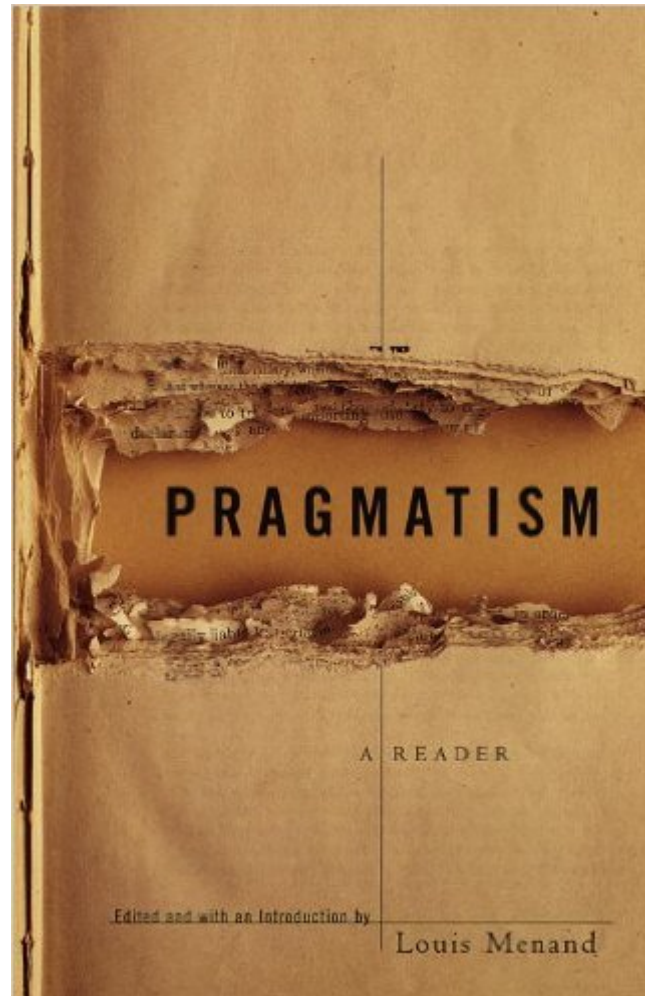


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Pragmatism: A Reader



Synopsis

Pragmatism has been called America's only major contribution to philosophy. But since its birth was announced a century ago in 1898 by William James, pragmatism has played a vital role in almost every area of American intellectual and cultural life, inspiring judges, educators, politicians, poets, and social prophets. Now the major texts of American pragmatism, from William James and John Dewey to Richard Rorty and Cornel West, have been brought together and reprinted unabridged. From the first generation of pragmatists, including the Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes and the founder of semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce, to the leading figures in the contemporary pragmatist revival, including the philosopher Hilary Putnam, the jurist Richard Posner, and the literary critic Richard Poirier, all the contributors to this volume are remarkable for the wit and vigor of their prose and the mind-clearing force of their ideas. Edited and with an Introduction by Louis Menand, *Pragmatism: A Reader* will provide both the general reader and the student of American culture with excitement and pleasure.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is astounding! It manages to accomplish in around 500 pages the twin tasks of giving a functional outline of the rise and rise of pragmatic thought and also to give examples, old and new, of that same pragmatic thought. The three more well-known "founders" (popularisers) of this philosophical method slash attitude are here in C.S. Peirce, William James and John Dewey along with an interesting selection of more modern pragmatists, such as Richard Rorty (of course!), Cornel West and Hilary Putnam. One name that is missing from the contemporary selection is Stanley Fish,

but since he seems to aim his sights indiscriminately he may be thought to be rather roguish for this sane and coherent selection of writings that the editor, Louis Menand, has pulled together. In his introductory piece Menand charts Pragmatism's birth in the universities of north eastern America in the second half of the nineteenth century and points up some of its distinctives (of which there are very few and deliberately so). This piece is worth the price of the book itself for its clarity, insight and authority. The choices Menand makes in presenting the pragmatic thinkers will always be one of judgment and decision (Are the two writings he chooses from Richard Rorty's work, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing" and "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism" really more appropriate to this collection? I would choose others.) and we may quibble with one or two and suggest others but Menand has made his choices and given his rationale and we, as readers, can ask no more.

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