

Epistemology and the Refutation of Idealism

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Abstract:

Epistemology often stands in an occasionally hostile relation with certain prominent versions of idealism. It would not be too much an exaggeration to indicate that the decline of the fortunes of idealism coincides with the rise of the discipline of epistemology during the twentieth century. Certain key questions figure in this paper: first, where did this debate over epistemology derive from? Second, how far was epistemology conscious of an opposition to idealism? Thirdly, how coherent was the basic epistemological argument? Finally, how far have the fortunes of epistemology prospered or declined in recent decades? The Discussion suggests that Idealist reservations about the status of epistemology in the 1890's and early 1900's are very much in tune with powerful currents within both non-foundational and hermeneutic philosophies, as well as aspects of late twentieth century analytic thought.