clear that his concerns about Royce’s idealism anticipate the direction of his thought. Still his concerns are legitimate and worth noting, for they apply to any absolute idealism that presents the Absolute first and foremost in epistemological terms. Marcel’s objection is that Royce’s arguments from the possibility of error lead to the two conclusions: that the Absolute is all-knowing and that our consciousness is an aspect of Absolute consciousness. He objects that the contingency of our consciousness as finite beings renders our experiences fundamentally different from those of an infinite being. This becomes most problematic in the case of self-knowledge. Our self-knowledge is supposed to be identical to part of the Absolute’s knowledge of us; but as the Absolute does not have that knowledge in the same way as we do, and the way we have it (limited, contingent) is essential for what we are, the knowledge of the Absolute is not properly knowledge of us. Marcel claims, “everything depends on whether I can really think of an omniscient being, and thus conceive myself as wholly known by Him, or whether, on the other hand, I can find in such certainty, assuming that it is possible, the absolute satisfaction which to the metaphysician is connected to the act by which the reason attains being,” and concludes that the conception of such an omniscient being is not possible. In his introduction to the English translation he adds the theological point that we need an account of the Absolute that can make sense of the finitude and humanity of Christ.

Marcel’s *Le Métaphysique de Royce* certainly deserves revisiting, at the very least as a historical testament to how Royce was being read soon after his death as a foil to James’s (and Bergson’s) pragmatism; but even more it deserves rereading for its ability to clearly and sympathetically spell out the full scope of Royce’s philosophy in a mere 150 pages. Nonetheless, beyond the minor benefits of the appendices and index, the new edition published by L’Harmattan offers little over past editions, including the 1956 English translation, *Royce’s Metaphysics*.

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How might a philosopher respond to 9/11? More specifically: how might an American philosopher rooted in pragmatism and fluent in both the analytic and continental traditions counter the “talk of evil” that has bombarded us in the last five years? Certainly one would analyze the language we use, so as to guide our thought in relation to the manipulation of such hot-button words as “evil,” “terror,” and “Islamo-fascism.” Ideally one would situate the critical tasks we (as Americans and as citizens of the world) face historically, in light of what is most constructive in our political, philosophical and cultural traditions. Richard J. Bernstein’s *The Abuse of Evil: The Corruption of Politics and Religion since 9/11* accomplishes all this by interweaving an inspiring narrative of American pragmatism with frank discussions of contemporary politics (the Iraq war, torture, the state of democracy). Judiciously supported by the most relevant social and political theory, Bernstein’s work exemplifies the wisdom of a
pragmatist who can help cure us of our “addiction to absolutes” (if you will permit my rephrasing of a current slogan).

*The Abuse of Evil* begins with a transition from Bernstein’s previous book. Poignantly, *Radical Evil* (2002) was sent to the press just a fortnight before 9/11. Given that Bernstein had just devoted himself to an investigation of a range of modern philosophers’ responses to evil (from Kant to Levinas and Arendt), he found himself in a unique position to reflect on the contemporary “talk of evil,” propaganda, Bernstein insists, “used as a political tool to obscure complex issues, to block genuine thinking, and to stifle public discussion and debate”(viii).

Bernstein does not question the existence of concrete evils, far from it. He does however cast serious doubt on whether there can ever be one complete theoretic account of evil in the abstract, and offers instead thinking responses to concrete realities. Exemplary are Hannah Arendt’s analyses of “radical evil” and “the banality of evil.” Like the other thinkers marshaled in *The Abuse of Evil*, Arendt proceeds unburdened by absolute moral certainty. Indeed, Bernstein makes a powerful case that Arendt’s eschewal of an absolutist mentality – her refusal of simplistic “black and white” oppositions – freed her thinking and enabled her to grasp the radicality and novelty of evil in the twentieth century. Bernstein, for his part, is too modest to express matters in this way, but as his own work has – among many things – entailed a clear and patient explanation of the moral and political dimensions of epistemology, e.g. of the “Cartesian Anxiety” that presses mere subjective certitude into ungrounded claims of objective certainty (*Between Objectivism and Relativism*: 1983), to a remarkable extent he is the philosopher prepared to guide our thinking in times in which absolutism rears its ugly head.

Chapter One, “The Clash of Mentalities: The Craving for Absolutes verses Pragmatic Fallibilism” is an obvious, albeit implicit, counter to Samuel Huntington’s influential thesis regarding “the clash of civilizations.” And let it be clear: Bernstein’s counter is no mere rhetorical flourish, for – whether they have actually read Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* or not – there are many influential people in contemporary politics openly advocating something close to a clash of civilizations (both Newt Gingrich and George W. Bush have recently described our present situation as the beginning of WWII). By juxtaposing clashing mentalities rather than civilizations, however, Bernstein reframes our contemporary political horizon in order to counter the belligerent posture of “us verses them” with a conception of philosophy and politics that opens to new possibilities of dialogue, diplomacy, moderation and tolerance. Where Huntington exhorts us to reactively protect an irreducible, fixed sense of identity, Bernstein offers an elegant vignette of American pragmatism; he reminds us who we are as Americans with a thinking tradition.

Bernstein’s account of American pragmatism makes for a most striking and thought-provoking contrast with our contemporary political situation. To be sure Bernstein tells the story in such a way that the reader is informed regarding the key epistemological and metaphysical themes connected to “the pragmatic way of thinking;” a fallibilistic mentality, emphasis on the primacy of practice, an affirmation of
contingency against determinism, and a constructive, realistic attitude that is both anti-skeptical and anti-relativistic (27-35). To be sure his narrative highlights many of the most important contributions from the times of Pierce and James into the present, highlighting Oliver Wendell Holmes, Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, Sidney Hook and Hilary Putnam among others. But most remarkably, Bernstein tells a vital and entertaining story, directly relevant to our present situation. Drawing from Louis Menand’s excellent *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (2001), Bernstein recounts how the traumatic experiences of the Civil War inspired the classical pragmatic thinkers “to develop a new way of thinking – a new mentality – that would be an alternative to, and would overcome, all forms of entrenched ideological extremism” (23-24). The thought-provoking contrast is clear: will we retreat into ideology and absolutism or keep faith with the legacy of pragmatism? By reminding us of the stark backdrop against which the sparks of Pierce’s genius were first illuminated and then “humanized” in James’ pluralism and in Dewey’s devotion to democracy, Bernstein exhorts us to develop our own cultural genius (37).

And lest we have any doubt about the political relevance of the fallibilistic mentality – with its insistence on debate and deliberation – in times when we must face “the realistic possibility” that “terrorists may soon have the chemical, biological, and even nuclear weapons to carry out mass murder,” Bernstein faces the criticism head on (53). Without denying the present dangers, he reminds us of the Cold War and the McCarthy Era, other moments in American history in which an absolutist mentality prevailed, other moments in which people claimed that action demands decision at the expense of discussion, indeed at the expense of civil liberties. *Pace* pragmatism’s many detractors throughout the twentieth century, Bernstein insists that the fallibilistic ethos is neither naïve nor superficial. Rather, as recent events prove most dramatically, the real danger in our thinking lies with those whose ideological certainty presses them to “confuse flexibility and reflective intelligence with indecisiveness” (58). Pragmatism is not only consistent with passionate commitment, Bernstein argues, but – precisely in its awareness of fallibility and the tragic dimension of life – is a responsible philosophy of action; indeed, “it is difficult to think of another philosophical orientation that has placed so much emphasis on conduct, practice and action” (57-58).

Having reminded us of the philosophical depth and political relevance of American pragmatism, Bernstein broadens his discussion of the fallibilistic mentality in chapters devoted to contemporary philosophy, political theory and the sociology of religion. These discussions are heartening, for even as the pointed indictment of “the abuse of evil” in contemporary politics continues, we learn that giving up our “addiction to absolutes” in no sense implies impoverishment. Rather, appreciating the fallibilistic mentality helps us to locate our philosophical allies, “rooted cosmopolitans” similarly committed to vital democracy. Fallibilism sharpens our wits with the best thought on “the political” and the virtues of a public life. And, refreshingly, we are reminded that we betray religion when we equate it with uncritical dogmatism or fanaticism; rather, “religious faith is deepened when a fallibilistic spirit informs it” (107).
It is not possible to review the details of Bernstein’s arguments, but space permits a brief consideration of some of the choices shaping his astute presentation of our present horizon. In philosophy, for instance, Bernstein might have taken any one of a number of paths, but by offering a comparative discussion of two public intellectuals, Charles Taylor and Jürgen Habermas, he beautifully illustrates the manner in which the fallibilistic ethos transcends pedantic squabbles and can unite thinkers on seemingly opposite sides of a philosophical spectrum. By contrasting the competing notions of “the political” offered by Hannah Arendt and Carl Schmitt, Bernstein not only treats us to a clear summation of one of the more “sexy” academic topics, but vividly clarifies the difference between those who equate politics and violence and those (like Arendt, Dewey, Taylor and Habermas) who insist that “the essence of political life is debate”(77). And finally, by concluding The Abuse of Evil with a fascinating, historically grounded discussion of religion in American politics, Bernstein offers precious guidance in yet another field where we must confront the dangerous claims of absolutism.

The Abuse of Evil is not a long book. It is not crowded with academic footnotes and it does not read as if it was written in an ivory tower. Indeed it is so straightforwardly presented that it could be given in good conscience to a family members or friends without philosophical training. And you might want to, for it is the kind of book that can produce harmony around the Thanksgiving dinner table. It certainly would make an excellent reader in an undergraduate philosophy course. And most ideally, The Abuse of Evil will filter into our shared discourse, helping to cure us of our addiction to absolutes.

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David Hildebrand, Beyond Realism and Antirealism: John Dewey and the Neopragmatists (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003). 241 pages, bibliography, index. $59.95

Among philosophers steeped in the tradition of classical American pragmatism, it is now commonly noted that the rise of neopragmatism is both a boon and a bane. The boon is there because philosophers who are of note outside of our smaller tradition are suddenly paying attention to the works of Dewey, James, and to a lesser degree, Peirce. It is a bane because there is a perception that these neopragmatists don’t really “get” what classical pragmatism was all about. Arguably the two most interesting and influential neopragmatists are Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam. These two have been developing their neopragmatism now for several decades, and the time is ripe for a systematic examination of the adequacy of this movement. With his book Realism and Antirealism: John Dewey and the Neopragmatists, David Hildebrand offers just such an analysis.

After a brief introduction, the first two substantive chapters are titled, respectively, “Dewey and Realism” and “Dewey and Idealism.” In these chapters, Hildebrand discusses the philosophical climate of the early decades of the 20th century, the climate in which Deweyan pragmatism emerged. In the former, Hildebrand begins