

BOOK REVIEWS

Peirce's Pragmatism: The Design for Thinking. Phyllis Chiasson. Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2001. XIV, 243 pp. (Value Inquiry Book Series, Volume 107). \$47.00.

The target of this work is Peirce's 1905 essay, "What Pragmatism Is," here reprinted as an appendix. Each of the eighteen chapters corresponds to a section of this essay. Among the notable characteristics of this work is its format. Noting that "Peirce was a thinker, not a writer" (200), and that his style is difficult to unpack, Chiasson chooses a dialogue format to facilitate comprehension of the essay. This dialogue is the product of discussions Chiasson had with Hal Leskinen over a span of five weeks. As a stylistic choice, Chiasson takes a chance here. But, as readers will recognize, it pays off. This format allows Chiasson the room she needs to clarify Peirce's ideas into what she calls everyday language. This leads to the second unique characteristic of this work, namely its dual nature. First, it is an introduction to Peirce's philosophy. Second, it is an account of a Peircian philosophy of education.

One of the primary strengths of this work is its ability to bring clarity to Peirce's pragmatism. Chiasson literally teaches the material in a series of discussions with Leskinen. When Chiasson arrives at a difficult section, she slows down and allows Leskinen a chance to ask questions. Aware of the fact that many people never access Peirce's ideas because of his dense prose (51), Chiasson goes to great length to clarify his ideas and language and use illustrative examples to bring out the force of Peirce's pragmatism. Recognizing the background readers need to understand Peirce's philosophy, she explains his references to Darwin, Comte, Ockham, and Hegel. At the same time, she exercises restraint by not pursuing a paragraph on Aristotle's logic and only briefly covering Peirce's theory of signs. These decisions enable this work to remain useful as an introduction to Peirce's pragmatism. Instead of getting bogged down in tangential elements, readers new to Peirce can focus on his theory of the logic of discovery, abduction, and his doctrine of continuity that refers to the interconnectedness of one discovery to another, two topics that receive especially strong treatment by Chiasson. While other strong overviews exist, Cornelis de Waal's *On Peirce* (2001) immediately comes to mind, Chiasson's work should not be overlooked as an introduction to Peirce's pragmatism.

Chiasson's work also represents a significant contribution to the philosophy of education. She believes we can arrive at a Peircian educational model by considering elements "embedded within the totality of his doctrine" (205). Chiasson's motivation for considering Peirce's relevance to pedagogy centers on her belief that his "theory of education can be used to revolutionize education" (28). According to Chiasson, America is suffering from an epidemic of "rusting brains" (146). Students and teachers do not reason rightly (2). Teachers perform and students store and regurgitate. Both lack an effective "design for thinking" that can serve as a foundation for educational programs. The key to the design for thinking is Peirce's experimentalism. As a model, it can be used to arrive at a program that can teach right reasoning. In Chiasson's estimation,

“Peirce’s pragmatism should be used to provide educational norms. Once established, these norms can go a long way in helping us to build the minds we need to formulate and implement good solutions” (205). However, while “Peirce’s theory provides us with an ideal, with what we should all be aiming for, ...he does not provide much of a roadmap for getting there” (151). For that road map, Chiasson focuses on developments in educational theory, namely, Relational Thinking Models, Davis Non-verbal Assessment, and Engaged Intelligence training programs. Without going into depth about these developments, it is enough to point out that Chiasson views Peirce’s work as a vital component of and compliment to recent developments in educational theory. While Peirce focused on verbal reasoning methods, recent developments focus on non-verbal reasoning methods. And while Peirce focused on the *logica docens* of reasoning, recent models focus on the *logica utens* of reasoning. Understanding Peirce’s role as a forerunner of educational theory represents an important step toward improving our educational models and practices.

In sum, this book is composed of two parts that effectively compliment each other. Chiasson’s ability to offer an overview of Peirce’s pragmatism *and* make a valuable contribution to educational practice and theory is partly a result of her years of experience applying the very educational methods she discusses. But it also derives from her obvious dedication to understanding how pragmatism can influence practical affairs, something all philosophers can learn from.

*Works mentioned in review: Cornelis De Waal, *On Peirce* (Australia: Wadsworth, 2001).

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Musical Structures in Wagnerian Opera. Marshall Tuttle. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000. 356 pp. \$99.95 Hardcover.

Wielding Ockham’s razor Tuttle disembowels analysis after convoluted analysis of Wagner’s operas, leaving in his wake a host of inadequate critics. Further he cuts to the quick to show the depth and quality of passages that, heretofore have been viewed as enigmatic by musicians and theorists. Tuttle uses Wagner’s letters, stage notes, drama, lyrics, and score to prove a musical and philosophical consistency in Wagner’s *Der Ring des Niebelungen*, *Tristan and Isolde*, and *Parsifal*. Each was written during Richard Wagner’s mature years, with the librettos written between 1848-52 for *Der Ring*, 1857 for *Tristan*, and 1877 for *Parsifal*. Full individual scores were completed for the parts of the tetralogy and the other operas, as early as 1856 and as late as 1882, the year before his death.

David L. Wolfe argued that an epistemological structure must have consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, and congruity. While Tuttle’s work is musical in nature he rigidly adheres to those philosophical criteria. In fact, he berates other critics for their lack of consistency, and particularly for their incongruity between their analyses and