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“Introduction”

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Introduction

Bjørn Torgrim Ramberg as Philosopher and Mentor — Editors' Introduction

It is with great pleasure that we offer you this collection in honor of Bjørn Ramberg's career as philosopher and teacher. The essays touch on both of these features; the philosophical concerns that have motivated Ramberg's reflections, as well as his guiding role as teacher and mentor for many of the contributors to this volume. We are eager to let the essays speak for themselves but will briefly touch on these two themes in this short introduction.

In terms of philosophical work, allow us to point to a few highlights and overarching themes in Ramberg's oeuvre. Ramberg burst onto the scene with his book on Davidson's philosophy of language, which he interprets as an attempt to expose and remove the dubious theoretical assumptions philosophers have made in the study of language (1989). This text was extremely well-received by both Davidson and Rorty, but perhaps less so by analytic philosophers interested in maintaining Davidson's status as a constructive, systematic and metaphysical thinker. Other important treatments of Davidson's views followed, including a discussion of his anti-representationalism and its link to his criticism of skepticism (2001). In addition, there is Ramberg's contribution to the *Library of Living Philosophers* volume devoted to Davidson titled 'The Significance of Charity' (1999). Here, he attempts to clarify the importance of Davidson's use of charity principles in interpretation by juxtaposing them with his less appreciated conception of the physical. Davidson's response showed great admiration for Ramberg's clarification of his view. In our view, this article serves as one of the best attempts to capture the interconnectedness of Davidson's thought by structuring it around the basic contrast between the intentional vocabulary of agency and the physical vocabularies of science.

Another central theme in Ramberg's work is his discussions of Davidson and Rorty and their key debates. Here his 'Post-Ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson' (2000), must take pride of place,

as it famously and successfully defends Davidson's emphasis on the significance of intentional discourse in response to Rorty's negative reading. There is also an ongoing concern with Rorty's neopragmatism especially with its connection to the rejection of metaphysics (2008, 2011a). Further, Ramberg often places Rorty and Davidson in conversation with the continental tradition, hermeneutics and the works of Gadamer in particular (2003, 2011b). Lastly, we detect a noticeable political, social turn in some of his most recent work, where Ramberg attempts to sort out the implications of his neopragmatist view for our moral, social, and cultural lives (2014, 2017, 2018). Here, he further draws on recent work in sociolinguistics (2016, 2025). As indicated, all of these themes and many more are addressed in the contributions that follow.

In terms of Bjørn's role as a teacher and mentor, I (Sinclair) will very briefly speak to my own case by simply noting his extreme kindness and generosity in accepting me as a doctoral student many years ago. This was during a transition in his own life, when his family was deciding whether to remain in Canada or return to Norway. It would have been perfectly understandable and justified if he kindly directed me elsewhere. I am eternally grateful.

As for my case (Huetter-Almerigi), when Richard Bernstein told me I should talk about my work to Ramberg, I was shy to approach him because he was such a major figure. I am glad I did because I didn't only find a generous and attentive mentor, but a kind and unpretentious person whose first question, when I arrived in Oslo was not about work but on whether I had brought my hiking shoes.

Bjørn left this impression on many people—exceptional intellectual abilities paired with unusual candor and modesty. The enthusiasm with which the contributors to this volume accepted our invitation provides lively testimony to the many people influenced by his thought, touched by his kindness, and owe part of their paths to his guidance.

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