any evidence that the president “approached reconstruction with any such partisan intent” (p. 3). Nevertheless, the evidence is there—plenty of it—to support the inference. One might ask Harris if he believes that Lincoln would have championed any form of reconstruction that might have produced a Democratic majority in the years to come. He is on sounder ground when he challenges those historians who portray Lincoln as changing his reconstruction plans to accommodate Radical demands “for black suffrage and for other revolutionary changes in Southern society” (p. 4). This will probably get the author in big trouble with the Lincoln industry.

Mind-reading aside, Harris has given us a lucid, readable survey of Lincolinian reconstruction, concentrating, of course, on those Confederate states with substantial areas under northern control where there was an opportunity of getting the process under way. As such, it is a useful contribution. Whether, as he asserts, his book “fills a void in Lincoln and Civil War-Reconstruction historiography” (p. 4) depends on how one defines “fill” and “void.” There are, after all, only 275 pages of text. The main shortcoming in an otherwise good, sensible book is the inadequate treatment of Lincoln’s actions during the last eight or nine months of his life, which saw many sinuous twists and turns, many of them behind the scenes, that would have, if analyzed, given considerable additional depth to our understanding of the subject at hand.

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Brian Lloyd’s book represents another effort on the part of a younger generation of historians to explain why older scholars were wrong to underestimate the potential of radicalism in American history. The author acknowledges the validity of the liberal consensus scholarship that emerged in the 1950s, particularly in the works of Louis Hartz and Richard Hofstadter, but he believes that the conservative nature of the American social order, one lacking in clear-cut class antagonisms, need not trouble us if we attend to the higher reaches of intellectual history. Here the key is, he insists, the theoretical compatibility between European Marxism and American pragmatism.

The effort to render pragmatism compatible with Marxism had been undertaken in the pre-World War I years by Robert LaMont and William English Walling, and it reached philosophical sophistication two decades later in Sidney Hook’s Toward an Understanding of Karl Marx. What Marx and John Dewey had in common was a
“praxis” test of knowledge, a criterion that would verify an idea based on its ability to prove successful in the world of practice. What Lloyd does not seem to “get” is that such a criterion goes to the heart of American society in general; as George Santayana observed, pragmatism simply expresses what America is all about and thus can hardly be used as a critique of its existing institutions and practices. From Ben Franklin to William James to William Gates the test of life is what functions successfully, what enables one to cope with experience, what ultimately brings “satisfaction.” In his essays on “What Pragmatism Means” and elsewhere, William James heralded the new philosophy as fulfilling a “cash nexus.” The pragmatist “account[s] of truths in the plural,” James declared, have “only this in common, they pay.” Is this the goal of Marxism or of Wall Street?

Lloyd is one of a number of scholars who believe that pragmatism, whether wedded to Marxism or not, constitutes a radical stance in American history. Where is the evidence? Charles Sanders Peirce, the original genius of pragmatism, sought to exclude political questions from philosophy, was skeptical of democracy, and came from a family that opposed the abolition of slavery. James condemned the Haymarket labor strike and hailed women’s place in the home, and Dewey wrote almost nothing on such social issues as race and poverty.

Although Lloyd expects too much of intellectual history, he is on stronger ground when he criticizes the new social history for leading us to believe that the working class offered the possibility of radical revolution emerging from the cauldron of modern industry. Lloyd is critical of English Thompsonianism (E. P. Thompson) and its American variant in the work of Herbert Gutman, which led a generation of young historians to see the seeds of radicalism in working-class neighborhoods, as though a class that dances together rises together.

*Left Out* often seems desperate in trying to reconceive America in order to rescue history from consensus liberalism; yet its author shows every sign of a first-rate intelligence. Particularly learned is his treatment of Thorstein Veblen. Lloyd rightly shows Veblen’s misplaced hopes, articulated among other places in *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* (1914), that industrialism and modern science would extirpate premodern animism and militarism. Less convincing is his contention that Veblen misunderstood Dewey’s pragmatism when he saw it as the rationale for expediency at the expense of “idle curiosity.” The expression Dewey hated most, it should be noted, was “otiose,” and his belief in practical ideas was as fervent as Henry Ford’s. Contrary to Lloyd, Veblen was prescient about a pragmatism that would see life as “shrewd management—a body of maxims of expedient conduct.” Look around you!

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