

Editorial Introduction

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When Robert Neville and I first discussed the prospect of editing a collection of essays honoring John E. Smith, we immediately discounted the idea of putting together a festschrift in the traditional style. As the term indicates, the festschrift is a Germanic idea that works best if the honoree is either a scholar of technical expertise or a philosophical system builder who has written an architectonic body of work that can be measured, tested for soundness, and, where need be, remodeled. Our concern was not that Smith was not a scholar. His editorial work with the writings of Jonathan Edwards alone (not to mention his commentaries on a variety of other American philosophers and German idealists) would qualify him as that. Nor were we concerned that Smith had not developed a sustained philosophical view. Only the most superficial reading of Smith's corpus of philosophical writings could miss his constant attention to the analysis of experience throughout his career. No, the problem for us was that neither of these pictures of Smith does justice to the man and his work. In fact, they may even assume a vision of the philosopher that Smith's own activities in the profession and his own writings have sometimes sought to undermine.

According to Smith, philosophy should be a communal, not a merely individualistic, enterprise. Long before it became fashionable in a postmodernist sense, Smith reminded us that philosophy is not the disembodied march of abstract ideas through history, but the reflection of flesh-and-blood human beings who try to understand their experi-

ence and address the problems of their time and place. This is one reason why Smith has always maintained the philosophical importance of understanding the history of philosophy. Historians of philosophy recognize that the ideas they analyze can only be understood and appreciated in their larger social and historical context. Those who deny that the history of philosophy is itself a philosophical project only show their ignorance of their own social and historical conditions. That philosophy can be studied independently of history is in fact an idea we can date, that is, philosophical ahistoricism is itself best understood as a development in the history of philosophy.

As we discussed the possible contents of this book, Neville and I realized that a distinctive contribution of Smith's life as a philosopher was his contribution to rebuilding a communal sense of philosophy in America when it often seemed intellectual community was under attack on many fronts. There were those ahistoricists who liked to think philosophy had been reborn and that the past was only the record of philosophical sins, unworthy of careful attention. There were those Gnostics influenced by the European continent who marginalized themselves by developing a jargon unintelligible to all but the initiate. There were those Anglo-based neoscholastic analysts who would cite no one (except each other) and who tried to bring under reign the messiness of life by refusing to discuss anything but the most desiccated version of human experience. The community of philosophers in America was about to dissolve. In the following introductory essay, Robert Neville explains some of Smith's role in reestablishing philosophical pluralism in America during that time. It helps explain why we think of Smith when we think of the "recovery of philosophy in America."

Against this background, we called on a diverse group of people to contribute to this volume. It includes both colleagues and students of John E. Smith, and the chapters address various topics in the history of philosophy—American philosophy, German idealism, process philosophy, the philosophy of religion, and comparative philosophy. These fields have all been addressed by Smith in his varied writings, and the individual essays often discuss directly some aspect of Smith's thought. However, the unifying theme is not a direct discussion of Smith's individual ideas themselves, but rather the communication of a clear sense of the type of American community of philosophers Smith has helped create and nurture. Some chapters discuss directly the recovery of phi-

losophy that is underway and that has been inspired by Smith's leadership as a scholar, a member of the academic community, and a philosopher. Other chapters simply address the kinds of issues that find a place within that recovery. All the essays share a sense of philosophy as the enterprise that takes seriously the richness and complexity of human experience as its starting point.

In the next chapter, "Philosophy's Recovery of Its History," George Lucas traces more fully one key aspect of the recovery of philosophy, the renewed interest in the history of philosophy as a form of doing philosophy. In this far-ranging essay that covers a trend in metaphilosophical thinking from Kant to Reichenbach, Lucas shows an acute awareness of philosophy as an enterprise increasingly located within, and responsive to, the needs of the modern academy.

The next two chapters, my own essay "Intimations of Religious Experience and Interreligious Truth" and Kuang-ming Wu's "The Spirit of Pragmatism and the Pragmatic Spirit," remind us that philosophy in America today is not limited to the ideas of Western Europe and North America. Asian traditions of thought have become part of the dialogue in our pluralistic philosophical discourse. My discussion deals with the impact of Buddhist-Christian dialogue on my thinking as a philosopher of religion. Because of my experience with that dialogue, I have found it necessary to reevaluate some basic presuppositions both of the philosophy of language and of epistemology as they have usually been applied to the understanding of religion. Wu's essay engages a topic that Smith himself initiated: the discussion of common ground in certain traditions of Chinese philosophy and American pragmatism. As a student of Smith and one sensitive to the role of culture and history in the development of philosophy, Wu explores the similarities and differences between Chinese and American humanism as they apply to their respective pragmatic orientations.

The Asian thought discussed by Wu and myself is part of the pluralistic context of education in America today. Increasingly, Americans wonder whether it is not only permissible but even essential that we expand the "canon" in our schools to include the voices of what had been marginalized, Orientalized, or ignored in our traditional syllabi. This is a sticky issue in our society today, but in his essay "Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Pragmatic Recovery of an Educational Canon," George Allan addresses the problem head on using William James as an

inspiration to show the merits and limitations of both sides of the debate.

Douglas Anderson's essay, "John E. Smith and the Heart of Experience," also draws on the tradition of American pragmatism, especially Dewey, in analyzing poignantly Smith's view of experience and the nature of self. In his balanced analysis of the problems involved, Anderson shows ways in which Smith's use of pragmatism can address issues related to self that the so-called neopragmatists cannot.

In his "Whitehead's Distinctive Features," Lewis S. Ford begins his clear and perceptive account of the major features in Whitehead's thought by arguing that Whitehead should be included as an *American* philosopher. In doing so, he agrees with the position taken by Smith. However, Ford notes, that although Whitehead's thought has been embraced by many philosophical theologians in the United States, philosophers have typically ignored him. Ford sees this as a common lack of understanding about the nature of Whitehead's metaphysics, the ineluctably important problems it addresses, and the significance of its approach. Ford then outlines the key features of that metaphysical vision, showing its radical reconception of subjectivity, the theory of relations, and the importance of novelty.

Richard Hocking's essay, "Emergence and Embodiment: A Dialectic within Process," complements Ford's discussion by exploring more fully the nature of process philosophy in terms of two kinds of process: that of nature and that of history. Hocking initially explains why these two processes are often considered exclusive and separate, but then constructs a powerful argument for why they should be understood as complementary and interdependent. He does this through a provocative analysis of the two processes in terms of what he calls "emergence" and "embodiment."

As the sequence of the last three essays has shown, in thinking about Smith and the recovery of philosophy in America, it is possible to go either in the direction of John Dewey or in that of Alfred North Whitehead. Both philosophers have been important to Smith in different ways. This is a point of departure for Donald W. Sherburne in his essay, "The Goldilocks Syndrome." He suggests that, like most philosophers today, Smith is pulled in at least two directions as to defining the limits and capabilities of our "philosophical aspirations." In a metaphilosophical discussion rich with metaphor and insight, Sherburne chal-

lenges philosophers like Smith to articulate where they stand on this important issue and develops a justification for his own, basically Whiteheadian, point of view.

Merold Westphal takes us further into metaphilosophical questions in his essay, "Philosophy as Critique and as Vision." In his reflection on what the recovery of philosophy can and should mean, he draws provocatively on the two images of philosophy as critique (identified with Socrates) and philosophy as vision (identified with Plato). In the dialectic between these two as represented in the Platonic *Dialogues*, Westphal argues, philosophy can recover its original mission of where the practical and the contemplative, the political and the metaphysical can meet. In the conclusion of this chapter, he suggests that the dialectic between these poles is exemplified in the lifework of Smith.

In analyzing the nature of philosophy, the issue also arises as to the relationship between philosophy and religion. For exploring this relationship, the position of Hegel is an almost inevitable starting point. Errol Harris's essay, "All Philosophy as *Religionsphilosophie*," gives a thorough and well-documented interpretation of Hegel's position, showing that Hegel believed that philosophy depends on religion and cannot be separated from it. By articulating carefully and incisively the relations among philosophy, philosophy of religion, and religion in Hegel's thought, Harris shows that philosophy aspires to the knowledge of God as expressed in the Christian Trinity.

Of course, Hegel was not (despite what he himself might have thought) the first Christian philosopher to reflect on the nature of religion. Of the ancients, probably no Christian philosopher was as perceptive in analyzing his own religious experience as was Augustine. Carl Vaught's "Theft and Conversion" adds a new layer of insight to Augustine's own reflections on the relationship between the individual and the community. Vaught's interpretation shows beautifully the way the stealing pears episode led Augustine from community to a negative association of isolated individuals, whereas his religious conversion took him from individuating personal experiences to religious community. One lesson of Vaught's analysis that confirms a fundamental premise of Smith's own approach is that religion is best understood from the standpoint of religious experience, and that experience must be studied in its full richness and complexity. Augustine's autobiographical reflections and Vaught's own attention to detail and connectedness

combine to give us just the kind of deep description needed to help us better understand the fundamental character of religion.

In his essay, "American Philosophy's Way around Modernism (and Postmodernism)," Robert Cummings Neville performs a major recovery of the American tradition of philosophy. Building on formulations first worked out by Smith in relation to the American pragmatists, Neville identifies a distinctively American philosophical tradition that includes key thinkers as far back as Jonathan Edwards and as far forward as today. What is more important, Neville articulates how this tradition contributes its own perspective that eludes several of the key shortcomings both of modernism and of postmodernism. In so doing, he sets an agenda for the recovery of philosophy in America.

The culmination of this volume is, of course, John Smith's own "Philosophy in America." As we have seen, the various contributions to the book span a broad range of interests and special concerns. Yet Smith engages each one individually, showing both his philosophical virtuosity and his ability to engage in a variety of conversations. At the same time, he sprinkles into this commentary the discussion of formative experiences in his philosophical thinking, demonstrating yet again that philosophy is most vigorous insofar as it engages the world of experience. By sharing our reflection on experience, we build a reflective philosophical community. That has been the goal of his teaching and writing throughout his career, and it is appropriate that in this concluding essay we see him doing what he does best and what he (and all of us who have contributed to this volume) value most.

In conclusion, I too will reflect on a formative experience in my own philosophical career. I was in my second year of graduate school at Yale, and I had a chance meeting with an old friend from undergraduate days who was also attending graduate school, but in a different department. In an almost rhetorical manner I asked him how he was doing in his degree program. He had always been an excellent scholar and had graduated from Yale *summa cum laude*. I was shocked, therefore, when I learned that he was failing his courses and was going to drop out. When I asked what happened, he replied, "I started to look carefully at my professors as people, not just scholars, and I asked myself whether I wanted to be like them. I decided there wasn't a single one I would want to be like." Stunned by his comment, I turned the inquiry to my own situation. After a moment's reflection, I said, "If I could become someone like

John Smith, that would not be a bad thing. " That was almost a quarter of a century ago, but I stand by the analysis.