Edwards places upon him the duty of religious service. But Edwards was also human, with the concerns of any eighteenth century man in his social status. (An interesting selection included here is "Receipt for Slave Venus.") He was, however, no mere product of his age—he was an extraordinarily gifted thinker and engaged community leader, and this is exemplified nowhere as well as in this collection.

Among other things, Edwards is American philosophy's early champion. The editors of this fine volume have given us enough evidence to convince any reader

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One can (more or less) recommend this book, at least to those interested in Emerson and Slavery. How important these largely occasional writings are for an understanding of the real (Classic) Emerson of the more polished works remains an open question. Emerson was doubtless more of an "activist" on slavery than the image of him as an Olympian philosopher would suggest, but 'more' is a bit vague. How much more? The publication of these writings does add to our understanding of Emerson; but exactly what, and how much, must be left to other volumes to decide. Joel Meyerson is, of course, the better known of the editors. This volume (like old Gaul) is divided into three parts. I- The "Historical Background" is mainly by Professor Gougeon. It is, on the whole, well written; but, the author's use of trendy jargon is not helpful (at least in my reckoning). We are given many names, such as Theodore Parker or Thomas Wentworth Higginson, with no explanation of who they were; but most events are explained. For example, William Ellery Channing, William Henry Channing and Ellery Channing are mentioned, with no explanation of how they are related. On p. 9, William Ellery Channing is described as a "teacher", but was he not more a "preacher?" On p. 13, we are told that the abolitionists "threatened the economic status quo", or on p. 14 that they "espoused extreme anti-institutional positions." Is this not more 20th Century jargon?

On p. xv, we are told that Emerson had "eschewed single issue reforms." (On p. 15, Gougeon also speaks of "Pres. Andrew Jackson" (sic).) On p. 16, Gougeon speaks of "moralistic social reformers like Emerson and Channing". Is the term 'moralistic' really helpful? (Is it not sociologism?) On p. 19, he speaks of "Emerson's aversion to such public reform activity." Was it indeed mere "aversion?" On p. 20, he speaks of Emerson's "highly controversial 'Divinity School Address". Was it merely "controversial"? On p. 45 he speaks of an "established elite." One could cite other examples of such mere jargon. This may be "generational", but I did not find such verbage helpful. Also, on p. 31, Gougeon states that Elizabeth Hoar was a "fiancée of Emerson's deceased brother". (Gender-bender?) Gougeon does show that Emerson was more of an anti-slavery activist than commonly supposed, but does not really help decide:
How much more? II- The heart of the books is the texts by Emerson on Slavery, some not previously published, or if so in corrupt form. These do doubtless show "another Emerson" than the classic works, but (I fear) that it will only be to activists that they seem supremely important. I still prefer the Essays. I am not sure just how important these texts are, especially to the general reader. To me, they seem interesting but hardly earthshaking. III- The "Textual Commentary" is mainly by Joel Myerson. It is doubtless all very scholarly; but such scholarship will doubtless seem largely irrelevant to those "activists" to whom this volume is mainly directed. Even I could not really find anything in this "textual commentary" that helped me to decide just how important these "texts" are to our understanding of Emerson. The volume also concludes with some helpful "Notes" and an "Index". Perhaps, if I had read Gougeon's Virtue's Hero: Emerson, Antislavery and Reform (1990), this book would have been more helpful to me, assuming it is better than his introduction to this volume.

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While pragmatic criticism advocates no particular policies, it does possess a specifiable politics. It is a politics distinguishable by the democratic preference for rendering differences conversable so that the conflicts they produce, instead of being destructive of human community, can become potentially creative of it; can broaden and thicken public culture rather than depleting it.


In his introduction to this collection of nine essays, Steven Mailloux uses this quotation to help focus his central theme. In a post-modernist world characterized by a plurality of perspectives and cultures and lacking any privileged foundation to provide a necessarily acknowledged authority, he explores how language can be used so that human problems are addressed for the common good rather than manipulated for private gain. Mailloux is issuing a call for a renewal of rhetoric, the study of the use of language to communicate, and he hopes to use the sophistry and pragmatism of the book's title to inform this renewal. Sophistry in ancient Greece is here discussed as a reform movement against the dogmatic philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, with Sophists recognizing the practical need to be able to discuss ideas and to clearly present one's views in situations, especially political ones, where the truth is not self-evident. This description sets the context for examining this role of rhetoric in a parallel reform movement in modern philosophy, that of the American Pragmatists and their more recent neopragmatist incarnations. The Pragmatists' are described as sharing the Sophists' concern that