are philosophers or theologians and most philosophers and theologians have not a wit of experience in business. Hence, they are extraordinarily reliant on textbooks. The pattern I sketched above reflects a textbook approach to business ethics. So, it is both unusual and exciting to find a book on business ethics, Rethinking Business Ethics: A Pragmatic Approach, which combines the philosophical expertise of Sandra Rosenthal with the managerial background of Rogene Buchholz, both professors at Loyola University. The authors have not written a textbook but a theoretical critique of present day moral theory and of ideologies underlying managerial capitalism. They promote pragmatist ethics as a healthy corrective to the individualism, objectivism, and atomism dominant in our western business culture.

The first three chapters (Part I) cull the writings of the classical pragmatist era, especially those of Mead and Dewey, to establish a conceptual framework for business ethics. Central to that framework are value pluralism, contextuality, community, growth, creativity, and imagination. (No surprises there). These chapters carry on a standard philosophical argument against utilitarian and deontological theories, while defending pragmatic perspectives against associations with relativism, subjectivism, and skepticism from both its enemies and its friends, notably Richard Rorty (Chapter Three). Readers of this Newsletter are likely to be very sympathetic to the viewpoint of these chapters but also not likely to discover anything especially fresh in the exposition or argument.

In Parts II and III of the book the authors attempt to apply pragmatist perspectives to the global economy, corporate identity, ecology, public policy, technology, and managerial leadership. For example, in Chapter 10 Rosenthal and Buchholz take a well-known stakeholder model of corporate responsibility, developed largely by R. Edward Freeman, editor of The Ruffin Series in Business Ethics,
and put both a pragmatist and feminist (!) spin on it, as in the following: “A truly harmonious relation between a corporation and its natural environment, as well as between a corporation and its stakeholders in general—a relation of mutual enrichment and nurturing rather than either domination and control or ‘external’ tolerance—requires that the corporation internalize the perspectives of the stakeholders into its unique perspectival network, because this is the route that will lead to the accommodation and harmonization which constitutes ongoing growth” (p. 155).

One of the more interesting projections of the authors envisions the corporate world as one of communities within communities. As with any community there are inevitable tensions between individual and communal interests. The authors hold that pragmatism provides a way of negotiating these tensions so that the individual member is not swallowed up by the collective and the collective is enriched by the contributions of the individual. Even a multinational corporation, with factories and offices all over the earth, can be seen to be engaged with a sort of Ur-community, which Rosenthal-Buchholz identify with “the level of the generically human, the human qua human, and indicates that the human qua human incorporates embodiedness, embeddedness, and concreteness” (p. 132). Presumably, by interpreting itself according to this vision, the mega-corporation might be more morally responsive to the needs of all its constituents, including members of the host countries in which it operates, more so than if guided merely by U.S regulations or international codes.

In many ways this is a refreshing, inspirational outlook on business ethics. I hope others will pursue the path opened up by the authors. There are, however, several disappointments as well. There is an airiness and abstractness about the discussion, surprising in light of the authors’ pragmatist commitments. I longed for examples or cases involving real dilemmas, tensions in recent business history, some models of how pragmatist thinking could illuminate decision making and provide guidance in the business environment. If pragmatism champions the contextual, the experiential, the robustly factual, then a book on pragmatist ethics should not be afraid to get its pages dirty with some engagement with matters of concern to people in business. Indeed, there are a lot of citations from textbooks and journals in business ethics, and those few theorists who serve as gurus for the authors—Sagoff, Fredericks, Freeman, and Solomon—but virtually nothing from business people—laborers, managers, CEO’s themselves. I would have enjoyed some suggestions, such as one finds in the work of Lynn Sharp Paine, about how organic, imaginative thinking might work in planning overseas factories,
marketing, minority hiring, protecting trade secrets, and so forth.

Perhaps this is asking too much. Perhaps all that a pragmatist could say is go forth and be responsive, sensitive, growth oriented in your efforts to resolve difficulties. That’s better, I believe, than asking a manager to apply some deontological or utilitarian template to complex cases. But, I look forward to more details on how pragmatist ethics might help my MBA students deal with their very real confrontations with demanding bosses, shady bookkeeping, and a fraudulent sales force, so as to find “the richest existence for those involved” in decision making (p. 30).

Siena College  
Paul C. Santilli


This volume of eighteen essays seeks to reorient some of the most troubling and compelling issues facing biomedical ethics in an American philosophical direction. The essays are divided into three parts: Part One, The Pragmatic Method in Bioethics, Part Two, Current Debates and American Philosophers, and Part Three, Pragmatism and Specific Issues in Bioethics. Glenn McGee, editor of the volume and author of two previous books dealing with bioethics, explains in the introduction that the argument being made is partly to overturn the perception of pragmatism as prioritizing expediency in moral questions. In order to support the renaissance of American philosophy McGee says “the task of the authors in this volume is to make manifest the outlines and dimensions of pragmatic philosophy so that elements of a pragmatic method for inquiry in bioethics can be ascertained and discussed.”(xv)

Discharging this task -- As expected in any collection of essays, some are better than others. In all cases an effort is made to incorporate American philosophical themes into present debates. Martin Benjamin epigrammatically quotes Dewey, “Unless professional philosophy can mobilize itself sufficiently to assist in this clarification and redirection of men’s thoughts, it is likely to get more and more side-tracked from the main currents of contemporary life.”(181) Clearly, the fear of being thus side-tracked is one of the motivations of this volume. Embracing pragmatic naturalism and the notion of habits in providing care are two ways of engaging the tradition. McGee’s more methodologically rich suggestion is based on pragmatism’s emphasis on reconstructing