This is a collection of essays that aims to mark out a place for American philosophy as it moves into the twenty-first century. Taking their cue from the work of Peirce, James, Santayana, Dewey, Mead, Buchler, and others, the contributors assess and employ philosophy as an activity taking place within experience and culture. Within this broad background of the American tradition, the essays reveal a variety of approaches to the transition in which American philosophy is currently engaged. Some of the pieces argue from an historical dialogue with the tradition, some are more polemically involved with American philosophy's current status among contemporary philosophical "schools," and others seek to reveal the possibilities for the future of American philosophy. In thus addressing past, present, and future, the pieces, taken together, outline a trajectory for American philosophy that reinvests it from a new angle of vision.

We employ the term "experience" in the title. "Experience" is a notion that American thinkers since Emerson have attempted to recover from its classical empiricist usage. In its traditional form, "experience" indicated a kind of subjective enclosure in which the self was walled off from an external world. In its American reconstruction it has come to mean the larger realm of natural transaction between self and world. Thus, for American philosophy, experience is not a barrier to knowing the world, but rather, as John E. Smith argues, "a valid medium of disclosure through which we come to know what there is."

More concretely, doing philosophy "in" and "through" experience has firm roots in the classical tradition. Consider, for example, Dewey's conception of ideas as instruments of inquiry linked to the problems of men, not simply the technical problems of philosophers. The problems of men inevitably imply the centrality of lived experience for philosophy. In seeking, for instance, to reconstruct the philosophy of education and the practice of pedagogy, Dewey argued for a marriage between the lived experi-
ence (of students and teachers) and education, reaffirming that education is not just formal preparation for a job but is integrally connected to life and its problems.  

The reader will note that our contributors regard American philosophy as a kind of inquiry and not a specific "school" or "system." It yields results that vary radically in content and style. It is a kind of inquiry that includes not only the systematic approaches of Peirce and Justus Buchler but also the more culturally involved approaches of Dewey and John McDermott. What we have, now as before, is a philosophy in transition that is guided by a common belief in the fallibility of finite inquirers and a shared concern to have experience, in its widest sense, provide the constraints on how we think about the world.

Our rationale for this volume has been to emphasize the sorts of themes (self, community, meaning, and interpretation) that have been prevalent in the tradition of classical American philosophy. Such themes of course remain integral to contemporary philosophical investigation, whether in American philosophy or other traditions and styles, as they continue to re-focus attention on common human experience.

These essays represent several, though by no means all, of the approaches to philosophy in experience currently under way in American philosophy. We have tried to present here the work of younger scholars who are working in a tradition set most recently by the work of Carl Hausman, John Lachs, John McDermott, Robert Neville, Sandra Rosenthal, Beth Singer, and John E. Smith, among others. But readers will also notice the strong influence of the naturalistic thinking of Dewey, George Santayana, G. H. Mead, and Justus Buchler as well as the more idealistic influences of Emerson, Peirce, William James, and Josiah Royce. Yet, these influences are not final authorities; their work is open to criticism, development, and interpretation. In a Deweyan sense, their work is instrumental to the present writers as they carry out the transition of classical American pragmatism to its own next order of thinking.

Richard E. Hart
Douglas R. Anderson
Notes


2. See, for example, Dewey’s *How We Think* (1933) and *Experience and Education* (1938).

3. Indeed, it should be mentioned that, while this volume does not directly address the work of A. N. Whitehead, there are a number of scholars who are pursuing speculative thinking by way of Whitehead’s writings.