

2. See Tommy J. Curry, "Royce, Racism, and the Colonial Ideal: White Supremacy and the Illusion of Civilization in Josiah Royce's Account of the White Man's Burden," *The Pluralist*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2009, pp. 10–38. Curry is critical of Royce's writings that praise the spirit of British colonialism as effective. This essay also charges that any subsequent work that relies upon Royce's essays on race and multiculturalism (including "Some Characteristic Tendencies of American Civilization"), as well as his correspondence, cannot fail to accurately and thoroughly address Royce's historical context.

3. In *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (U of California P, 2005), Alexandra Minna Stern documents the systemic policies that targeted people with Spanish surnames and African Americans in California.

4. See V. Denise James, "Comments on Marilyn Fischer's 'Addams on Cultural Pluralism, European Immigrants and African Americans,'" *The Pluralist*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2014, pp. 66–71.

### *Evolutionary Pragmatism and Ethics*

Beth L. Eddy. Lexington Books, 2016.

The fact that Dewey was born the same year in which Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published is one of the historical coincidences most commonly mentioned by those interested in American philosophy. Such lack of originality—mine included—is perfectly justified by the fact that pragmatism would not exist, at least not as we know it, without Darwin. The intersection between philosophy and evolutionary theories has been amply explored. In this book, Beth L. Eddy offers us an additional examination, focused, this time, on the contribution of Darwinism and pragmatism to ethics.

Eddy begins by examining the context in which Darwinism emerged and the two contrasting ethical standpoints derived from it, namely, social Darwinism and ethical pragmatism. As Eddy explains, Darwin's innovative work appeared during a moment of intense social turmoil. In that moment, this new evolutionary paradigm seemed to offer valuable insights into the reasons and nature of this strife.

Influenced by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Herbert Spencer proposed a peculiar ethical interpretation of Darwin's theory by equating the process of natural evolution with that of moral progress. As Eddy points out, Spencer's interpretation was not only erroneous, but also had terrible consequences, for it was used to justify social discrimination and economic inequality on scientific grounds. "To facilitate this process of human social evolution, Spencer opposed all government aid to the poor as intrusive to the teleological progress inherent in the natural world." Hence, she continues, "Spencer's system served as apologia for laissez-faire economics" (12).

The first generation of American pragmatists, particularly John Dewey, Jane Addams, and William James, rejected Spencer's social Darwinism and embraced the evolutionary theory in a more accurate way. As Eddy explains, they inherited from Darwin a conception of the universe as something open and uncertain in which accident and chance are as pervasive as order and coherence, as well as a perception of the individual as an agent-patient in permanent interaction with the environment. But what are the ethical implications of such a conception of the world and of human life?

In her detailed account of Dewey's philosophy—in which T. H. Huxley and George Santayana are included as intellectual partners—Eddy makes explicit the relation between Darwin's evolutionary theory, with its attention to selection, and Dewey's metaphysics of experience, with its emphasis on agency. Dewey, she argues, “wants to include processes that are not, strictly speaking, a matter of biological *genetics*, but are hardly non-natural. In particular, Dewey is interested in agency and the choices that people make; which human actions are selected, which not, and why? How does the social environment ‘select’ various choices and actions of individuals?” (40). For Dewey, cultural change is nothing but a “subset of natural selection” (40), a non-biological evolutionary process that nonetheless is inevitably conditioned by nature.

Eddy maintains her focus on Chicago and continues by offering a rich exploration of Addams's social philosophy. On this occasion, Eddy chooses Petr Kropotkin and Dewey as interlocutors. Both Addams and Kropotkin, Eddy explains, opposed social Darwinism and defended the importance of “mutuality” in social relationships (60). Kropotkin put the emphasis on the notion of community and on the necessity and benefit of mutual aid among its members. In consonance with Dewey, Addams, for her part, highlighted the idea of the individual as a relational being and the influence of the environment in the development of morality. In Addams's view, Eddy argues, “both an individual's sense of the good and social context can vary over time. The ethic must ‘fit’ the environment. The environment in turn shapes personal character.” As Eddy adds, “for reform Darwinists such as Addams, human poverty was not caused by individual sin or defect but is rather shaped by environmental conditions” (65).

Eddy continues her nuanced account of Addams's philosophy by bringing attention to one of the most interesting aspects of her social theory: namely, the radical rejection of paternalism and Addams's appeal for the democratization of human relations. As Eddy writes, “Addams emphasized cooperation. Characteristically she would object when philanthropists assumed a paternalistic

attitude.” In her view, Eddy states, “people should work ‘with, not for’ others” (87).

Eddy concludes the book by analyzing the current status of the debate about the fruitful and often controversial intersection between evolutionary theories and ethics through the work of several highly visible figures, particularly Richard Dawkins and Stephen Jay Gould.

Eddy’s book is a succinct and informative introduction to a fascinating field of study. *Evolutionary Pragmatism and Ethics* will be of interest to students and scholars of pragmatism, ethics, and religious studies, and to those interested in evolutionary theories and their intersection with philosophy. At the same time, the aim of the book is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of American pragmatism or of evolutionary theories—readers who are looking for a detailed exploration of these topics will be disappointed. Its goal, instead, is to offer a vivid description of the origin and development of the productive convergence between these two areas by exploring a vast array of interpretations and theories to which Darwin’s revolutionary work gave rise.

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