I also found the treatment of Political Liberalism was too short — although Talisse did cover the most important concepts, such as the fact of reasonable pluralism, overlapping consensus, and the idea of public reason, he did not approach the Kantian constructivist basis in Rawls’ political theory that provides the notion of objectivity that is important to Rawls’ project. Talisse also did not satisfactorily deal with the success (or failure) of Rawls’ incorporation of his theory of justice as fairness into his new political liberalism framework — an important aspect that individuals new to Rawls’ work need to be exposed to. Let me finish by saying that while A Theory of Justice has been a monumental contribution to political and moral philosophy, the importance of Political Liberalism (especially those ideas and concepts that have a marked similarity with pragmatism) is often not given sufficient treatment in works on Rawls at an introductory level.

Although this book, as with other titles in the Wadsworth Philosophers Series, have been written with the needs of undergraduates and the general public in mind, I still found Talisse’s volume to be a good introduction to Rawls’ most important concepts, but with the proviso that its contents should be used as a means to explore the deeper complexity and richness of Rawls’ project and its relationship with contemporary liberalism and political theory. I know that as an undergraduate when I first encountered Rawls, this primer would have been quite helpful, and at under a hundred pages, individuals new to Rawls’ work can gain an adequate grasp of key concepts in an afternoon over coffee.

University of Toronto Adrian M. Viens


Deledelle was a student of Herbert Schneider and winner of the 1990 Herbert Schneider Award This book is an excellent introduction to American philosophy from Samuel Johnson and Jonathan Edwards to Sandra Rosenthal and Susan Haack. This third edition has a section on recent philosophers (1976-1996), including Cavell, Rorty, Goodman, Putnam, Rawls, and Nozick New also are treatments of Afro-American, Native American, and feminist philosophers and of Rorty’s relation to European philosophers, including Apel, Haberman, Derrida and Foucault. This edition also has a summary of John McDermott’s The Culture
of Experience and Streams of Experience.

Deledalle generally gives a judicious allotment of space relative to the significance of the philosopher, with about seventy pages devoted to Peirce, James, Royce, Dewey and Mead. Santayana is given somewhat less space; only Whitehead, among big names, suffers, receiving less than two full pages.


As an historian his expositions are balanced and his interpretive judgments appropriate. He has a nice treatment of Jefferson and of Dewey on Jefferson, of Alexander Bain's significance for James, and gives careful attention to the New Realists and the Critical Realists. One also finds insightful comparisons with European figures, for example, between Peirce and Saussure's semiotics, Peirce's three categories and Kierkegaard's three stages, between Mead and Merleau-Ponty or Ralph Barton Perry and Bertrand Russell, of similarities between the roles of Dewey, Russell and Sartre as consciences of their nation, and the inability of Dewey and Russell to understand each other. He points out that the translation into French of The Brief Course of James, rather than The Principles of Psychology resulted in a misunderstanding of James in France (p, 133). There are two helpful pages relating Wittgenstein's Tractatus and his Investigations to Peirce and James (pp. 197-199). There is ample citation and quotation of primary and secondary sources. His insights and references would make it worthwhile to read sections of this book for those who do not chose the read the entire volume.

In his treatment of William James, he suggests that James's radical empiricism is susceptible of divergent interpretations: James as an experimentalist and James as a realist. He elaborates both interpretations and attempts to find a common thread between these interpretations. He also raises the question as to whether James is to be viewed primarily as a unsystematic thinker or as a proto-phenomenologist (pp. 137-144).
He gives careful treatment to the differentiation between the pragmatism of Richard Rorty and of John Dewey. He suggests that Rorty's attempt to have Dewey without his theory of inquiry results in a "pragmatism against the grain" (un pragmatisme à contrecoeur, pp. 260-264). If there is a problem of balance it is that Deledalle gives short shrift to positivism, analytic philosophy and phenomenology, to Nagel and Randall. However, he does treat Quine and Wilfred Sellars.

This is an excellent work with which to learn or review philosophical French. The style is straightforward and the philosophically literate person will be able to glean much from context. A make-shift vocabulary list kept at hand will soon lessen visits to the lexicon.

The French graduate and undergraduate curriculum in philosophy seems rather provincial. Based on an admittedly limited acquaintance with French textbooks and examinations, this reviewer has seen knowledge of classical Greek and modern German philosophy in French schools, but little British and virtually no American. This volume provides the means for the French to overcome this deficit.

Specialists in individual American philosophers would find his treatment of interest.

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Oliver's overall thesis is that "James is an advocate for a type of personal transcendence owing at least as much to subjectivity as to pure experience." (p. 79) He provides support for this position in Part One of his text by stressing the pervasiveness and the importance of subjectivity in James's philosophy. "Subjectivity is the importance-conferring aspect of our being, the condition and permanent possibility of 'meaningfulness'." (p. 58) Oliver uses essays like "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" extremely well, to bring out "James's devotion to the subjective life." (p. 60) He believes that James's vision is not reducible to a single point of view; instead, it is suited to a plurality of