

for years. Not that Polk is anti-theory (his customary Freudian psychoanalytic critical approach is well balanced by Judith Butler's body theorizing, for instance), but he assumes the role of one who respects the primary text, too, and reminds readers to look there and see what can be found in its richness. Polk is, in a sense, somewhat like the grandfather Lucius Priest who tells his story from a position of much experience and learnedness in Faulkner's final novel *The Reivers*. And all young Faulkner and Welty scholars would do well to listen, for Polk opens very important but overlooked doors in the texts.

Beyond even this grandfatherly role, though, Polk emerges as a writer with something of his own to say beyond the texts he deals with. He expounds on topics from the failures of masculinity to the problems of sentimentalizing war, either for it or against. It is as if Polk has reached a new stature – that not only of a scholar showing the world what Faulkner and Welty have to say but also of someone who uses those texts as the starting place for stating his own views, standing alongside these paragons of literature with his own message. The high point of the book, from this perspective, is the essay “Scar,” for it most successfully blends Polk's scholarship, mentorly guidance, and individual comment. This is a wise book – one to be read by someone seeking to grow not only as a scholar but also as a person.

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Melvin L. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey: Religion, Morality, and the Ethos of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, \$45.00). Pp. 328. ISBN 976 0 231 14486 5.

The American philosopher Morton White wrote that after the death of John Dewey in 1952, “a great change came over the face of American philosophy as it used more and more refined logical techniques, squinted its eyes, and peered into smaller and smaller places.” After several decades with eyes wide shut, a renewed focus on Dewey and classical Pragmatism evolved, due in part to Richard Rorty's recuperation of Dewey for neo-Pragmatism, the completion of the thirty-seven-volume *Collected Works of John Dewey*, and the exhaustion of post-structuralism and other highly theorized models of academic critique. As Cornell West rightly suggests, the renewed appeal of Dewey's philosophy of experience, conflict, inquiry and experimentalist resolve stems from its progressive, democratic tenor, matching a meliorist quest for relevant social responsibility in reaction to the privatized culture of Reaganism and a faith in the sanctity of “free-market” norms.

Besides the work of neo-Pragmatists such as Rorty and West, landmark scholarship in the Dewey revival includes the critical biographies by Robert Westbrook (*John Dewey and American Democracy* (1991)) and Alan Ryan (*John Dewey and the High Tide of American Democracy* (1995)), both worthy introductions to Dewey's life and thought. Melvin Rogers's *Undiscovered Dewey* belongs on the shelf alongside them, offering an authoritative, coherentist account that integrates Dewey's political, ethical and religious thought in the context of his engagement with American democracy in a post-Darwinian, post-Christian – and now postindustrial – world.

It was a lengthy engagement, as Dewey was born before the Civil War and died during the Korean War at the age of 92. He was prolific as well, and, more importantly for Rogers, consistent through the decades in shaping his philosophy of experience, inquiry, and intelligent action. In Rogers's view, Dewey was not a child of the Enlightenment so much as a worldly philosopher coming to terms with Darwin and the "death of God," alert to the contingencies and uncertainties of modernity, an anti-foundationalist with faith in creative, practical intelligence for constructing a viable system of ethics, politics and religion. For Rogers, "Dewey's philosophy represents a careful and measured attempt to defend a belief in human agency in a world shorn of ultimate foundations" (237).

Rogers's persuasive, fresh account views Dewey's work as a careful reconstruction of philosophy developed in response to a post-Darwinian world of evolving contingencies, shorn of the certainties of orthodox Christianity, the eternal truths of metaphysics, and the rationalist confidence of the Enlightenment. For Dewey, the demise of dogmas and dualisms did not lead to an abyss of existential despair, but rather could prove liberating, allowing for a more dynamic individualism in the context of deliberative democratic community. Dewey's anti-foundationalist pluralism and celebration of agency makes him congenial to global, participatory, democratic politics and also contributes to his revival – the Obama campaign's chant of "Yes we can!" might have been Dewey's own mantra.

The Undiscovered Dewey illuminates the Pragmatic roots of that appeal. The first part, "From Certainty to Contingency," explores the profound shifts to a more anthropocentric paradigm and the collapse of the "sacred canopy" of conventional Christian belief. Rogers argues persuasively that the shift animated Dewey's turn from neo-Hegelian idealism to a "modified Aristotelianism" – practical inquiry and *phronesis*, adapted to a more dynamic, pluralist context than ancient Athens, and less dark a vision of modernity than Max Weber's "iron cage."

The book's second part offers a comprehensive, integrated view of Dewey's philosophy, the "Religion, Morality and the Ethos of Democracy" of the subtitle. In carefully laying out his argument, Rogers also manages to take on and rebut familiar criticisms of Dewey – that he was naive in his faith in participatory democracy, blind to political inequalities and the tragic sense of life, an amoral relativist, and a pious but secular humanist. The chapter on democratic politics, "Constraining Elites and Managing Power," positions Dewey against Walter Lippmann's faith in the expertise of an elite of technocrats (Dewey preferred an informed electorate, not just an informed elite) and Richard Wolin's radical distrust of institutions (which Dewey thought an informed electorate could keep in check). The chapter on ethics describes the reflective, sympathetic, and "mutually responsive" citizen one could trust with the right to vote, developing "habits of character" and reflection reminiscent of Aristotle's virtuous, practical citizen-philosopher.

"Faith and Democratic Piety," Rogers's chapter on Dewey and religion, is perhaps the most controversial, arguing that Dewey saw in democracy "a fuller and deeper religion" than the Protestantism of his early years. Rogers rightly argues that in works such as *A Common Faith* (1934) Dewey did not so much secularize religion as sanctify democracy – inquiry emerges not from abstraction or an Archimedean vantage point, but from within "our religious commitments, moral choices, or political decisions" (239) – with piety, openness, and sympathy as democratic

virtues. Skeptical secularists might turn to Dewey's early essay "Christianity and Democracy" (1893), where he argues that the main theme of the New Testament is that "the truth shall set you free," and that "Democracy thus appears as the means by which the revelation of truth is carried on." It is an ongoing, open-ended revelation, congruent with the dynamics of Pragmatism.

President Obama's election represents the more hopeful, progressive, participatory strain of American democracy of which Dewey might approve (although he invariably voted for socialist candidates, now a *rara avis* in American electoral politics). Several tests of the viability of Deweyan deliberative democracy will be the current effort to reform an inefficient, ineffective American health care system; to diminish the overinvestment of "blood and treasure" in colonialist wars; and to redistribute American wealth from the top-heavy "trickle-down" model to more of a "trickle-up" model. Such progress would prove to be the ongoing redemption, rather than the relative squandering, of the promise of American life. Melvin Rogers's articulate, timely work helps make audible once again Dewey's voice in this fateful conversation.

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Charles Hersch, *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008, \$35.00). Pp. 210. ISBN 0 226 32867 8.

The varied musical sounds that would become jazz emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century, an era often described as the "nadir" of American race relations. Jim Crow segregation was but the most obvious codification of a national ideology defending white racial purity. With a discerning eye (and ear) for viable expressions of political opposition to this worldview, Charles Hersch opens *Subversive Sounds* with a telling juxtaposition of two New Orleans creoles of color. Homer Plessy, plaintiff in the famous *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court case, and jazz innovator, pianist Jelly Roll Morton. Plessy lost his case challenging the legitimacy of binary racial classification, while jazz musicians like Jelly Roll, who embodied hybrid racial identities in both their persons and their music, won at least a small victory by musically undermining the rigidity of racial categorization.

Hersch traces this process through judicious examination of New Orleans history, urban geography, social and economic organizations, aesthetic sensibilities, and musical qualities. Hersch draws profitably on local sources – particularly the William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz – as well as on a wide range of secondary materials. Delineating how places, people, and music contributed to a protean musical culture, Hersch explores multiple ways in which New Orleans provided a "unique" (203) environment for hybridization between African American, Creole, and European cultural forms. Hersch emphasizes Bakhtinian models of dialogic exchange to reject rejecting "melting pot" and "Afrocentric" models for jazz history (8). Instead, he celebrates New Orleans's carnivalesque atmosphere as his alternative.