Book Reviews

Two Centuries of Philosophy in America. Edited and with an Introduction by Peter Caws. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980.

1. Why should philosophers, whatever their political or national loyalities, if any, have come together to pay homage to the American Bicentennial? The question will be raised by many readers of this volume, just as it was by many of those who contributed to it, and by its editor, Peter Caws, whose fine introduction is the only contribution that was not presented at a Bicentennial Symposium of Philosophy held in New York City from October 7-10, 1976 (with funds provided from a variety of sources, including the Rockefeller Foundation, the NEH, IBM, and UNESCO). 1976, Caws muses, might have been a good year to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the death of David Hume, but why should it have been necessary to commemorate certain legendary events leading to the founding of the American Republic? Caws poses the issue in a somewhat platonic spirit, but one detects a more general discomfort, not so easily expressed in proper philosophical or academic language, throughout the volume: "It may well be asked, then, why philosophers, whose business would seem to lie with the necessary and universal, should pay any attention at all to such accidental products of evolution and politics as the Bicentennial of the American Revolution" (p. 1).

Before even beginning Caw's introduction one should already have detected something of the problematic character of the volume from its title. A deliberate effort seems to have been made to avoid the phrase 'American philosophy' and whatever nationalistic implications it might have, and not even the term 'America' as it is used has an unambiguous referent. But even if we take the term in the same sense as it was used in de Toqueville's classic work, Democracy in America, yet another oddity of the project becomes apparent. Philosophy, it would seem, often strikes us as something accidental, or perhaps, as de Toqueville himself might have said, antithetical to the American spirit, something alien to the democratic, mass culture of a nation which first defined itself in a post-Enlightenment world, a spirit already freed from the 'inverted world'

of traditional metaphysics, as the new culture of American might have been described by a Hegel or Nietzsche.

What usually counts as the distinctively 'American philosophy', pragmatism, is indeed in certain respects anti-philosophical, whereas what came earlier often seems more European in spirit, and what followed pragmatism took much of its inspiration from transplanted German, Austrian, or English sources, or, most recently, mainly from the fads and fashions of Cambridge or Oxford. At the very least, in other words, the very idea of 'American philosophy' itself is in many ways problematic, and so what we are offered instead is an anthology of reflections on philosophy 'in' America, and not even reflections on the 'history' or 'development' of this slippery entity.

What is more, one knows that the idea of even trying to understand any relationship between philosophy and history has become, and remains, particularly suspect among those philosophers who, because of the totally accidental, if not necessarily chaotic, events of history (which, as Caws would have it, have no decipherable meaning, or purpose, or progress), just happen to practice their profession within the geographical boundaries of these now some fifty states that make up the United States of America. One also knows, however, that it hasn't always been so: that is, that philosophers, albeit not usually those who have actually lived in America, have not always been so reluctant to talk about the philosophical significance of this one 'new' world as if it were a tangible reality, understandable through certain philosophical ideals or ideas. One thinks, for example, of Condorcet's vision of the Tenth and Final Epoch of Human History, the culmination of the rationalistic, Cartesian scientific and technological spirit, which was heralded into existence by the events of the American and French Revolutions. Such reading, however, even as one might find in Hume's historical writings, is not much in favor today, and certainly no one contributing to this volume gives much thought to what connection there might be between American history and what Hegel referred to as the 'Germanic', i.e., northern European, Spirit. Or, to put the matter quite bluntly, if history has no decipherable meaning, then obviously neither does anything that might be called 'American' history. And if there is no relationship between philosophical movements and history, then there is no reason whatsoever to even attempt to reflect upon the development of a philosophical tradition within the geographical and politico-cultural context of American history. The very idea of such a project simply disappears before our analytical eyes.

But why should the effort have been made to publish this volume? The cynic might well say that the funds

for this conference were available and that philosophers deserved to get their 'cut' from all that was spent to glorify the Bicentennial. But surely we will have to come up with a better answer; and there is really very little evidence of such outright cynicism on the part of those who contributed to this volume. Indeed, all of them did, despite occasional uneasiness, try to take their duty seriously to reflect upon the general theme of the conference, 'Philosophy in the Life of a Nation'. But perhaps what we might ask instead is, what should we gain from reading such a volume?

2. I raise this last question because it is less obvious, but in some ways, more important for the reading of this volume than the others. I suppose that it is only the really conscientious or exceptional reader, or perhaps only reviewers, who would take on the project of reading such a work from cover to cover. I would even venture that those who only scan the Contents for an essay on a favorite American philosopher, or to see what so-and-so said at this symposium, or perhaps to find the most up-to-date views on some topic or other, will be disappointed with the volume, but if so, that is only more reason to ask just what one should expect to get from it. The volume is in no sense an 'introductory' volume to themes or problems in American philosophy, for most of the papers presuppose prior familiarity with the figures or issues discussed, and would not be accessible to a novice undergraduate or, unfortunately, to a lay audience (although it really is unfortunate that more non-professionals won't read a volume like this). Nor, as already suggested, is it in any way a compendium of the latest research on the topics covered; for after reading far more of the essays than the editor would probably care to admit, one is likely to find a footnote indicating that the present paper is only an abbreviation of a more substantial, technical paper to be found in some other volume. But if it is neither an introductory volume nor a standard anthology, how is the volume to be read? I would suggest that it should be read for exactly what it is, or was: a collection of papers read by philosophers to philosophers, who, for a brief time, were asked specifically to think in a way which for many of them must have seemed odd, that is, to present their work on some topic or other as relevant for that unfamiliar, unsettling question: what role, does, or should philosophy have in American life, or, for that matter, in the life of any nation? I think that the volume is best read from cover to cover, not just as a series of philosophical articles to be analyzed in the spirit of professional competiveness and criticism, but as historical and contemporary meditations, as brief sketches intended to arouse reflection as much as to teach or demonstrate professional expertise or superiority in

some area of research or other. I will, therefore, endeavour to provide something of just such a reading in the following discussion of the volume, with the understanding that whoever would read the work should come necessarily to their own, perhaps very different, conclusions about what philosophy has been or should be 'in' America.

3. What did philosophy have to do with the 'origins' of America? Judging from the contributions to this volume, very little, and the four essays of the first section of the text are perhaps more notable for what they don't have to say, and the oddities they reveal about certain figures of this period, than for what they do say, or, for that matter, for any particular depth or brilliance of scholarship. For example, what are we to make of the fact that Madison and Jefferson had to fight vigorously against the re-establishment of Christianity as the state religion of Virginia as late as 1785; that in the Treaty of Tripoli, signed by Adams in 1797, the English version of the text expressly emphasized that "the Government of the United States is not in any sense founded upon the Christian religion"; or that during the election of 1800 Jefferson was repeatedly attacked for his religious liberalism and that "rumors were spread that [if elected, he] would confiscate all the Bibles in the land and substitute his own version" (p. 35)? Such are the curious tidbits to be found in Nicholas Gier's treatment of the 'religious liberalism' of the founding fathers. But shouldn't it seem odd that one finds less serious reflection here about the significance of such facts, particularly on the matter of the nature of 'religious freedom' in the modern political state, then is to be found in Marx's reflections on the same issue, complete with copious references to the various constitutions of the new American states and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen ("On the Jewish Question" from the year 1844)? Other than this, Roscoe Hill offers a thought-provoking sketch of the Bill of Rights as an example of Aristotelian 'reasoning by example' (reasoning from 'part to part' in contrast with deductive or inductive reasoning), Winfield E. Nagley offers an excellent, serious analysis of Jefferson's 'materialism', and, in the opening essay, Andrew J. Reck discusses the philosophical background of the Declaration of Independence.

Reck's essay, although brief, is especially rich, and while for the most part quite uncontroversial in the interpretation, especially when compared to the views of Gary Willis' more recent, 'revisionist' study, Inventing America: Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, it strikes me as particularly noteworthy for its emphasis on two English philosophers who stood between the Lockean roots and American realities in the formulation of the political philosophy that is usually

said to have buttressed, or at least rationalized, the American revolution. The two figures are Richard Price (1723-1791) and Joseph Priestly (1733-1804). Reck also emphasizes the significance of Francis Hutcheson's System of Moral Philosophy as contributing to this background, a source which Willis claims to have been the most significant influence on Jefferson. Willis goes further than Reck, however, and cites this latter source extensively showing how Jefferson could have derived his political theory from Hucheson's views instead of those of Locke, thereby hoping to cast doubt upon the 'orthodox' view of Carl Becker that Jefferson's political philosophy comes almost lock, stock, and barrel (if only for life, liberty and the 'pursuit of happiness' and not the property itself) from Locke's Second Treatise. Indeed Willis is so extreme in his 'revisionist' views that he dismissed entirely any consideration of how the Lockean political philosophy might have also informed Hutcheson. Reck's essay is thus particularly suggestive in pointing to a way of reconciling the 'orthodox' and 'revisionist' views, for he neither ignores the long development of Lockean influences between 1691 and 1776, as does Willis, nor does he make any exaggerated claims for some sort of 'direct' Lockean influence on Jefferson, as did Becker (those who might want to pursue this matter further should follow up the suggestions in Reck's paper). But doesn't it seem odd that what would appear to be such a straightforward scholarly problem should remain such a matter of controversy 200 years after the Declaration was written--and not because the sources themselves are so confusing, but because they apparently haven't always been studied very rigorously?

4. If this volume should just happen to stimulate any new trends in research in contemporary American philosophy, one must doubt that it will be in such matters as clarifying the distinctive role of figures in the Lockean tradition who influenced Jefferson. But perhaps the essays of the second section could serve some purpose, for the general tone of many of these is that in the 'classical' period American philosophers already understood many of the central issues we have been learning about from more recent positivistic and analytic sources--as if early American philosophers had nothing at all interesting to say to us anymore. This is not to say, however, that the 'greats' of American philosophy, Peirce, Royce, Santayana, James and Dewey, are to be read in isolation from other modern philosophical traditions. So it is that Peirce's 'theory of truth', as presented by H. S. Thayer, is to be read in a dialogue with the views of Hegel and Schelling, on the one hand, and, at the same time, with the more recent critiques of Peirce by Russell, Ayer, and Quine. His 'critique of psychologism' is similarly compared with that of Husserl in an essay by Charles J.

Doughterty, while his views on knowledge of the mind are contrasted with the approaches of Kant, Wittgenstein, and more recent figures, such as R. Chisholm, J. Schaffer, D. O. Hebb, W. Alston, and J. C. C. Smart in a contribution by E. James Crombie. James is first considered as an inheritor of the tradition of Common Sense Realism of Reid, Stewart, and Brown by Elizabeth Fowler, and then, as if to suggest hitherto quite unthought of parallels in the history of recent philosophy, as having foreshadowed some of Heidegger's reflections on a theory of truth in a paper by Bruce Wilshire. Indeed, these five essays are among the more stimulating of the volume, precisely because they use 'traditional' American philosophical sources in an attempt to go beyond 'contemporary' views that have either found their inspiration in other sources or simply not taken American philosophy very seriously. Royce, Santayana, and Dewey do not seem to fare so well from contemporary reflections as Peirce and James, however. Royce and Santayana remain, even in these pages, something of antiquarian oddities, tucked away in dusty, old, probably wooden, filing cabinets around philosophy department curiosity shops, to be brought out, dusted off, and polished up for just such occasions as these. But this should certainly not be taken to mean that they have no place in the consideration of what philosophy has been or should be 'in' America, or that there is any lack of serious, current research on their philosophies--at least not if one is to take seriously the suggestions of the contributors to this volume.

Robert Holmes, for example, makes a valiant effort to place Royce's thought more concretely within the mainstream of American pragmatism than it is often considered to be. Still, one might wonder if this should improve or diminish the unique place in our tradition of a man who could say that at one time he'd probably been the only philosopher in all of California! At the same time, however, one might consider that the plausibility of this effort suggests that the relationship between Absolute Idealism and American pragmatism might indeed be much closer than what it is often thought to be. Brenda Jubin's paper on what Royce referred to as the 'yes' and 'no' consciousnesses is suggestive of similar parallels in another way. She draws from Royce's logical and mathematical treatises for an account of his views on what we would think of simply as logical affirmation or negation. Perhaps there is something here of interest to contemporary logicians, but the account seems to me to fail to suggest that Royce's views on such matters were anything more than an odd sort of half-way house of 'psychologism', somewhere between Hegelian 'philosophy of mind' and modern formal logic, yet certainly not a successful

mediation of these viewpoints (as if that was either desirable or possible).

Santayana remains an even more problematic figure in these pages, although the three essays by Morris Grossman, Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., and John J. Stuhr do clearly indicate that there is no deficiency of work on who might be the most enigmatic of all the figures of this period. I find the most suggestive of these three pieces that by Saatkamp, in which Santayana's Scepticism and Animal Faith is presented as a counter to recent accounts of strong foundationalism. The other two essays also show Santayana as a participant in the effort of all the pragmatists to think beyond the framework of traditional metaphysics, yet without giving up philosophical reflection entirely. This is a task which was perhaps as central to the American classical period as any, but no more so than to any number of other modern philosophical movements or figures, including Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.

Because of the orientation of the essays on Santayana, it seems particularly appropriate that the final three essays of this section should focus on Dewey's own peculiar struggle to 'overcome' metaphysics, particularly as it is to be found in his notion of 'experience' in the volume entitled Experience and Nature. However, for Dewey, as perhaps for Kant, and for Marx--if not exactly so for Hegel, and certainly not for Heidegger--the critique of traditional metaphysics leads to philosophical anthropology, or, as Sidney Hook describes such reflections in the first of these essays, "a selection of those gross features of the world that impinge upon the theatre of human life, the background against which, and in intersection with which, human beings play out their roles" (p. 159). Hook's presentation of this development in Dewey's philosophical evolution is, however, not precisely formulated. Fortunately, Lewis Hahn, drawing upon material in the John Dewey Papers preserved in the Special Collections of the Morris Library at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, contributes greatly to the discussion in the following paper. Hahn suggests that this development can be best traced through an analysis of the key notion 'experience' as it was used in several of Dewey's major works and in his own reflections upon his use of this term, in which he finally decided that it would have been better to use the term 'culture' instead. For, as is suggested by some unpublished notes, as a result of cultural shifts in the connotation of the words, Dewey came to believe that "[culture] possesses as a name just that body of substantial references of which . . . 'experience' as a name has been emptied" (cited, p. 172). In other words, Dewey was, as Hook also emphasized, not just interested in the individual experiences of isolated human beings, but in the 'biological matrixes' of

social experience, "in their reciprocal connections, with one another, that immense diversity of human affairs, interests, concerns, values, which when specified piecemeal are designated religious, moral, aesthetic, political, economic, etc., etc., . . ." (ibid.).

Unfortunately, the final essay of the section, by Jude P. Doughterty, does not deal directly with this same development, but focuses instead on the evolution of Dewey's views on religion. However, read in the context of the previous two essays, this discussion becomes much more than a chronological overview of Dewey's development from the "young instructor of philosophy and . . . faculty adviser to the Student Christian Association" who professed a philosophical 'idealism' at the University of Michigan in the 1880's to the 'naturalism' of his Terry Lectures fifty years later (delivered at Yale and published as A Common Faith). According to Doughtery, and as would follow from the centrality of a philosophical anthropology that resulted in his movement away from a viewpoint more compatible with traditional metaphysics, Dewey's mature view of religion is to be summarized simply as follows: "Thus, nature and man's experience within it become both the source and the object of an ideal which is directive of life. Any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal end is religious in quality. The essentially unreligious attitude is that which attributes human achievement and purpose to man in isolation from nature and his fellows" (p. 178-79).

5. That this 'generalist' view of philosophy found in Dewey has for some years not been in favor among American philosophers, and why it has not, is made quite clear in several of the essays that make up the third section of the volume. As John E. Smith explains in the first of five essays, each of which are very different, philosophy in America is characterized by "receptivity, change, and relevance". Moreover, our receptivity for sources as diverse as phenomenology, positivism, existentialism, and ordinary language analysis in the decades since the heyday of Dewey's dominance of American philosophy has so changed things that Dewey's work, for better or worse, is no longer considered relevant, either to American philosophy or society. So considered, the appeal from T. L. S. Sprigge, one of five non-American contributors to the volume, that Americans should look to the 'distinctiveness' of their own tradition, will no doubt not be given a great response, despite the fact that many of the papers of the second part of the volume go a long way to support such an appeal.

The following three papers seem to me to be the pivotal essays of the entire volume. First, there is an overview by A. C. Genova of mainstream contemporary interests in American philosophy, which, of course, has

drawn so heavily upon positivism and various trends in language analysis of recent British philosophy. This is followed by Richard Rorty's reflections upon the contemporary status of philosophy as a professional activity. However, perhaps the most serious, if not most successful, attempt in the entire volume to come to terms with the central theme of the symposium is a paper by John McDermott which addresses two unavoidable issues; the meaning of America as a 'New World' and what implications the American experience should have for the 'global New World' that is now emerging. A Condorcet, de Toqueville, or Hegel could surely sympathize with McDermott's project, although one supposes that a majority of his professional colleagues would not. Nevertheless, one would imagine that his efforts must have been particularly interesting to the many 'Third World' delegates who were able to attend the conference thanks to the funds provided by UNESCO, for it is the only paper which really attempts to deal with such issues directly, issues which must surely interest if not American philosophers themselves some of those who are confronted with the threat and promise of American cultural hegemony in all parts of the globe.

Genova's paper might be described somewhat paradoxically as a 'historical retrospective' of contemporary trends in American philosophy, even though these trends have not yet come completely to their logical conclusion, according to his assessment of them. He suggests that there exists "in the work of philosophers like Chomsky, Fodor, Katz, Davidson, Harman, Montague, Hintikka, Kripke, Searle, David Lewis and others in their development of theories of natural languages" a distinctive philosophical synthesis as significant in its own way for its resolution of crucial problems of the Anglo-American post-pragmatic positivist orthodoxy, as pragmatism itself was for the period 1880-1920. However, according to Genova this synthesis has received very little recognition as such--except for an article by Anthony Quinton in the Times Literary Supplement (June 13, 1975)--despite the fact that it represents a significant reconciliation of the opposing programs of earlier positivist models of formal language and the subsequent developments of ordinary language philosophy. He suggests that the specific applications of this synthesis are nevertheless already to be found in "recent philosophy of science, possible world semantics, the theory of truth, political philosophy and other quarters" (p. 222). So, as if to offer an historical synopsis of the movement before it has become historical, Genova summarizes the synthesis as follows (p. 223):

> For what this comes to is a reconciliation between ordinary language and systematic formalization in virtue of an interpretation of lingu-

> istic activity in which purely formal rules have the status of essential organizing principles of natural discourse. In contrast to the logical analysts, this is not a conventional program of imposing independent abstract forms on the body of language; and in contrast to the linguistic analysts, it is not a process of generating indefinite regularities from the piecemeal description of the interaction between word usage and the context and circumstances of utterances. Instead, it rests on the basis of treating language as a substantial whole in its own right, as a rule-governed activity wherein the rules are natural forms constitutive of their content and the activity is linguistic performance in accordance with rules. The previous discrepancy between the 'amorphous discourse' of everyday life and the 'pristine language' of an idealized canonical notation is mediated by means of a new interpretation of language as a seamless whole--one in which formal and material aspects stand in a natural relation of reciprocity and thereby manifest a synthesis of systematic form with linguistic elements.

What is perhaps most curious about Genova's article, however, is that after offering such a clear and concise summary of this synthesis and emphasizing its achievements, he goes on to suggest that it will have a very short reign in the history of philosophy: "I would predict that the much belaboured philosophical synthesis I have been trying to clarify--after it has been fully exhausted at all levels and in all quarters (as is typical of philosophical movements)--will culminate and bring to an end the linguistic orientation of recent philosophy" (p. 227). What is more, although he does not appear to lament the passing of this linguistic orientation, he is unwilling to make any suggestions about what should follow. All he is willing to say is, "Where we go from here is anybody's guess"!

Read against this background, the piece by Richard Rorty seems almost a premature post-mortem apology for the professionalization of philosophy since the Second World War, rather than an apologetic for the trend which it was meant to be. This professionalization of philosophy has often identified itself with precisely those concerns that have been central to 'the recent linguistic orientation in philosophy' described by Genova, which after nearly forty years of effort has resulted in a synthesis whose passing will not seem to be cause for great sorrow. Rorty borrows from Santayana's famous assessment of the American philosophical tradition in his title, "Genteel Synthesis, Professional Analysis, Transcendentalist Culture" (p. 228). Santayana claimed, of course, as the few who

have read his essay and the fewer who remember it will recall, that it was a combination of Calvinist guilt and metaphysical egoism that made up "the Genteel tradition in American philosophy", which he saw as standing in opposition with "America's ruling passion, the love of business . . . joy in business itself and in its further operation, in making it greater and better organized and a mightier engine in the general life" (cited, p. 228). It was this feminine, 'genteel tradition' which Santayana believed to entirely dominate American academia. But, Rorty asks, is it still so? His answer, a decisive No!, is perhaps in itself neither surprising nor all that interesting. We are, afterall, all familiar with his description of contemporary academic life from our own experiences. Perhaps this 'genteel tradition' still exists in the realm of highbrow culture, which Rorty defines as "the culture which produces poems, plays and novels, literary criticism and what, for want of a better term, we call 'cultural criticism'." He says that one might even find a few specimens of this endangered breed inhabiting our universities, 'mostly in literature departments', but they no longer make up the stereotypical image of the 'academic-type' in American culture: "They do not get the grants; they have disciplines rather than research teams; they inhabit whatever mansions may still be tucked away among the academic skyscrapers. Their more business-like colleagues treat them alternately with the deference due from tradesmen toward the clergy, and the contempt the successful feel for the shabby genteel" (p. 229).

The more interesting question which Rorty next addresses is, however, the following: "Where, in the busy modern academy, do we find the philosophy professors?" In answering this question Rorty must give an account of the development of American philosophy in the 20th century, that is, since Santayana's essay appeared, and not just a typical history of philosophy, but rather a history of philosophy in America as a professional activity. However, in so describing this development, and defending it, what Rorty seems to be doing is justifying the growth of a profession which has, according to Genova, recently produced a significant philosophical synthesis, though one which is apparently to be forgotten--as if of little real cultural significance--as soon as it has been fully realized. But so what of it?, Rorty might ask. How different is it in any number of other professions? Why should philosophy think that its professional achievements are any different? After all, American philosophy has already had its days of 'social significance' in this century: "The period between the World Wars was one of prophecy and moral leadership--the heroic period of Deweyan pragmatism, during which philosophy played the sort of role in this country's life which Santayana

could admire. . . . For the first time, American philosophy played the sort of role which Fichte and Hegel had once played in Germany" (p. 229 and 231). All that has happened since the Second World War has largely removed philosophy from this visionary 'generalist' social position, however: "The period since the Second World War has been one of professionalization in which philosophers have quite deliberately and self-consciously abdicated such a role" (p. 229).

Why then has this transformation come about and what are we to make of it--or, to speak with the vulgar, what does it all mean? For Rorty, the 'professionalization' of philosophy has not meant its banalization or the adoption of a huckster, business-like mentality, as some critics of this trend would suggest, but instead has provided its autonomy. Philosophy in America, in other words, is no longer to be defined in terms of its relationship to religion, as was largely the case before the First World War, or to the social sciences or political ideology, as in the Deweyan period, or even in its relation to mathematics and the natural sciences, as seemed to be the case in the late 40's and 50's. Nevertheless, as Rorty readily admits, this insistence on autonomy has also meant a "withdrawal from the rest of the academy and from culture" in which the importance of philosophy and its claim to be a 'technical subject' is "not defended directly by pointing with pride to the importance of the issues philosophers discuss or to paradigms of successful inquiry", but "rather . . . indirectly, by pointing with scorn to the low level of argumentative rigour among the competition--in the Deweyan philosophy of the 30's, in contemporary continental philosophy, and in the cultural criticism of the highbrows" (p. 229-30). The 'special contribution' of philosophy appears to be nothing but 'argumentative skill', which doesn't have much, if anything, to do with rhetoric, of course, but with "a kind of sensitivity to distinctions and presuppositions which is peculiarly their own" (p. 230). What has resulted is a debate between philosophers and highbrow culture, however, in which highbrow culture, which still includes some philosophers, sneers at the 'irrelevance' and 'scholasticism' of contemporary professional philosophy, while philosophers view their opponent's vision of themselves and philosophy "as palliating cranky hypersensitivity with aesthetic comfort, just as Santyana saw Royce and Palmer as palming the agonized conscience off with metaphysical comfort" (p. 230). Rorty certainly doesn't avoid addressing the issues of this debate head-on and his description of it is indeed so good that it would seem an unpardonable sin not to have quoted him at length: "Accusations of softness and sloppiness are exchanged for accusations of pedantry and narrowness" (p. 231).

Rorty is thus actually somewhat less concerned in his paper to take sides in this debate than to explain something of how these changes have come about in American philosophy. This rather 'highbrow culture' project is, admittedly, also intended to be a defense of this professionalization of philosophy, yet at the same time, as we would expect from the editor of The Linguistic Turn who later gave us The Mirror of Nature, Rorty also emphasizes the need for 'transcendental culture' as well, that is, the "attitude that there is no point in raising questions of truth, goodness, or beauty, because between ourselves and the things to be judged there always intervenes mind, language, a perspective chosen among dozens, one description chosen out of thousands" (p. 235). However, such an attitude is no longer appropriate to the philosophers, according to Rorty, and indeed is more likely to be found among the adherants of highbrow culture, "but they [the philosophers] should not try to beat it" (p. 231). What this amounts to, it seems to me, is his saying that the price that philosophy has had to pay for its autonomy, giving up any responsibility for teaching the 'western tradition', for example, has not been too much, not if it has left the professionals with the time to develop their own 'disciplinary matrixes', or to bring about this 'contemporary synthesis' of which Genova speaks, which may or may not be of much interest to professionals in other fields. As Rorty says, again with reference to Santayana's essay, "although Santayana hoped that the American culture would stop trying to solace the agonized conscience with metaphysical comfort, he did not think it would go away" (p. 237). The only difference is that today the 'metaphysical comfort' offered by contemporary 'transcendentalist culture', as defined above and with its roots in the transcendental critiques of Kant, now takes its clues from some sort of soft nihilism or Nietzschean 'perspectivism' (including Wittgensteinian 'language games'), and not from some variant of American absolute idealism. Philosophers, on the other hand, have often cut themselves off altogether from such concerns in their pursuit of professional autonomy and respectability. But, again, according to Rorty, this was the price that had to be paid (p. 237):

> It may be that American philosophy will continue to be more concerned with developing a disciplinary matrix than with its antecedents or its cultural role. No harm will be done by this, and possibly much good. The dialectical dramas which began with Plato will continue. These others may not be called "philosophers" but something else, possibly "critics". Possibly they will be given a name which would seem as odd to us as our use

of "critic" would have seemed to Dr. Johnson, or use of "philosopher" to Socrates.

Rorty obviously accepts this state of affairs as appropriate for American philosophy in the coming decades. He also seems content with the total separation of American philosophy from American culture, although he does not attempt to explore the possibility that this professionalization of philosophy and the consequences of it may in fact only mirror other developments in American culture since the end of the Second World War.

I am inclined to think that this is a state of affairs that doesn't please John McDermont, judging from the final essay of this section. For McDermont it is apparently necessary for philosophy, or at least so 'from the perspective of a philosophy of culture', not only to face squarely questions about the 'presentness of the Past' that professional philosophy has passed off according to Rorty, to the 'agonized conscience' of 'transcendentalist culture', but also the 'burning questions' of what America's "bequest to the new world of global culture" should be (p. 242). This question is certainly not rooted in a sense of cultural imperialism for McDermont, who clearly has no illusions of the purity or grandeur of American culture: "Speaking out of historical honesty, we must acknowledge the considerable offenses perpetuated in the American name. Leaving only broken and rightfully contentious Indians to tell the story, we are, after all, the only modern culture to commit successful psychological, if not physical, genocide. Our racism is long-standing, systematic, and globally infamous" (p. 243). But this profoundly 'agonized conscience' is also compelled to look seriously for the positive contributions of American culture: "Our history is creative as well as destructive" (ibid.). Yet try as he may to rekindle the spirit of such philosophical reflection, that American philosophers are ill-equipped and ill-trained for such tasks is also clear from the paper. He is nevertheless successful in suggesting four "philosophical dimensions of American culture which deserve to become operative in the formation of a new world culture": (1) pluralism ("Patterns of unity, however intellectually desirable, are inevitably imposed, usually in a procrustean manner"); (2) provincialism (i.e., a resistance to a bland cosmopolitanism that forgets the distinctiveness of different traditions); (3) the ambiguities of progress ("One generation's pesticidal success is another's silent spring"); and (4) that "the ultimate meaning of history" is rather that there is an "absence of such finality" to history (pp. 247-58).

I certainly have not meant to suggest that McDermont's reflections aren't to be taken seriously. I

think in fact that they should be and that he has probably done about as well as anyone in contemporary American philosophy could with these issues. But again it seems odd to me that the more perceptive discussion of such matters in this volume are not offered by Americans, but by two non-Americans, Mihailo Markovic and John Passmore, whose essays appear in the final section of the volume. It is also in this final section, subtitled "Public Issues" (and further subdivided into two parts, A. Political and B. Moral), where the tension between the professionalized model of philosophy and the only rumoured dead, but clearly still breathing, and quite spirited, 'agonized conscience' in contemporary American philosophy is most evident.

6. This final section begins with a rather belated defense of 'Liberalism' by Ronald Dworkin, an analysis which is then politely criticized by Virginia Held, who seems to me to have a much more acute sense of how deep the crisis of the 'liberal tradition' in the western industrial democracies is in our time. I think that Held also has a much clearer sense of how closely related the conservative and liberal sides of this 'liberal tradition' are, a matter which Markovic also has a clear understanding of as indicated in his essay which is the fourth and final in this section. Markovic, however, because of his experience as a member of the Praxis Circle and his sense of the tradition of Critical theory, is also in a position to do more than lament this crisis, but to look beyond it to some possible alternatives. By Rorty's classification, all three of these figures partake of the 'agonized conscience', but I can't resist suggesting that Dworkin and Held also seem to suffer from an 'unhappy consciousness', whereas Markovic is already partly 'liberated' in his consciousness of his agony, of himself, and of the world. This is to say that Dworkin and Held remain subject to a world view from which they can't escape. They sense that there is a serious crisis in the 'liberal tradition', but they have no alternative, whereas Markovic can at least offer some concrete proposals about how we might look beyond this crisis to a more hopeful, freer future (pp. 302-03):

> Western liberal societies live today with a false dilemma. The only alternative seems to be on the one hand a Utopia of equality which can only be reached by violence and destruction, and which too often ends up in bureaucratic despotism; and on the other hand an unjust, wasteful reality which nevertheless offers at least a reasonable level of stability, security, and civil liberty. But a third alternative is historically possible and indeed optimal: a series of substantial reforms implemented in a non-violent, continuous

way, but as a whole transcending the basic social framework of liberal capitalism and bringing to life a more just political and economic participatory democracy. The theoretical ground of such revolutionary reformism is a philosophical and scientific critique of the given society. The method of this critique is the opening and radical solution of its essential problems. Each essential problem is a certain incompatibility between defining structural characteristics of liberal capitalism and some basic universal human needs of human beings to survive, to develop, to genuinely belong to a social community.

The specific problems which Markovic singles out for consideration are those of privatization, bureaucratization, material and spiritual poverty, alienated labor, and ecological degradation. Some readers may find Markovic's paper just one more example of an old adage quoted several times in this volume: "Old European philosophers never die; they just get positions in America!". I'm inclined to think that it would be a mistake to dismiss his comments so simply, but the problem remains that the questions he raises refer to matters that our peculiar 'disciplinary matrixes' have not always trained us very well to handle.

A fourth essay in this section which combines the virtues of 'professional analysis' and the reflective criticism of the 'agonized conscience' in an exemplary fashion is Rex Martin's "Two Ways of Justifying Civil Disobedience" (pp. 291ff.). Clarifying the presuppositions and implications of notions of civil disobedience is indeed a matter that is aided by the technical skills of philosophers, as emphasized by Rorty, yet which has consequences for the world outside departments of philosophy.

The tension between professional technique and social relevance is, nevertheless, still quite evident in those essays that make up the second half of this section, which begins with a summary by William Frankena of the competing theories to be found in contemporary, self-consciously technical, analytic ethics. The essay, although ostensibly "something . . . of a programmatic piece on moral philosophy in relation to the future moral standards of society", should be read instead for what it is, a succinct, and really very good summary of recent work in mainstream Anglo-American moral philosophy, but not much more. After all, worrying about the 'moral education of society' has not really been an issue of all that much concern in these inquiries, but just one more matter which philosophy has had to give up in its efforts to gain its autonomy, perhaps. At any rate, according to Frankena, if philosophy is to have something to offer in this area, it will need some help: "A full theory

of moral education is not something philosophers can work at alone; psychologists, social scientists, and teachers must also do their part" (p. 236). However, what might appear to be a revival of the Deweyan vision of philosophy as something like the 'handmaiden' to the social sciences is really nothing more than a concession to the spirit of the conference. For after saying this, it turns out that the 'important way' in which philosophy is actually to help in this effort is limited to that of "discussing such rather theoretical issues as divide the various theories described above" (pp. 226-27)! What this amounts to, in other words, is that philosophers are to be of most benefit if they remain isolated in the autonomy of their professional cubby-holes. Abram Edel, in the following comments to Frankena's paper, clearly rejects this view, even going so far as to suggest that "the neglect of Dewey's moral theory in contemporary America is a serious mistake which a Bicentennial reckoning of our intellectual capital should try to remedy" (p. 333).

J. J. Thompson, in the next essay, takes relief in the fact that the emphasis on the immediate 'relevance' and disdain of technical philosophical analyses and meta-ethics that characterized the spirit of the late 60's in American academia has come to an end, and with it a return to the 'theoretical', enhanced by recent work in action theory, semantics, and a renewed interest in denotic logic. Just as for Edel, a retreat from the 'formalism' of Frankena's style of ethics is not to mean that he would "join the chorus that treats analysis as a whipping boy" (p. 334), so Thompson "hopes that philosophers will continue at the same time to attend to concrete moral, social, and political problems" (p. 345). But that their visions of the future direction of moral theory are quite different is nonetheless very clear. What Edel suggests, in short, is nothing less than that our entire approach to moral philosophy must be reconceptualized, since it has been too a-historical, "concerned with an eternalist picture and so not geared for change and reconstruction," too piecemeal and too isolated, due to an inadequate model of analysis, and, finally, unduly individualistic. What he demands, in other words, is a radical transformation of our very way of doing moral philosophy, whereas I'm inclined to read Thompson's paper as a defense of nothing other than a renewed, more powerful version of the same general approach advanced by Frankena, which is effectively a return to the earlier methods but with the 'advances' of new developments in other areas of philosophy as already noted.

The authors of the final two essays avoid this self-critical debate altogether by simply addressing contemporary moral issues head-on. Richard DeGeorge's "Education and Morality", a deceptively simple piece, is an overview of topics, ranging from Piaget's and

Kohlberg's theories of the acquisition of moral reasoning to a critique of the 'building block' view of knowledge, which, in its entirety, actually seems to cover systematically nearly every critical issue necessary for a comprehensive philosophy of education. Moreover, the account is well informed by an acute awareness of the practical, everyday issues confronting post-secondary education in the US in the post-boom period of the 1980's. I would also assume that some of the pointed questions which he raises have a familiar ring at institutions other than his own University of Kansas. For example, in proposing how those who support our universities should evaluate them, he offers the following suggestion: "Has it [the university] served as society's critic and social conscience or has it simply gone along with whatever would bring in the most students, money, and faculty?" (p. 360)

Finally, in the last, but surely one of the best essays of the volume, John Passmore discusses "Philosophy, Technology, and the Quality of Life". Why, indeed, Passmore asks, should philosophers think that it is outside their province to deal with such issues? "Philosophy . . . gave its blessing to technology e.g., Bacon, Descartes, and Marx. It can now contribute to clearing up the mess technology has created by examining the larger contexts, the wider principles, on which our culture depends" (p. 375). But like Markovic's essay, what distinguishes this piece is a broader awareness of the western tradition and alternative practical approaches to some of the relevant issues, as well as the creative ability (not so well developed in McDermont's paper, unfortunately) to combine a flair for professional 'analysis' with the style of a 'highbrow culture' training that is nevertheless not afraid to address serious, practical issues, head-on.

7. What we have in this volume is very little of what might be called 'philosophy in the grand style', despite the occassion which prompted its publication, the Bicentennial of the founding of the American Republic. There is indeed very little in these pages that merits comparison to the earlier reflections of a Condorcet, a de Toqueville, or a Hegel. There is instead perhaps a conscious effort to avoid such philosophizing and certainly not without good reason. We know, as Rorty reminds us once again, why this is not the style of contemporary American philosophy. We also know that American philosophers since the Second World War have deliberately avoided any such grandiose, speculative 'Hegelian' attempts to identify a particular style of philosophical achievement with any distinctive cultural tradition--what is commonly referred to as 'the poverty of historicism' since the influential work of Karl Popper. I will not enter into the debate here as to whether or not his interpretation of the Hegelian philosophy is correct. I do not personally think so,

but suffice it to say that there were enough attempts to make use of Hegel's philosophy in such an objectionable manner during the last 150 years that it is understandable that American philosophers have wanted to avoid a similar style of philosophizing. One remembers, for example, that, already in 1873, Nietzsche, in that 'untimely essay' of his translated into English with the title, The Uses and Abuses of History, objected to a certain, Hegelian-inspired, style of reflection upon history and national culture which was being used to proclaim the inevitability of the rise of the Bismarkian state. I'm inclined to think that our situation is very different than that which Nietzsche described, however. After all, we do not suffer from an 'excess of history' which 'has attacked the plasticity of life' so that it 'no longer understands how the past can serve as a powerful nourishment' for contemporary life, or for philosophy. We suffer instead from a deficiency, not an excess, of 'historical consciousness' and 'self-consciousness'. We suffer from an inability to judge our own culture by the standards of the great cultures of the past and by a lack of understanding of how we, that is, the American Republic, got to be where and what we are, for better or worse, in the contemporary world, whether because of some particular cultural brilliance, or, as Michael Harrington has suggested in his The Accidental Century, merely because of the accidents of history.

American philosophers during the past three and a half decades have thought perhaps that if they remained preoccupied with their particular, professionally defined, tasks they would not be in a position to be held responsible for the course of American history should it go astray in its supposedly unassuming rise to global power. Nor indeed is there reason to think that as a group philosophers are necessarily to be concerned with such matters any more than any other element of society and certainly no more than the adherents of what can be called 'transcendentalist culture' according to the analysis of Rorty. But couldn't it be that an avoidance of such reflection could be just as dangerous, perhaps even more so, than an 'excess'? We know, after all, that if the philosophers will not take up the task of writing such a philosophical history for a nation that others will, some of whom may have had no more knowledge of such matters than what is to be gained from acting in westerns produced in Hollywood. Might it not be the case then, that if we are, as Genova suggests, now at a certain impasse in the development of contemporary American philosophy after the trends of the past forty years or so, it is a good time to take up such matters as these again, or at least grant that there is a place for such reflection on the part of some of those who make up the community of professional philosophers in America? I would even go

so far as to suggest that this Bicentennial Symposium on Philosophy, in so far as it was an attempt to stimulate reflection about 'the role of philosophy in the life of the nation', might be viewed as a step in this direction. However, that it was no more than a nimble first step seems to me to be clear from the weaknesses of the first section of this volume, the unfulfilled promise of the second, the stimulating, but inconclusive, diversity of the third, and the controversies and concrete beginnings of the fourth. Nevertheless, there is plenty here to stimulate such a revival.

I noted earlier that this volume is neither a standard anthology or an introductory text for the study of American philosophy, and that, as a consequence, it deserves a special kind of reading. I have tried to suggest such a reading in these remarks. Those who find my reading objectionable are naturally free to attempt their own. What, indeed could be a better justification for the publication of the volume than that it should stimulate such debate about what philosophy has been and what it should yet be in its American setting?

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