

David Hildebrand

*Could Experience be More than a Method? Dewey's Practical Starting Point*

Recent debates have arisen over whether Dewey sought or eschewed a metaphysical project. Charlene Haddock Seigfried argues that Dewey is best read as eschewing metaphysics in any strong sense of that term; whatever descriptions he concocted for experience were meant to «thicken» his account of engaged intelligence. William T. Myers argues that while Dewey rejects foundational metaphysics, he must be read as having (and needing) an empirical, fallible, and experimental metaphysics. Using this debate as a pretext, this paper argues that despite Dewey's caveat that experience is only a method, his own denotative method nearly forces us to at least render a metaphysical sketch of experience as stuff at the starting point of inquiry. There is an intimate and co-dependent connection between «method» and «stuff». I explicate that connection and show how denotation depends upon its correlative stuff, primary experience. I conclude by drawing back to what seems to me as the larger conundrum of any discussion of the starting point.