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
theoretical activity, such as philosophizing, grow out of and have a relevance back to our concrete experience, that theory does make a difference in practice.

To encourage this renewal of rhetoric the contributors (including three SAAP members, Charlene and Hans Seigfried and Joe Margolis) take a wide variety of approaches: examining the essential role of rhetoric in the political education offered by Isocrates in ancient Athens; arguing that English composition courses must be given a central rather than peripheral role in higher education; showing the way to a non-authoritative rhetoric by way of Bakhtin's dialogics; critiquing as anti-political and isolationist neopragmatism's rejection of theory; examining the union of argument and rhetoric now that the argument has lost its demonstrability; showing via James and Nietzsche that arguments cannot without distortion be abstracted from their concrete life contexts; using Henry James' The American Scene as an example of rhetorical openness, i.e., the ability to wait in the presence of meaninglessness for meaning to come from without and not be peremptorily imposed from within; describing pedagogy as the central process in producing and disseminating knowledge in a culture and then developing a pragmatic, non-hierarchical pedagogy; and finally pushing neopragmatism beyond its comfortable "conversations" to a more radical pragmatic concern with transformation, especially among a culture's marginal peoples. One essay describes a clever implementation of Dewey's notion of the Public, using computers as a neutral medium for students and teachers to realize common interests, pursue research ideas and publish results for broader reaction.

Several common concerns tie these views together and in turn make sense of the effort to newly understand the relation of sophistry and rhetoric through the focus of pragmatism. First, in our post-modern world there is no given foundation which can guarantee knowledge or certainty. Our claims to knowledge are often traps which cut us off from the world rather than increase our abilities within it. Second, we live in a world where human pain and suffering is institutionalized (education of the poor, wages of women and minorities, etc.) and thus must be politically addressed. Democracy is the best political means to use in order not to intentionally increase this suffering, and to participate in democracy one must know how to use language effectively, both to convince and to be convinced properly. To this end, the topics of inquiry and knowledge, deception and error, health and happiness are all discussed. And third, rhetoric, when properly understood, is the arena where theory and practice meet, the arena where classification and the actions taken as a result of these identifications. Here the authors turn to sophistry and pragmatism to clarify this dynamic notion of rhetoric. In the twilight of traditional homeric culture in ancient Greece, the Sophists appeared to help the culture face the ineffectiveness of its traditional values and to promote language skills (versus mysticism or materialism) as the primary tools for developing new values. American Pragmatism served a similar purpose critiquing the authoritarian world views of institutionalized capitalism, Christianity and academia and promoting inquiry, discourse and concerted action as the skills needed to find happiness in an evolving world. Mailloux and his collaborators use these historical examples to provide support for a renewed recognition of rhetoric's central role in maintaining and developing a culture.
This dynamic rhetoric of inquiry and discovery certainly reflects a dominant concern in classical American Pragmatism. This volume generally does a good job of distinguishing the democratic and practical concerns of these thinkers from the more recent "neopragmatists." However, several writers promote the resurrection of the Sophists' reputation by means of continuing the Platonists' literal and uninspired reading of the highly rhetorical Plato which strikes one as strange in a volume devoted to the power of rhetoric. Plato recognized the potential of rhetoric for both benefit and harm and therefore, like the Pragmatists, developed communication as a central philosophic issue. Following the history of rhetoric as a constant companion of philosophy, rather than an episodic one, might provide even more light on our current situation than the use of just these two historical examples. Yet debates over interpretation is exactly what should encourage one to read these provocative essays. They provide a stimulating appropriation of philosophy by what purports to be a separate discipline.

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John Peterman


This definitive text is the single best work on Peirce's semeiotic (as Peirce would have spelled it) allowing scholars to extrapolate beyond Peirce or to apply him to new areas by simply beginning: "As presented in Liszka ..." The comprehensive explication of Peirce's theory is succinct, readable, and accurate; it is well documented (excepting for fewer references to *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, than expected), providing an excellent organization of all aspects of the semeiotic. It is an introduction, but also a reference for understanding the vocabulary used and coined by Peirce.

The book is divided into four parts, the first, "The Discipline of Semeiotic," is the shortest and describes what Peirce's semiotic was as a formal, normative science and how it fit into the larger corpus of his theories. Liszka offers (p. 14): "Semeiotic, as a branch of philosophy, is a formal, normative science that is specifically concerned with the question of truth as it can be expressed and known through the medium of signs, and serves to establish leading principles for any other science which is concerned with signs in some capacity." The last part of the final phrase is a catch-all that could include fields of science which might, some day, come to recognize the role of signs within the dynamics of their discipline.

The second chapter, "Semeiotic Grammar," defines signs, the component parts of signs, how signs are divided into categories or types (typology), and the classification of the sign types. The chapter concludes with the most useful explication of the ten classes of Peirce's signs. The third chapter, "Critical Logic," "Is concerned with those types of signs, such as legisigns, symbols, dicents, and arguments, that are capable of expressing and inferring information" (p.53). The final chapter, "Universal Rhetoric," "Is the least