

PRAGMATISM TODAY

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It is a special pleasure for us to introduce the inaugural volume of *Pragmatism Today*, the journal of the Central European Pragmatist Forum (CEPF). CEPF held its first conference ten years ago, in 2000, in Stara Lesna, Slovakia, and it has continued to hold biannual conferences since that time. The purpose in creating the CEPF was twofold: 1) to provide an occasion for European and American specialists in pragmatism and American philosophy generally to become acquainted with one another and with one another's work, and 2) to advance the study of both the history of pragmatism and its contemporary development. *Pragmatism Today* is an additional effort toward the same two ends.

As philosophers on both continents are well aware, there has been a sharp increase in interest in the history of pragmatist thought and in pragmatism as a significant conceptual tool for contemporary philosophy. Historically, the pragmatist tradition represents a rich strain of philosophical thought, and there continue to be numerous studies of its classical figures, primarily Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and Herbert Mead. *Pragmatism Today* intends to be a forum for further studies of this pragmatist tradition.

Perhaps even more importantly, though, pragmatism has become a significant voice in current philosophical discussion and debate. The person most responsible for that development, again both in Europe and in the U.S., was Richard Rorty. Since the publication of *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* more than thirty years ago Rorty developed a distinctive form of pragmatist thought, drawing primarily on his sympathetic reading of Dewey, that has stirred the philosophical imagination of many current thinkers. Despite his recent and untimely death, Rorty's work continues to be a source of insight and a growing body of commentary. *Pragmatism Today* will also provide an occasion for ongoing articulation of the meaning and implications of the neopragmatism that Rorty and others represent.

In addition to his own insights, one of the most significant results of Rorty's work has been that it has redirected attention to the role that thinking along pragmatist lines can play in the consideration of current philosophical issues. For example, in recent years philosophers in all traditions have had reason to concern themselves with the general question of objectivity and constructivism. Developments in post-modern thought have been especially relevant to this theme, though so have debates within the analytic traditions that follow on earlier Austrian, British, and American predecessors. Pragmatism, it

turns out, has its own distinctive approach to these questions, one that may well be able to resolve some of the more thorny problems associated with it.

Along more practical lines, throughout its history pragmatist philosophers have been particularly concerned with social and political issues. The themes of the social self and the development of democracy that so concerned Mead and Dewey, for example, are no less relevant today than they were throughout the 20th century, and pragmatist philosophy continues to have a great deal to contribute in both theoretical analysis and practical application. When Dewey spoke of democracy as a form of life characterized by ongoing communication among members of a community and across the boundaries of communities and nations, he articulated a point of view that might serve us very well in an increasingly internationalized environment. *Pragmatism Today* intends to offer pragmatist philosophers and critics an opportunity to explore these and other topics of moment.

The philosophy of pragmatism, including both of its versions, classical pragmatism and neo-pragmatism, offers us a wealth of ideas that can help us to solve the problems of our current global predicament as well as to answer the crucial questions of how to live and what to do. Pragmatism in the contemporary world is a unique philosophy which has preserved and amassed valuable ideas with the potential both to influence the lives of men and women and to provide a reconstruction and transformative impact on all spheres of human life and action. Pragmatism is a *transformational, anti-dogmatic and creative philosophy*. Its key feature is an approach (or a method) rather than a doctrine (or a fixed body of ideas) to be endorsed by philosophers and non-philosophers. On the other hand, pragmatism is by no means an opportunistic or wildly relativistic, un-principled philosophy without norms and values. Pragmatism cherishes its own norms, values, and principles, and it has its own set of ideas. It also has its own broad vision of the world, one that is relevant to the current global situation.

Philosophy for pragmatists is a *tool*, but a cherished tool to be employed in an intelligent reconstruction of all aspects of human experience. The global purpose of this philosophy is to provide inspiration to develop and integrate our efforts in and through creative intelligence.

In recent years the CEPF meetings and a growing number of other regular conferences throughout Europe have helped to invigorate the study of pragmatism and have enabled a cross-fertilization among European and American philosophers. Many of the papers and essays from these conferences have been published, and no doubt will continue to be made available in book form. CEPF, however, also sees a need for and a value in a serial platform in which pragmatist thinkers can explore one another's ideas and develop their own. *Pragmatism Today* provides that platform, and we invite all

interested philosophers from around the world, not exclusively from Central or Eastern Europe, to contribute to future issues.

Pragmatism Today will be published twice a year as summer and winter issues, and in the future we expect it to develop further into quarterly issues, and possibly to include standard print versions. It will publish original papers and essays in all genres of philosophical work: articles, discussions and dialogues, interviews, conference and research reports, invited symposia, and other material. A special focus will be on contributions devoted to the exchange between pragmatism and other traditional or contemporary European schools of thought, research into the non-American roots of pragmatism, and the like. A specific section will be devoted to book review essays with a critical reading of a host of contemporary works being published within the pragmatist mode.