Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism

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Published by Fordham University Press

Hickman, Larry.
Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism: Lessons from John Dewey.

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Preface and Acknowledgments

For the most part, the essays in this volume were written with the aim of extending the reach of John Dewey’s insights into areas where they have so far had little or no recognition. The underlying claim is that his work still offers much that is fresh, and that when properly understood, it is capable of making important contributions to contemporary philosophical debates.

Following the practice advised by the fifteenth edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (section 8.85), I have capitalized Pragmatism and its cognates throughout “to distinguish them from the generic words used in everyday speech.” I have done the same for Instrumentalism and its cognates.


Special thanks are due to James Downhour for the diligence and patience that he brought to the preparation of the typescript for this volume. Special thanks, also, to the entire staff of the Center for Dewey Studies: James Downhour, Barbara Levine, Michael McNally,
Paula McNally, Karen Mylan, and Harriet Simon for the energy and care they bring to the task of collecting and editing the research materials that make volumes of this type possible.

During the final stages of the preparation of this volume, I received the sad news that Richard Rorty had passed away. In several of the following chapters I have taken issue with Rorty’s reading of Dewey, and even argued that his version of neopragmatism did not always avail itself of the full range of philosophical tools that the classical Pragmatists offered us.

Nevertheless, I think it important to point out that during the last quarter of the twentieth century American Pragmatism broadly conceived, as a way of thinking about the complex problems and prospects of human life, had no more dedicated champion than Richard Rorty. If there is to be a Rorty biography, I hope it will tell the story of his many efforts to place Dewey’s books in places where they were greatly needed. For more than twenty years, Richard Rorty was a dedicated supporter and friend of the Center for Dewey Studies. He will be missed.
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