

Call for Papers:

Negative Philosophy—Philosophy of Negation:

The Concept of the Negative in Classical German Philosophy



17th Conference of the Research Network for Transcendental Philosophy and German Idealism

Organizers: Christoph Asmuth, TU Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin
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Keynote Speakers: Günter Zöller, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
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Abstract Submission Deadline: Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words to gsmoss@cuhk.edu.hk by **October 1st, 2018**.

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Conference Dates: 25.2.2019-27.2.2019

Location: Chinese University of Hong Kong

Description:

The Research Network for Transcendental Philosophy and German Idealism welcomes the submissions of abstracts of approximately 300 words on the theme of “Negative Philosophy.” Although English is preferred, papers in either English or German are welcome.

In his seminal *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant constrained the application of categories of the Understanding to a domain of objects *relative* to subjectivity. Accordingly, for Kant, what applies to all categories applies to negation as well. Negation is a condition for the possibility of experience, whose only sound domain of application are objects of possible experience. Having drawn a limit to cognition, in Kant the Absolute remains beyond the scope of the category of negation. Following Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte attempted to provide a genetic deduction of those very categories, including negation, from a self-positing first principle.

Although the unknowability of the Absolute presented a profound obstacle to philosophical knowing, Hölderlin, as well as figures we now classify as early German Romantics, e.g. Novalis, Schlegel, et alia, turned to *Poesie* (albeit in various ways) as an alternative path of conceiving and bringing form to the inconceivable Absolute. In conjunction with this aesthetic turn, mysticism and negative philosophy found their way into the center of the discourse. In the Romantic circle at Jena, the thought of Jakob Boehme was rediscovered and his thought appropriated to address the problems facing the new philosophy.

Unsatisfied with the limits of cognition imposed upon philosophy by Kant, and unhappy with the subjectivist turn in Romantic thought, Hegel brought the Absolute into the purview of philosophical knowing by means of his famed, and often misunderstood, logic of negation. The contradiction that arose with the attempt to think the Absolute in Kant was transformed in Hegel’s thought into the very means by which the Absolute is known: a dialectic in which negation itself is negated. In his later philosophy, F.W.J. Schelling introduced the distinction between negative and positive philosophy, from which he would criticize Hegel’s philosophy as an unsuccessful attempt to generate *existence* from a pure logic of self-negation. To be sure, Schelling offered his own alternative to Hegel’s negative philosophy: the positive philosophy.

In our discussions of negative philosophy, we aim to re-think the role of negation (and related concepts, such as ‘reality’, ‘determination’, ‘limitation’, ‘finitude’, etc.) in Classical German philosophy, of which here we have only given the briefest indication. We welcome all papers related to this theme in German Idealism, Early German Romanticism, and Transcendental philosophy in the German tradition broadly construed, from Neo-Kantianism to Husserl’s Transcendental Phenomenology. We also welcome papers on the relationship between apophatic theology and classical German philosophy, the putative limitation(s) of knowledge and cognition, as well as the philosophical legacy of the philosophy of negation in classical German philosophy as it pertains to contemporary philosophical discourse.