turning to the notion of democracy as a task. He then compares Dewey’s conception of democracy to contemporary deliberative democratic theory and shows how it undercuts the “one-versus-many” debates in political theory. Finally, Pappas defends Dewey’s account of Democracy in chapter 13. The central element is Dewey’s “faith in experience” or the capacity of experience to “generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness” (296). Democracy, as Dewey might say, is our best hope for growth.

Pappas’ book is outstanding, painstakingly bringing out what is unique in Dewey’s ethics, revealing its intricacies and defending it well against its detractors. However, Pappas claims, wrongly, that the science/ethics comparison in Dewey has outlived its usefulness. In addition, his discussion leaves out the important concepts of valuation judgments “in their distinctive sense” (Iw.13.208), and Dewey’s normative ideal of ‘growth.’ How these all fit within Dewey’s ethics is an important question Pappas (admittedly) makes no effort to answer.

Pappas is right to worry about one-sided, partial, or de-contextualized interpretations of a philosopher’s views (3), and that “we must not become so eager to become part of the mainstream philosophical dialogue that we compromise Dewey’s unique and most worthwhile contributions” (ibid.). However, this cuts both ways: If Pappas’ interpretation ignores significant elements of Dewey’s thought, then he, too, can be accused of a “selective reconsideration of Dewey’s ethics” (ibid.). Pappas has developed the most thorough, detailed, and sophisticated understanding of Dewey’s normative ethics to date, and its appearance has put us in an excellent position from which to ask some very important, but as yet unanswered, questions.

Matthew Pamental
Northern Illinois University


Howard Callaway here has given us a thoroughly annotated new reading of James’s 1909 pragmatic classic, then one last sword-thrust at the dying Absolute of metaphysical idealism, now the enduring final note of America’s most distinctively stylish and original philosophical voice. (Some Problems of Philosophy was still to come, posthumously. James did not consider it finished at his death.)

Absolute Idealism was on its deathbed thanks in no small measure to James’s own polemics on behalf of radical empiricism. This book represented his clearest explication of why pragmatism and radical empiricism are best completed by the philosophy of pluralism: the view that a world of multiplicity, teeming with uncounted and only-loosely-related personal centers of subjectivity, is rich and resourceful beyond the dreams of metaphysical Absolutists who would impose the unity of “vicious intellectualism” -- the habit of excluding from reality all that has not been explicitly included in our verbal accounts.

Callaway’s notes and introduction add a layer of clarity, and shine a spotlight on James’s important intellectual kinship with Emerson. James endorsed Emerson’s insistence that we each forge our own original relations to the universe, and not submerge our separate identities in a
great sea of unified metaphysical indifference. Callaway's choice of epigraphs underscores their shared sense that "something always escapes" from every theory, every system, every account of things. Something, somewhere, somehow will always evade our best efforts to impose ultimate order and tidy, predictable, rational unity.

Pluralists are happy about this. An open, evolving, personal and pluralistic universe invites and promises adventure ("zest" was James's preferred word), for those who go to meet it. Pluralism thus becomes a humanism: each and all, as individuals and as a species, have the opportunity and the capacity to make a constructive difference in the world. We're all better off for that, and must "respect one another's mental freedom." It was in just this spirit that an inspired scriptwriter once had Captain Picard of the starship Enterprise giving a copy of *A Pluralistic Universe* to young Ensign Crusher, who protests: "William James won't be on my Starfleet exams." Picard answers, "Nothing really important will be. Open yourself to the past history, art, philosophy, and all of this might mean something."

But James (like Emerson) would tell the young man to take from the book what is useful and life-giving to him, and then put it down and go collect fresh experiences. This volume contains what may be the single most important statement in the entire corpus of James' published works, from "Continuity of Experience."

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I am tiring myself and you, I know, by vainly seeking to describe by concepts and words what . . . exceeds either conceptualization or verbalization. As long as one continues talking, intellectualism remains in undisturbed possession of the field. The return to life can't come about by talking. It is an act; to make you return to life, I must set an example for your imitation, I must deafen you to talk, or to the importance of talk. . . . Or I must point, point to the mere that of life, and you by inner sympathy must fill out the what for yourselves. ("Continuity of Experience") PU, 131
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This is a perplexing thing to read in the middle of a book, and might incline some readers to put it down in tired exasperation. But a footnote in the preceding essay ("Bergson & Intellectualism") anticipates the mood.

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In using concepts of his own to discredit the theoretic claims of concepts generally, Bergson . . . show[s] us to what quarter we must practically turn if we wish to gain that completer insight into reality which he denies that they can give." (PU, 122)
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James is with Bergson on this. Fight bad concepts with better ones – the ones that admit their own limitations. Callaway summarizes the general point succinctly, as one more instance of James's unflagging concern with the need to act instead of merely thinking.

This is a welcome addition to the growing library of James scholarship. One might quibble about the generous extent of Callway's annotations. It seems unlikely, for example, that many educated general readers will need to be instructed in the identity of Aristotle or David Hume, or the meaning of "multifarious." But this is one clear case in which even James might agree that it is better to err on the side of caution.
Howard Callaway's voice has long been a civil, engaging presence online, in forums devoted to American philosophy. Many who have known him as an indefatigable poster and charitable replier now have the happy opportunity to know him as a careful reader and guide to this indispensable work.

Phil Oliver

Middle Tennessee State University


It is an interesting thought experiment to wonder what John Dewey would make of the interest his work has generated since his death. One can only hope that he would be delighted with the conversations that his views on epistemology, democracy, and education have inspired. Surely, a volume such as Reconstructing Democracy, Recontextualizing Dewey: Pragmatism and Interactive Constructivism in the Twenty-first Century rises to this level in its ability to provoke discussion among scholars and spark debate among political activists. The chapters have superb cohesion for an edited volume and the diverse themes explored expertly therein connect Dewey’s ideas to continuing social, political, and economic problems. Several of the book’s noteworthy sections are discussed below.

Jim Garrison’s Introduction to the text, “Reconstructing Democracy and Recontextualizing Deweyan Pragmatism,” aims to provide the needed background for why we must turn to Dewey. In the following passage, Garrison sets the aim of the book and contends that if one does not bring Dewey to the problems of the day, then one falls short of fully understanding him:

Dewey was a philosopher of reconstruction. Those who claim to understand Dewey yet do not reconstruct him for their time, place, and purpose fail to appreciate what was perhaps his most profound message. The chapters in this book recover and reconstruct Dewey for today’s postmodern, post 9/11, fragmented, and globalized world. (p.1)

This process of putting Dewey back together to help confront these complicated issues is essential to the social progress he so desired.

James Campbell’s contribution “The Political Philosophy of Pragmatism” will strike a chord with scholars who yearn for political philosophy to turn away from the abstract and back to the concrete world of experience. Essential to this interpretation are the connections between education and politics through a process of collaboration. Campbell asserts:

[Dewey] believes that by working and solving problems together, by interacting with others with similar interests, and so on, individuals will come to recognize their interdependence, develop respect for their fellows, and build community. Thus for Dewey political activity is a kind of educational experience, and its method is cooperative inquiry. (p. 24)