

REVIEWS

THE HEART OF WILLIAM JAMES. ed. Robert Richardson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. 342 pgs. \$29.95.

Commemorating the centennial of the death of William James, Harvard University Press has published a collection of seventeen pieces, edited and introduced by James biographer Robert Richardson, that represent James's most famous and significant ideas. The book serves as a digest of excerpts from Harvard's nineteen-volume *Works of William James*, which appeared from 1975 to 1988, and is considered the definitive edition of James's writings. This new book, handsomely produced, complements several other collections: *William James: Essays and Lectures*, edited by Richard Kamber and Daniel Kolak (Longman Publishers); *Pragmatism and other essays*, edited by Giles Gunn (Penguin); *The Writings of William James*, edited by John McDermott (University of Chicago); and the Library of America's two volumes of James's works.

Two of Richardson's selections rarely appear in collections: "The Ph. D. Octopus," in which James derides the privileging of a degree that he himself never earned over other measures of brilliance; and "The Philippine Tangle," his criticism of America's foreign policy that, Richardson writes, shows James "in a blind rage. . . .as one of the strongest anti-imperialist voices of the time." Fulfilling the aim of the book to show James's central ideas, Richardson includes selections from *The Principles of Psychology*, *Pragmatism*, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, and *A Pluralistic Universe*. Clearly addressed to non-specialist readers, perhaps a new generation of readers coming to James for the first time, Richardson provides an accessible overview of James's life and main ideas, and brief introductions for each selection. He presents James as an energizer and life affirmer who "stood for the individual, and he argued that each individual matters." This is the James who delivered *Talks to Teachers on Psychology; And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals*, the source of four selections. From *Essays in Religion and Morality*, Richardson chose "The Energies of Men" and "The Moral Equivalent of War," both certainly notable, but consistent in tone with James's talks to teachers and students. Besides introductions, the collection includes annotations from the Harvard volumes. While not ground

breaking, *The Heart of William James* serves as a fine introduction to James and a fitting celebration of his life's work.

Linda Simon
Skidmore College
lsimon@skidmore.edu