
Pragmatism and Classical German Philosophy

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Abstract

The relationship between the classical figures of German philosophy and the early pragmatists is complex and difficult to address. With the exception of James, who arguably was critical of the German tradition in general, the classical pragmatists regarded their relation to classical German philosophy as one of both appropriation and opposition. For example, Peirce, on the one hand, recognizes both the merits and the flaws of the positions defended by Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, etc. Dewey, on the other hand, acknowledges his debt to Hegel, while he criticizes other figures like Kant. Focusing on how Peirce, James, and Dewey commented on central doctrines of Kant, Hegel, and other German philosophers has already thrown light on their respective views. However, an adequate assessment of the relationships between pragmatism and German philosophy cannot be limited to a consideration of the pragmatists' explicit observations. We cannot assume that the pragmatists' understanding of these figures was actually correct, as we cannot take for granted that there is no indirect influence that was not consciously recognized by the pragmatists (even for those that were more resolutely critical like James). It is by focusing on the relationships that we can detect at this deeper lever of analysis that we can gain various insights on both pragmatism and classical German philosophy.

The papers in this panel take all into consideration this complex framework in which the relationships between pragmatism and classical German philosophy need to be addressed. The first paper considers the interconnections between Peirce's account of reference and his metaphysical views on individuals, and it compares Peirce's early views with Leibniz and his later position with Kant. The second paper addresses Peirce's and Hegel's accounts of actuality in light of their respective views on experience and reason. The third paper takes into consideration James's criticisms of Hegel's metaphysics. It argues that these criticisms cannot be labelled as superficial and deserve to be taken seriously, especially in consideration of new readings of Hegel which seem to bring the two philosopher closer to one another. The last paper argues that both Hegel's and Dewey's methods in philosophy can be read as models of immanent critique. Their methods, in turn, highlight an essential feature of immanent critique that has often been neglected, that is, its self-transformative character.

Papers

Gabriele Gava (Goethe University Frankfurt): Reference and its Metaphysical Implications: Leibniz, Kant, and Peirce

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Vincent Colapietro (Penn State University): Actuality and Intelligibility: Hegel, Peirce, and Experience vis-à-vis Reason

Robert Stern and Neil W. Williams (University of Sheffield): James on Hegel
Arvi S'arkel'a (Goethe University Frankfurt/University of Lucerne): Immanent Critique as Self-Transformative Praxis: On Hegel's Phenomenological Method and Dewey's Criticism of Criticisms

Keywords: Pragmatism, German Philosophy, Charles S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, G.W. Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel