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Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth

Robert B. Westbrook

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"The pragmatists' response to the claim that theirs is a deeply American philosophy has been less to challenge the claim than to attempt to embrace it on their own terms. . . . One could speak of a national philosophy as one could not speak of a national chemistry or physics. But national cultures were complicated and often conflicted. Hence the relationship between a philosophy and a national culture could be at once close and fraught with tension."—from *Democratic Hope*

Pragmatism, as Richard Rorty has said, "names the chief glory of our country's intellectual tradition." In *Democratic Hope*, Robert B. Westbrook examines the varieties of classical pragmatist thought in the work of John Dewey, William James, and Charles Peirce, testing in good pragmatic fashion the truth of propositions by their consequences in experience. Westbrook also attends to the recent revival of pragmatism by Rorty, Cheryl Misak, Richard Posner, Hilary Putnam, Cornel West, and others and to pragmatist strains in contemporary American political thinking. Westbrook's aims are both historical and political: to ensure that the genealogy of pragmatism is an honest one and to argue for a hopeful vision of deliberative democracy underwritten by a pragmatist epistemology and ethics.

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