groupings, or communities. Brightman expresses concern about Hartshorne’s lack of coherence, pointing out that the mind-body relationship cannot logically arise from the collective influence of, for example, cells or atoms that are “too light and too weak” to have “any predominant influence.” Hartshorne admits to some lack of coherence in this regard, just as Brightman admits that panpsychism is a possible, if not a probable, view.

A third example of an ongoing topic of contention is the extent to which Hartshorne’s ontologically derived panentheism is arguably tantamount to pantheism. Hartshorne’s process theology includes the assertion that God’s knowledge grows over time (and as new facts, some of which are the result of genuinely free will, are revealed), or else God’s knowledge would not continue to be perfect knowledge. Brightman suggests that this expands God’s omniscience to such an extent that God’s mind includes each person’s erroneous beliefs, resulting in a pantheism that irrationally includes active error on God’s part. This is an example of a discussion that is never “resolved” to the satisfaction of both correspondents.

Other disputes regarding epistemology, methodology, theology, and philosophical conclusions permeate this correspondence. In explaining their parameters for the inclusion of footnotes and added commentary, the editors suggest in their introduction that this book is intended for “philosophically trained” readers. However, the breadth of topics discussed and disputed, the casual references to a wide variety of philosophies and philosophers, and the application of philosophical constructs to current events (in particular, World War II), renders this work useful as an introduction to idealism, personalism, process philosophy and theology, and modern American philosophical thought generally.

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About a year ago I read a short quote, which accused pragmatism of being a philosophy of imperialism. The accuser, one Harry K. Wells, succeeded in so offending my sensibilities about pragmatism that I did not bother to read his book,
Pragmatism: Philosophy of Imperialism, which would have offered me a justification for the charges. I quickly forgot about that quote until I began to read Ryder’s Interpreting America. Chapter four of the book discusses Russian interpretations of pragmatism and one of the predominant criticisms presented in the chapter is that pragmatism is imperialistic. My mind immediately jumped back to Wells’ quote. I realized, after finishing the chapter, that I had not given Wells enough credit. Seen from the perspective of a dialectical materialist such as Wells, or any of the Russian authors Ryder references, pragmatism’s logical outcome is imperialism. Ryder’s book allowed me to take that criticism more seriously than I was able to take Wells’.

Ryder’s book not only covers Russian interpretations of pragmatism, it also explores Russian interpretations of Puritanism, the American Enlightenment, Transcendentalism, Idealism, Realism, and Naturalism. The book retains a wonderful historical continuity between the movements by carefully charting the evolution of American thought. For example, Ryder points out that Russian thinkers interpreted transcendentalism’s commitment to democracy as its historical link to the more progressive wing of American Revolutionary thinking (118). And transcendentalism’s link to future American philosophic thought is traced by Russian philosopher Sidorov, who claims that Royce’s absolute idealism and Peirce, James and Dewey’s pragmatism both have their origins in Emersonian thought (138).

Another strength of Ryder’s book is the refreshing reminder that even American philosophy has its flaws, and serious flaws at that. Each chapter carefully explores what Russian thinkers take to be the positive and negative aspects of each movement in American thought. For those of us who study American thought, many of these interpretations are already familiar. But a few, in particular, surprised and pleased me. One pleasant surprise was the interpretation of the more progressive wing of American Revolutionary thought represented by Jefferson, and Paine. Russian thinkers take revolution as a primary human right and they congratulate those thinkers who, in siding with Jefferson and Paine, agree that the right to revolution should be included in the Constitution. One of the criticisms which surprised me was the consensus among Russian thinkers that “all the prominent strands of twentieth century American philosophy, with the possible exception of some forms of naturalism, consist of one or another version of philosophic idealism (142).” From the point of view of a dialectical materialist who believes that the
material world is composed of objective, yet knowable, facts and lawful regularities, this criticism makes sense.

One of the other strengths of the book is also, at times, its only weakness. Ryder, overall, maintains a very objective stance toward the material he is discussing. He offers the reader a look at interpretations given by Russian thinkers, but he rarely criticizes these interpretations. When he does criticize them, he does it quickly and with humility. The only weakness this book has is that it is sometimes difficult to tell if an interpretation is Ryder’s or that of a Russian thinker.

I encourage all of you who study any of the movements of American thought to read this book. I cannot summarize it adequately because it explores in depth so many different Russian thinkers. While there is some agreement in interpretation among these thinkers, just as often they have widely different interpretations of American thought. Understanding the criticisms of our own philosophy that are made by persons from a different background than our own can only help us strengthen our own thought. Nikita Pokrovsky points out in the introduction that Americans and Russians have often viewed the other’s philosophy as a display of the worst values and ends of the other’s country (xxiii). If you have ever found yourself wondering what Russians value or dislike about American values, Ryder’s book is a good place to start.

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Janet Handy


Benefiting from the completion of John Dewey’s collected works, the second volume of The Essential Dewey continues the excellent selections introduced in the first volume. The volume covers Dewey’s developmental writings on ethics, logic, and psychology and offers many selections unavailable before in such a form. Most significantly, however, the new selections beautifully demonstrate the ongoing relevancy of Dewey’s ideas to contemporary discussion.

First are Dewey’s writings on habit, conduct, and language, which begins with his seminal article “The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology (1896), as well as his important chapter on “The