Identity-in-Difference

ABSTRACT

Facile assumptions of sameness born from the desire to claim universal truths persist as a dangerous tendency. Differences matter and we have yet to fully understand what difference means. But claims of absolute difference also have a history of justifying colonization. Currently, in philosophy of race’s emphasis that race has ontological significance and in feminist philosophy’s ponderings on the differences of embodiment, too much of an emphasis on difference can leave differently racialized and sexualized people living in isolation from each other.

Absolute sameness and absolute difference do not stay true to phenomenological experience. Philosophy has long debated the metaphysics of monism and dualism, but the idea of an identity-in-difference explores the immediacy between the two. Maurice Merleau-Ponty relies upon the idea of identity-in-difference throughout his phenomenology; this paper explores at least four instantiations relevant for the present emphasis on difference in philosophy of race and feminist philosophy.