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Category: Publication

Title: Language or Experience: Charting Pragmatism’s Course for the 21st Century

Description: Call for papers for a special issue of the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* (Volume 6, No. 2, 2014)

Guest editor: David Hildebrand (Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy, University of Colorado Denver, USA)

Thirty-plus years ago, Richard Rorty published *Consequences of Pragmatism*. One consequence of that book—along with other subsequent work by Rorty—has been to challenge the centrality of “experience” for pragmatism’s conceptions of truth, morality, and reality. Rorty denigrated “experience” argued that the notion should be eliminated from pragmatism. He criticized pragmatists like Dewey and James for either lapsing into bad faith (offering experience as a substitute for “substance,” or “mind,” etc.) or for simply lacking the linguistic tools (devised later by analytic philosophy) to escape philosophical dead ends.

Rorty’s challenge, one may safely assert, created both space and motivation for the development of a more language-centered pragmatism, sometimes called “neopragmatism” or “new pragmatism.” This language-centered strategy has become important in the work of figures such as Robert Brandom, Huw Price, Cheryl Misak, Michael Williams, and Bjørn Ramberg.

However, while Rorty was trying to eliminate experience from pragmatism, contemporaries of Rorty (e.g., John J. McDermott and Richard Bernstein) were elucidating the notion and arguing for its indispensability to pragmatism. In a recent book (2010) Bernstein argued that a pragmatic conception of inquiry requires experience: “Redescription,” Bernstein writes, “no matter how imaginative, is not enough.” Bernstein traces this lesson to Charles S. Peirce’s view that “experience involves bruteness, constraint, ‘over-and-againstness’”. Experience is our great teacher. And experience takes place by a series of surprises.” Without this element, Bernstein argues, experimental inquiries lack friction. This experience-centered approach informs the work of a variety of recent contemporary pragmatists such as Thomas Alexander, Richard Shusterman, Charlene Haddock Seigfried, Gregory Pappas, Douglas Anderson, and many others.

This issue of the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*

seeks to provoke debate about the motives and stakes behind these two approaches to pragmatism. We welcome any contribution that (i) takes a stand defending “experience” or “language” as central for (neo/new)pragmatism in the 21st century or (ii) explains the importance of “experience” or “language” for pragmatist applications in other disciplines— aesthetics, political theory, literary criticism, environmental ethics, medical ethics, public administration, etc. or (iii) proposes (neo/new)pragmatist formulations that resolve or dissolve familiar tensions between language and experience (possibly by showing them in innovative relations or by re-interpreting their derivation from classical or neopragmatist works).

FORMAT AND DEADLINES: Papers must

- be written in English
- be limited to 12,000 words
- include an abstract of 200-400 words
- include a list of works cited

Papers should be sent as an email attachment to David Hildebrand (hilde123@gmail.com) before December 20, 2013 with “EJPAP Submission” in the subject header. Acceptance of papers will be determined before February 15, 2014. Papers will be selected on the basis of a process of blind review and published in the December 2014 issue of EJPAP. Please address any questions to David Hildebrand, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Colorado Denver (hilde123@gmail.com).

Link: CFP

Keywords: Pragmatism, Experience, Language