

Editorial

A number of the articles in this issue are themed around pragmatism, one of the most influential philosophies of the Twentieth Century. Pragmatism as a philosophical movement started in America in the first quarter of the last century. Those who describe themselves as pragmatists tend to place more emphasis on human needs, desires and values than they do on truth and objectivity. Most pragmatists insist that what is claimed to be 'objective' and 'value-free' is, in truth, always shaped by our own subjectivity. They often question the impartiality and neutrality of 'reason'. Some even go so far as to identify truth with usefulness. Undoubtedly, the leading pragmatist philosopher of recent years is Professor Richard Rorty, who contributes to the dialogue 'What is Pragmatism?' towards the end of this issue.

The articles on pragmatism begin with Chris Horner's 'Introducing pragmatism', which explains in more detail what pragmatism actually is. Neil Gascoigne then contrasts the pragmatist's attitude towards science with, on the one hand, that of the kind of realist who believes science is and should be value-free, and, on the other hand, that of an anti-realist who accuses Richard Dawkins et al of having elevated science to the status of a new religion. Gascoigne's article is then followed by a fascinating dialogue about pragmatism between Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty, James Conant and others. The final article is a previously unpublished lecture by Hilary Putnam; It sets out what Putnam thinks is both unique and valuable about pragmatism. Putnam's article is longer and, in places, a little more difficult than usually is usually published in *Think*. However, having read the preceding articles on pragmatism, you should be well-prepared to grapple with it.

Before you reach the pieces on pragmatism, however, you will find a number of highly combative and enjoyable articles on a whole range of topics. The conflict in Iraq is the focus of essays by Richard Norman and Richard Ryder, both of whom are critical about the case for war. Ted Schick poo-poops some

New Age ideas about Eastern Mysticism and modern physics. Michael Ruse takes Jenny Teichman to task over her contribution to *Think 7*. And Robert Groothius rebukes Nigel Warburton (also in *Think 7*) for treating Pascal unfairly.

Stephen Law, Editor