

Department of Philosophy Colloquium Series

FEATURING SCOTT PRATT AND ERIN MCKENNA



Dr. Scott L. Pratt
University of Oregon
Dean of the Graduate
School
Professor of
Philosophy



Dr. Erin McKenna
University of Oregon
Professor of
Philosophy
Director of
Undergraduate Studies

Fanaticism and the Future of Dewey's Past

ABSTRACT

*Some recent Dewey scholarship has taken a linguistic turn dismissing the need for a philosophy of experience since a language philosophy is enough to keep the conversation going. We will argue that Dewey anticipated this debate a century ago when he sought to account for the connection between German philosophy and the politics that led to the First World War. In his 1915 lectures, published as *German Philosophy and Politics*, Dewey argued that a philosophical view, more than any political or economic factors, was essential to the outbreak of the war. His thesis was that German philosophy (mostly Kant and neo-Kantianism) made war a necessity and, in the introduction to the second edition published in 1942, that Hitler's rise and actions depended on the same philosophical commitments. The problems of the past, the formative result of what Dewey called a "logic of fanaticism," are the problems of the American future underlined not by German philosophy, but by the increasingly widespread trend in American philosophy, manifested most recently as linguistic pragmatism. It severs the connection between experience and reason and makes freedom something that is talked about more than something that is achieved and tracked in experience. The future of this strand of Dewey scholarship risks reinforcing the very view that Dewey sought to challenge and runs the risk of masking American fanaticism.*

Thursday, December 1, 2016 | 3:45 PM | YMCA 401