

News item. Retrieved from <http://www.commens.org/news/item/pragmatism-and-psychologism>, 09.01.2026.

Category: Publication

Title: Pragmatism and Psychologism

Description: *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, Volume 9, No. 1, 2017

Guest Editors: Rosa Maria Calcaterra and Roberta Dreon

According to the paradigmatic formula offered by Kant, the philosopher's task consists of demonstrating "how we ought to think" as opposed to "how we do think" - that is, logical rules or norms must be separated from the functioning principles of the human mind or from psychological laws. For Kant, as well as for all those who have accepted his 'normative' approach to logic, the "how we do think" falls within the realm of psychology, whose task is indeed 'to describe' the actual features and conditions of human thought. Authors such as Frege and Husserl adopted this stance, that they contrasted to the so-called 'psychologist' account of knowing and thinking processes. As a matter of fact, the philosophy of the past century contains a dramatic oscillation between a strong condemnation of psychologism across-the-board - targeting phenomenology as well as certain emerging areas within analytic philosophy - and a more recent trend in the philosophy of mind and in the cognitive sciences to naturalize philosophical inquiries in a way that welcomes the translations of existing philosophical vocabularies into psychological ones.

According to the enemies of psychologism, James, Dewey, and Mead - though not Peirce - were responsible for a 'psychologist fallacy' consisting in conflating objective causes or necessary rules of logical processes with subjective reasons; as a consequence, pragmatist conceptions sharing Dewey's understanding of logic as the natural history of thought have been criticized for missing the very point of logic altogether. Yet for the pragmatists the very dualism of logic and psychology was a problematic theoretical constructions that needed to be submitted to critical inquiry. Indeed, the very gist of pragmatist arguments such as the reject of the fact/value dichotomy in the name of the intertwinement of logic with the affective, biological and cultural sphere could be read as attempt at rethinking the relationships between logic and psychology. And pragmatist "cultural naturalism" can be seen as similarly attempting to overcome the psychologism/anti-psychologism divide. Actually, to those who pursue the goal of naturalizing philosophy, "cultural naturalism" sounds like a strange, ambiguous creature, basically as untrustworthy as every form of emergentism. For what kind of psychologism, critics might again ask, eliminates "consciousness" and "mind," rejects dualistic (and reductionistic)

differentiations between the psychical/physical, and instead emphasizes social component of thinking and acting norms?

The 9, 1, 2017 issue of the European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy will investigate the perspectives opened up – or closed down – by the different pragmatist approaches to this topic, aiming at outlining their specific and potential novel role in the study of the relation between philosophy and psychology as well as of normative and descriptive philosophical stances.

We welcome any contribution that (I) will clarify classical or neopragmatist positions on this subject, (II) compare pragmatist views with other philosophical positions in the field, or (III) propose new approaches and solutions to the problems envisaged by pragmatists.

Papers should be sent to Rosa M. Calcaterra (rosamaria.calcaterra [at] uniroma3.it) and to Roberta Dreon (robdre [at] unive.it) by January 15, 2017. Papers should not exceed 12.000 words (bibliography and footnotes included) and must include an abstract of 200-400 words and a list of works cited. Papers will be selected on the basis of a process of double blind review. Acceptance of papers will be notified before April, 15th 2017. Papers will be published in July 2017.

Keywords: Pragmatism, Psychologism