

SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY



provides an introductory philosophical foundation for specific classroom activity, which has some substance--something rare in philosophy of education today.

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The Community of Interpreters. Robert S. Corrington. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987. xiii+111. \$24.95.

Corrington accomplishes the Promethean task of applying classical American philosophy to biblical hermeneutics. He shows "how such classical American thinkers as Pierce and Royce laid the foundations for a hermeneutics of greater power and scope than that which has evolved in Europe" (xi). Furthermore, Corrington emphasizes Emerson's establishment of nature as the ultimate text of interpretation. Finally, he applies the work of Justus Buchler to the problem "of community and its bearing on the horizontal structures of interpretation" (48). What emerges from Corrington's study is a horizontal hermeneutics.

The opening chapter is an excellent study of how Peirce's major articles of the 1860's influenced Royce's theory of interpretation as presented in *The Problem of Christianity*. Corrington explains how Peirce's semiotics enabled Royce to construct a hermeneutics based upon the community of interpreters.

While Corrington finds fault with the narrowly drawn relationship of self and text found in the hermeneutics of Continental thinkers, he remedies this subjectivistic view with the community of interpretation. Using the concept of horizon found in Husserl and developed by Gadamer, Corrington shows that "the community and not the self forms the horizon for each hermeneutic act" (31). Because of its complexity and extended temporal nature, the community is capable of sustained comparison and play among signs that the individual is not. Objectivity resides in the ability of the community to be an arena for the detailed comparison of individual interpretations.

However, Corrington also finds fault with Peirce for making the scientific community normative and with Royce for excluding communities that do not meet his idealistic framework. By redefining the concepts of order, community, sign and horizon through an appropriation of the work of Justus Buchler, Corrington has remained true to the insights of Peirce and Royce while expanding on their work. A further example of Corrington's originality is his linkage of Royce's concept of loyalty to John W. Miller's metaphor of the Midworld and Karl Jaspers's notion of the Encompassing. I am looking forward to future work by Corrington that explains the relationship between semiotics and this metaphysics

created in connecting the work of Peirce and Royce with the Midworld and the Encompassing.

Corrington agrees with Royce that the early Christian community is much more important for an understanding of Christianity than a search for a historical Jesus. Thus, here is an example of the community of interpreters engaged hermeneutical activity.

Applying Emerson's emphasis of nature over the text, specifically the Bible, Corrington explains that hermeneutics is shaped by the community of interpretation and nature. Nature is an interpretive process of interaction and evolution. In fact, human communities are part of nature. Our search for meaning, our interpretation, is mediated through nature.

Whereas Continental hermeneutics has overemphasized human texts, Corrington concludes that the proper context for hermeneutics is a democratic community searching for eschatological hope. Texts must be placed within a community of interpretation that is capable of correcting solipsism. "More encompassing than the sum total of all texts is the unending community of interpretation, which gives all texts their ultimate meaning"(106). The goal of this community is a hope that guards against of nihilism.

Corrington does a fine job in suggesting the sources and general direction of American hermeneutics. However, there are a few questions that need further study. While Corrington places the individual within a community founded upon nature, he does not clarify the interactions of nature and society. Can human beings change nature through interpretation? What effects would this have on future interpretation and on nature? Another question is what is the correcting function of the community? Must individuals submit their interpretations to the stamp of a temporalized political community? If so, then a stifling atmosphere could develop that would hinder philosophical creativity and growth. Finally, how does Corrington wish to respond to the success of Continental philosophy in offering a framework for the study of texts, especially in the humanities?

This monograph is a challenge to American scholars to find their provincial roots for the hermeneutical project. I only wish it could have been expanded beyond a monograph so that Corrington's ideas could have been explained in more detail. Also, I fear that philosophers will hesitate in turning to a study found in a series on biblical hermeneutics. However, the challenge of this text should not be overlooked by philosophers interested in the problem of interpretation.

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