"paradigm of Jamesian radical empiricism/meliorism" (p. 79).

In sum, the authors have done a splendid job of bringing James’s Philosophy to life or better, of disclosing how alive his philosophy really is. The text is clear, engaging, and free of jargon. James’s “Will to Believe” has for too long been marginalized as the black sheep or white elephant of the Jamesian corpus. It is refreshing to see two James scholars place it where it belongs—at the very center of his philosophical vision. For James, much as for the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel, being (or, for James, experience) was not a problem to be solved. As Marcel put it, “being is, as it were, attested to”.

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The pragmatism of Peirce, James and Dewey was significantly—even centrally— Influenced by the ideas of indigenous Americans, especially Narragansett and Delaware peoples of the Northeast. That is Scott Pratt’s thesis in Native Pragmatism, and the reader is likely to find it either inherently plausible or blatantly preposterous at the outset. Pratt is well aware that the burden of proof he faces is formidable: not only have leading historians of pragmatism interpreted it as an outgrowth of European philosophy, but so also did the principals themselves. He develops his thesis by characterizing two “attitudes” competing for the hearts and minds of 19th and 20th century Americans, one characteristic of colonialism, and the other characteristic of indigenous peoples. These attitudes are interpolated via a schema for comparing foundational philosophies to pragmatism, emphasizing the pragmatist commitment to four key principles: interaction, pluralism, community and growth. Pratt then makes two arguments. First he argues that the form these principles take in American pragmatism can be found in the indigenous attitude, but not the colonial attitude. Second, he documents key points of contact between indigenous peoples and intellectual figures that can account for a line of descent to Peirce, James,
Dewey and other founding figures in American intellectual life. This second argument is intended to show that the four principles characteristic of pragmatism could have entered American intellectual life by following this line of descent.

The first argument hangs on the four principles that Pratt associates with pragmatism. Pragmatic naturalism adopts a principle of interaction in taking nature as a field of relational processes, rather than as a system of static entities. This principle has social and normative implications for philosophers such as James and Dewey in serving as a basis for viewing experience (and hence human projects) as precarious, contingent and fleeting. Pluralism reflects a multi-dimensional commitment to contextual conceptions of truth and method, on the one hand, and to diversity and co-existence of worldviews and practices, on the other. Community is reflected in the social character of meaning and pragmatic conceptions of self, as well as in classical American aspirations of fulfillment and democracy. Growth is a principle again reinforcing openness, meliorism and experimentalism in the face of an interactive, uncertain and contingent natural world. Pratt uses these principles as matrix of interpretation for his rendering of the indigenous attitude, noting how a series of Native American principles and practices foreshadow and embody these elements so characteristic of American pragmatism.

Wunnegan, a native American practice of welcome, reconciliation and co-existence was, in Pratt's view, taught to Roger Williams by the Narragansett leader Miantonomi, and to Benjamin Franklin through his involvement in negotiations with the Delaware leader Teedyuscung, and also reflected in the writings of Lydia Maria Child, who had extensive interactions with Ralph Waldo Emerson. Teedyuscung (along with the Delaware prophet Neolin) is also a source for the indigenous American principle of place. Place situates philosophy at particular locales. A commitment to place requires that spatiotemporal location becomes the reference for interpreting principles, and for resolving possible conflicts among principles. Place and wunnegan thus serve to moderate tensions that arise when philosophical principles are taken to be universal in scope or application. Place emerges in the experienced interactivity between human beings and the natural world, pointing toward an always immediate, rather
than transcendent, nature. As the indigenous wisdom traditions interact with European ideas in the 19th century, place becomes thematized as home, a possibility that invites growth through a continual process of "becoming native" to one’s place (to paraphrase Wes Jackson).

Pratt interweaves the development of these indigenous ideas with the pragmatist matrix of interaction, pluralism community and growth, laying stress on the complex ways in which these ideas evolve and interpenetrate each other. His approach serves both the philosophical and historical arguments by allowing an integrated ecology of principle and practice to establish multiple interconnections and mutually reinforcing themes. Because the argument is emergent, rather than didactic, a skeptic may remain unconvinced. Nevertheless, the complexity, subtlety and holism of Pratt’s approach must be regarded as one of the book’s greatest strengths. It is only when Pratt succumbs to reductive simplifications in the attempt to prove a point that he runs into problems.

The problems arise in connection with Pratt’s attempt to articulate “the colonial attitude” in contrast to the more promising philosophical contributions he associates with indigenous traditions. Not surprisingly (or even controversially) the colonial attitude is marked by a supreme confidence in the singularity of truth and in its universal applicability. One particularly pernicious manifestation is a belief that history is a narrative of European progress and the eventual salvation of mankind through the domination of European ways of life. This has by now become an unexceptional assessment of the European experience in the “New World”. That it is also itself a somewhat selective interpretation of ideas and events associated with European exceptionalism might not have been a problem for Pratt’s thesis, for if it is an overly simple view, it also captures a profound truth. Pratt, however, takes the additional step of associating the colonial attitude with certain villains—Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson and George Bancroft—who serve as foils not only to the indigenous voices but also to Williams, Franklin and Child. In this step he mirrors the tendency toward dichotomous thinking that pragmatism has attempted to overcome.

In fact, Williams, Franklin and Child can each be quoted to reflect aspects of the colonial attitude, as
Pratt does not fail to admit. There are fewer nuances in the treatment of the villains, however. Jefferson, for example, expressed sincere admiration for indigenous peoples, and might have been cast in a more heroic role had Pratt chosen to focus on the development of place that Jefferson provides in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, as well as in his correspondence and farm writings. Jefferson was capable of astounding manipulations and hypocrisy, yet there is no reason to doubt him when he writes that Native Americans represent superb civilizations, keenly adapted to place, and worthy of emulation in many respects. While he clearly did believe that indigenous ways of life were fated to be overrun by the sheer numbers and technology of European culture, he saw no justice in this fate, and Jefferson was one of the few individuals in his generation who took steps to ensure that destruction of indigenous peoples on the ground would not also involve their erasure from the historical record.

These quibbles aside, I confess to being a reader who found Pratt's thesis inherently plausible at the outset. Frankly, it just stands to reason that the European encounter with indigenous Americans would result in a blended culture, and it is not surprising that this blend should emerge in the writings and philosophies of American intellectuals decades and centuries after the fact. For me, Pratt’s task was to recover lost connections and reverse erasures both intentional and inadvertent, not to overcome a skepticism that finds the very idea of native pragmatism preposterous. I believe that he has succeeded admirably, if not definitively, in his task of recovery. In fact, I suspect that there are many more stories to tell, and that even subtler and more complex relationships will emerge as future scholars lend their efforts to cultivating the ground that Pratt has broken in this engaging and stimulating book. Someone who thinks of philosophy as a singularly European phenomenon may not be convinced by Pratt’s argument, but it is unlikely that such a person has much admiration for Peirce, James or Dewey, either. *Native Pragmatism* is thus an important book within the pragmatist tradition, consistent with its tendency to stress the importance of practice, praxis and experimental engagement, even to the extent of rethinking the bounds of philosophy itself.

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