Interpreting America
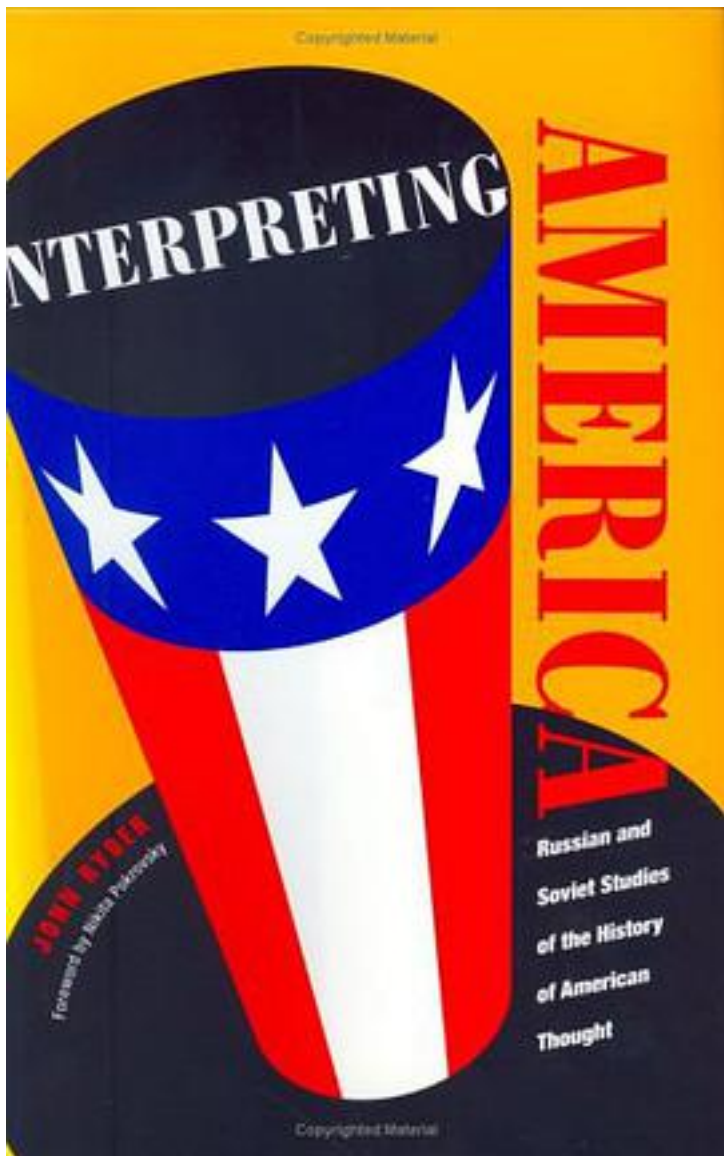

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More scholarly works on the history of American philosophy have been completed in Russian than in any other language outside of our own; yet most of that body of work has not been translated or studied comprehensively. Consequently, Soviet-era efforts to understand American thought have remained almost entirely unknown to Western scholars.In his pioneering new book Interpreting America John Ryder makes available for the first time to English-speaking readers Russian views of the full range of American philosophical thought: from seventeenth-century Puritanism through the colonial and revolutionary periods, nineteenth- century idealism, pragmatism, naturalism, and other twentieth-century movements and figures. Using his own accurate translations, he clearly reconstructs a chain of core ideas, emphasizes the most essential concepts of each writer's work, and gives a multidimensional reconstruction of the arguments of each author.By taking mainstream Soviet philosophical commentators like Baskin, Bogomolov, Karimsky, Melvil, Pokrovsky, Sidorov, and Yulina seriously and letting them speak for themselves, Ryder shows not only what Soviet philosophers and scholars thought of American philosophy (and why they were so interested in the first place) but also the nuances of the internal disagreements among Soviet thinkers about what American philosophers were saying. He also reveals a strong continuity between contemporary, post-Soviet Russian philosophy and earlier Soviet work.Perhaps no other book has ever explored in such a systematic manner the ways in which one philosophical system has regarded another. Ryder's revealing study of how others have viewed us helps to clarify the depth, richness, and complexity of our own American philosophical heritage.

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