

News item. Retrieved from
<http://www.commens.org/news/item/call-papers-special-issue-%E2%80%98idealism-and-pragmatism%E2%80%99>,
20.05.2026.

Category: Publication

Title: Call for Papers: Special Issue on 'Idealism and Pragmatism'

Description: Call for Papers: European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy
Special Issue 2018: 'Idealism and Pragmatism'

The relationship between pragmatism (from classical pragmatism to the varieties of pragmatism alive today) and the Kantian and German Idealist tradition is one of the most complicated and philosophically rich in the Western canon. For example, while Hegel's influence in continental Europe waned in the second half of the nineteenth century, during that time in America interest in Hegel's philosophical system was growing. One clear indication of the level of American interest in Hegel (as well as in Kant and German Idealism) is the large number of articles about Hegel and translations of his works that were published in the early issues of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, founded in 1867 by W. T. Harris, and which were promulgated by Hegelians such as Josiah Royce, J. H. Stirling, and G. S. Morris. This American following of Hegel was the transatlantic mirror of the popularity of idealism in the UK under the stewardship of T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, and Bernard Bosanquet. However, true to Newton's Third Law, there was also considerable opposition to Hegel and idealism in the US, most notably from F. E. Abbot.

For Abbot, Hegel's absolute idealism amounted to a baroque and absurd metaphysical monism committed to the view that human discursivity is capable of intellectual intuition, the cognitive ability to create the objects of thought. On this reading, therefore, Hegel's idealism is an ontological thesis, specifically a species of mentalism. In addition, since many of Hegel's critics deemed him the paradigmatic representative of an attempt to resurrect the metaphysico-theology of early modern rationalism rejected by Kant, speculative philosophy came to be seen as instantiating the worst qualities of rationalism. To William James, idealism represented just the kind of empty and abstract rationalist metaphysical theorising that pragmatism wanted to overturn. Such a portrayal of both idealism and pragmatism created a lasting and powerful representation of both idealists and pragmatists: as Willem deVries writes, "[i]t would not be terribly difficult to construct a case that Hegel and pragmatism have very little in common, especially if one employs some of the more cartoonish characterisations of the protagonists. 'Hegel was a metaphysician on a grand scale who claimed to be able to think God's thoughts ... which he then recorded

in a fair amount of obscure detail in his system. The pragmatists were naturalistic anti-metaphysicians who worshiped the empirical sciences, which they took as the model for all rational activity, and whose highest goals aimed at finding workable solutions to particular real-life problems” (‘Hegel’s Pragmatism’, forthcoming).

In recent years, there has been a steady rise in studies of the complex relationship between the Kantian and German Idealist tradition and the pragmatist tradition. Increasingly, idealism and pragmatism scholars argue that the problem with Abbot’s and James’s portrayal of both idealism and pragmatism is it created a lasting and powerful caricature of both idealists and pragmatists that regrettably masks significant philosophical commonalities between idealism and pragmatism: rejection of Cartesian and Humean conceptions of experience in favour of a richer and conceptualist phenomenology; metaphilosophical commitment to dissolving various strict dualisms, such as the distinction between nature and normativity; commitment to the indispensability of metaphysics; commitment to realism about universals; commitment to fallibilism; rejection of the Cartesian model of human subjectivity as an inner private realm of a *res cogitans*; and a conception of human subjectivity as socially constituted self-conscious human agency. Moreover, both Dewey and Hegel argue that social institutions must be structured in a way that realises autonomy.

However, the affinity between idealism and pragmatism is in danger of being exaggerated. For example, Hegel, contra James’s radical empiricism, regards speculative cognition as a higher form of knowledge than sensory experience. For Hegel, to progress from ordinary consciousness to philosophical consciousness, one needs to overcome the natural anthropological tendency to make sense of things principally through perceptual experience. Peirce’s realist metaphysics is more a posteriori and empirically informed than Hegel’s speculative synthetic apriorist realism. As such, for Peirce, metaphysics is an empirical science, whereas for Hegel, metaphysicians are not only concerned with providing an a priori account of the structure of reality to support the special sciences, they are also interested in uncovering the ways in which reason manifests itself in the world.

Our goal in this special issue on idealism and pragmatism is to bring the idea of convergence between Kant and German idealism and pragmatism under question. We, therefore, have a strong commitment to include contrasting, non-dogmatic perspectives on the matter: articles that give compelling reasons for thinking there is a significant connection between idealism and pragmatism as well as articles that give compelling reasons to deny such a connection.

Confirmed contributors:

- 1) Daniel Brunson
- 2) Vincent Colapietro
- 3) Shannon Dea
- 4) Willem deVries
- 5) Paul Giladi
- 6) Fabio Gironi
- 7) Terry Pinkard
- 8) Jörg Volbers
- 9) Aaron Wilson

Papers should be 9000 words maximum, exclusive of references, prepared for anonymous review with a separate cover page, and accompanied by an abstract of no more than 200 words. The submission deadline is 31st May 2018. Please feel free to contact any of the guest editors in advance of submission: paul.giladi [at] gmail.com; fabgironi [at] gmail.com; aaron.philosophy [at] gmail.com.

Final submissions should be made electronically to ejpapsi2018 [at] gmail.com.

Keywords: European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy