

fiction or a factually true narrative is irrelevant, and Harrison's restriction to fiction is misguided. *Richard II* is not quite fiction, and how far Donne's *Songs and Sonets* are fiction nobody knows.

The *Songs and Sonets* is a sort of album of love. Here it is ! in many different forms. It can be this, it can be that. The poems make love. They do so by work on language. They deepen or extend one's sense of the word *love*. Whether this counts as "cognitive gain" I will not speculate, but it does clarify the notion of literature as common possession. A work of literature shows something of human life non-trivial and not usually generalisable. But it has to be shareable. Literature can only be formed by individual judgements, but the idea of a private literature is a variety of the idea of a private language. The train of thought takes us back to Leavis's "third realm."

What is Fiction For? is evidently the product of many years of reading and thinking; prodigious work has gone into it, nicely cloaked by a consistently alert and civilised style: it is itself a good example of the humane. But it still looks as if published prematurely [I do not mean the occasional mistake, although he should not twice write *The Rainbow* when he means *Women in Love* (pp. 118, 130) or take Leavis to approve Lytton Strachey's dictum that Pope's criticism of life was simply and solely the heroic couplet (p. 312)]. In its meticulously organised discussion of many philosophers the concentration on the question of the title goes rather adrift. Perhaps, philosophy being as endless a discussion as literary criticism, this may not be as adverse a comment as it looks. All the same, there are a number of central questions that need to be refined and taken further. The present reviewer is in an awkward position, rather like that of the teacher writing a report on a pupil he knows to be much more knowledgeable than himself. The teacher may still be justified if he has to write: Try harder!

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Cheryl Misak, *The American Pragmatists* (Oxford: O.U.P., 2015). xiv + 286, price £ 27.50 hb.

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Cheryl Misak's aim is to trace in the history of American pragmatism two strains: one genuine, the other less so. The genuine strain is represented by Peirce, Lewis and Sellars; the less genuine by James, Dewey

and Rorty. She has a crowded cast of characters. Besides chapters on the major figures, she has chapters on what she calls fellow travellers. These are figures who participated in the discussion of pragmatism whether, like Wendell Holmes, as friends or, like Moore and Russell, as enemies. Her book contains much useful information, and she is certainly correct on some points of interpretation. She shows, for example, that Quine's views were anticipated in certain respects by C.I. Lewis. She shows, also, that the logical empiricism, which the European positivists brought to America, at least as it developed, was akin to pragmatism and not opposed to it. Unfortunately, as it seems to me, she does not read the main history aright.

We may illustrate the point by reference to Peirce, the begetter of pragmatism. Misak does not distinguish sharply between his earlier and later views. She notes differences between the two, but treats the latter simply as refinements of the earlier. In fact Peirce's later views are in conflict not simply with his earlier ones, but also with views she takes to characterise genuine pragmatism. For example in one of the earlier papers that influenced William James, Peirce identified the meaning of "hardness" with certain sensible effects. That is directly opposed to his later view. On the later view, meaning can never be reduced to any set of finite instances. One may teach a child the meaning of a word by pointing to certain instances, but he has not grasped its meaning unless he can go on to apply it to others. Moreover he can go on indefinitely, for there can be no finite set of instances that can exhaust the child's grasp of meaning. The earlier view denied in effect the reality of continuity. The essence of what is continuous is that it cannot be reduced to its actual instances and it is in their continuity that one finds the reality of conditionals, laws and habits.

We may illustrate the point further by referring to Peirce's distinction between abduction, deduction and induction. It was commonly assumed in his time that induction is the basis of science. To arrive at a scientific law, we generalise on the basis of a number of instances. Having seen many black ravens, we conclude that all ravens are black. Peirce denied that we can infer a law from a succession of instances, unless in those instances we grasp a law that transcends them. It is because the law transcends those instances that we can go on and infer others. Indeed we can go on indefinitely, for a law is never identical with any finite set of its instances. Induction and deduction cannot produce a law, but can serve only as a check on what we take to be one. It may be noted that whether we deal with scientific laws or the meaning of words practice is prior to theory. We can of course formulate the meaning of a word by mentioning others. But this presupposes that we have already grasped in practice the words used in the formulation. In short, according to

Peirce's pragmatic maxim, practice is *logically* and not just temporally prior to theory.

During the 20s and 30s it was Morris Cohen who was prominent in reviving an interest in Peirce's work. Cohen himself was a vigorous opponent of pragmatism. He referred to Dewey's pragmatism as "anthropocentric naturalism". Against Dewey and other pragmatists he defended the objective reality of logical form and rational order. What attracted him to Peirce's views was that he saw in them an evident kinship with his own.

Misak's own version of pragmatism might well be described as anthropocentric naturalism. For example, she finds it exemplified in the work of C.I. Lewis. It will be useful to consider for a moment the views of this distinguished philosopher. He may be said to have advanced an empiricism modified by Kant. According to Kant, concepts without experience are empty but experience without concepts is blind. Since experience without concepts is blind, it follows, on Lewis's view, that what we get out of experience will depend on what we put into it. Experience is not inherently rational; it is we who rationalise it by bringing it under our concepts. But concepts vary. According to Lewis, we can construct alternative systems of logic. Which we apply to experience is a matter of choice, guided only by pragmatic considerations. Experience may be less recalcitrant to some systems than to others. As Misak says, Quine held a similar view. One finds a similar view also in Putnam's "internal realism." In fact, views of this kind had been undermined by Thomas Reid and the Scottish school. As Reid implied, in sensory experience we are primarily aware not of the experience itself, but of its objects. In technical terms, experience is inherently intentional; we do not have to impose our intentionality upon it. We do not, for example, have to impose upon it the concept of independent objects. The concept simply makes explicit what experience inherently reveals. In short, in the way the world appears to us the fundamental forms of our thought are already present. The forms of logic simply make explicit those forms without which there would be no world for us. That, in fact, is the view of both Peirce and Cohen. That, indeed, is why Cohen described the views of Lewis's kind as anthropocentric.

We may note that Misak repeatedly misrepresents Reid and the Scottish school. For example, she attributes to Reid the view that our belief in an external world is based on intuition. But Reid did not mean that we arrive at this belief through a flash of insight into the nature of reality. He meant that we have only to reflect in order to find that we already have the belief. One may, indeed, call it a priori. That is because although it is implicit in experience, it is not *derived* from it.

Misak argues that the pragmatism she favours is distinguishable as a *broad naturalism*. On her view, one does not have to suppose that the scientific spirit is confined to the physical sciences. The experience of value is itself a source of knowledge and ethics can be pursued in the scientific spirit. It is surprising, however, that she offers no detailed criticism of ethical relativism. Ethical relativists, in the main, are as naturalistic as she and they offer a view that is a rival to hers. In the work of Dewey – it is true – one would not expect to find a discussion of ethical relativism, for he hardly recognised the category of the relative. In his work, it is absorbed into the category of the objective, leaving the objective as the only alternative to the purely subjective. This is brought about by eliminating one end of a relation. For example, we are confronted by a situation that causes us problems. This means that we are confronted by a problematic situation. In short, on Dewey's view, we are confronted by a situation that is objectively problematic. In fact, it seems obvious that a situation that causes problems for one set of people may cause no problem at all for another, having a different set of interests. Moreover there is at least an apparent relativity in ethical values. Compare the ethics of a Quaker community with that of the warrior communities beloved by Nietzsche. In neither community is ethical judgement subjective. It is relative to the standards of the respective communities. But the standards themselves seem in evident conflict. Misak's response to such a situation is that we must never abandon hope in reaching agreement. But she says this, one suspects, because agreement is the only substitute she has for objective truth. Moreover, from the relativist's point of view, it is irrelevant whether people reach agreement. Suppose the whole world is converted to the standards of Western liberalism. What is true or false will then be determined by those standards. But, as any relativist would point out, that does not mean those standards themselves are objectively true.

On Rorty, Misak is very severe. Her implication is that in some of his views he has brought pragmatism into disrepute. Not for a moment do I wish to defend Rorty's views. One may suspect, however, that he differs from other pragmatists in having the courage, or at any rate the nerve, to assert explicitly what in them remains decently implicit. For example, Misak criticizes him for the following attitude: "Forget, for the moment, about the external world, as well as about that dubious interface between self and the world called 'perceptual experience' " (p.229). But Rorty's point is that if experience is the raw material out of which we carve our knowledge, it cannot simultaneously be an independent route into an external world. So far as "the external world" has any sense it is identical with what we have carved it out to be.

Nor is Rorty susceptible to Putnam's criticism. According to Putnam, it is contradictory to claim that all truth is relative, since this statement

itself claims to be absolutely and not just relatively true. But, as Rorty says, he is not claiming that truth is relative rather than objective. He is rejecting as incoherent the category of objective truth. But then, since there is no category to contrast with it, it is senseless to assert that truth is relative. That seems consistent. It does not follow that it is correct. If we follow Peirce, it is not even coherent. For without the objective category of law or continuity there would be no sense in discourse itself.

Pragmatism was made famous by William James. But he was under the influence of the early works by Peirce, which, for all their brilliance, contained serious confusions. If there is to be a coherent expression of pragmatism, it must be based on Peirce's work in its later and more mature form.

Readers of Misak's book will find useful information about figures who might otherwise be unfamiliar to them. It is another matter whether they will accept her central thesis. Unless I am mistaken, they will be ill advised to do so.

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