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Title: EJPAP Thematic Issue: Pragmatism and Common Sense

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Pragmatism and Common-Sense

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The 2017/2 issue of the EJPAP will discuss the relationships between pragmatism and common-sense. Its goal is to reflect on the importance of the notion of common-sense for pragmatism, both from a historical and a theoretical point of view, and to inquire whether pragmatism provides a distinctive and original approach to this concept.

Pragmatism understands human action as grounded on general habits of behavior. The dimension of habituality is what allows human beings to cope with environmental conditions in a way that makes it possible for them to feel at home in the world. The notion of common-sense is therefore intrinsically relevant to a philosophical approach emphasizing habitual interactions with the world. Moreover, pragmatists have often proposed a kind of “conservatism” in epistemology – that is, they argue that common-sense beliefs need not be justified until there are authentic or “living” reasons to doubt them. In other words, pragmatists disallow merely possible skeptical scenarios as reasons to doubt.

Thus, if the concept of common-sense is central to pragmatism in this (and other) ways, it is nevertheless questionable whether a pragmatist approach implies a distinctive account of common sense that differs, essentially, from those available in other traditions of thought. To know these, we would need to answer the following kinds of questions: (1) Do pragmatists make use of a unique version of common sense or one that overlaps with other uses? (2) If it overlaps with other uses, how does this work? For example, one might consider the different roles of common sense in different contexts; (a) common-sense can be used to highlight the conceptual or normative primacy of the “ordinary” over the “derived” or refined products of scientific investigation; (b) alternatively, it can be used to defend the opposite thesis, that is, that everyday practices are open to a continuous and never-ending process of revision, through which they incorporate within themselves the results of

science. Or, (c) common sense can be deployed either as an epistemological concept (which provides a sort of justification for certain claims to knowledge) or, in a sort of Deweyan spirit, as a tool to defeat the very possibility of epistemological accounts of knowledge. In this latter sense, focusing on the notion of common-sense can reveal those theoretical assumptions which are at the basis of different versions of pragmatism.

We welcome contributions from any area of philosophy, and encourage social scientists and theorists of politics to also participate. Possible topics for discussion are: a) the historiographical assessment of the relation of pragmatism to the Scottish philosophy of common-sense; b) the influence of the theory of evolution on the pragmatist account of common sense; c) the similarities and differences between pragmatism and the “philosophy of the ordinary”; d) the possible relations to authors as different as Wittgenstein, Foucault, Bourdieu, to name only the most important ones; e) the relation between common-sense and science; f) the relation between pragmatist common-sensism and issues in contemporary epistemology such as the epistemology of virtues or the know-that/know-how distinction; g) the role played by a pragmatist-inspired notion of common-sense in social sciences.

Papers should be sent to roberto1gronda [at] gmail.com and gabriele.gava [at] gmail.com by May 31st, 2017.

They should not exceed 12.000 words and must include an abstract of 150-400 words and a list of works cited.

Papers will be selected on the basis of a process of blind review.

They will be published in December 2017.

Keywords: European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy, Common sense, Critical Common-Sensism