

REALISM, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND CRITIQUE IN A METAMODERN KEY

Open Philosophy (<https://www.degruyter.com/opphil>) invites submissions for the topical issue "Realism, Psychoanalysis, and Critique in a Metamodern Key," edited by Martin Bartelmus (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf), Friederike Danebrock (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf), and Christian Wilken (Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf and Universität Koblenz).

DESCRIPTION

Though postmodernism has (allegedly) left the theoretical stage for good, we still hear its echo throughout contemporary critique – for instance in the polemical accusation against deconstructivism as being responsible for so-called ‘postfactual’ politics. Simultaneously, forms of realism and materialism have been flourishing which refer to themselves as ‘new’ (e.g. Ferraris, *Manifesto of New Realism*, Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*) and yet might not be radical innovations so much as they indicate that we remain stuck in theoretical camps inadequate to what we might call the “metamodern moment” (cp. van den Akker/Gibbons/Vermeulen, *Metamodernism*). Into this field, we would like to intervene with a topical issue for *Open Philosophy* that uses this theoretical lacuna as opportunity to reposition ourselves as critics: Do we, as critical theorists, want to call ourselves ‘realists’, and if so, in which sense? What are our claims on political efficacy? What does it mean to practise theory as critique?

A properly ‘new’ realism cannot, in our estimation, be classical realism (which, in any case, is a belated construct more than a historical occurrence) in a new guise, but must differ from it in that it is not defined in any strict opposition to constructivism, and is inclusive of fantasy, imagination, and desire. This philosophical stunt becomes possible with psychoanalysis, which helps us to claim a form of realism which is neither ‘postfactual’ nor simply naturalistic. Critique – whether we want to label it post- or not – needs to be imaginative and hopeful in some form (cp. Castiglia, *Practices of Hope*), in the sense that we need to acknowledge its utopian undercurrent. Facing the question of realism therefore also means facing the precarious distinction between invention and ideology.

We have diagnosed and conceptualised the following six fields of inquiry, which we seek to address. Our contributors may work with, but are not limited to those issues:

1. Historicising/differentiating realism: Realism is hardly a self-evident and supra-temporal concept but has its own history. Which significant moments can we identify in the history of realism?
2. Realism in/and the present: What does it mean to ‘do realism’ in the present, within an un-dead capitalist order, under circumstances of digitalisation, with a heightened ecological awareness, and in the face of an omnipresent sense of ‘crisis’?
3. Desire and imagination: Is the opposition to imagination, fantasy, and desire in which we construct realism inevitable? Can desire and imagination be an ingredient of realism without relegating them to the status of an included excluded, a status which serves political and epistemological purposes more than being ontologically justified?
4. Realism and ‘the Real’: What is the relation between the psychoanalytical Real and the notion of ‘reality’ such as it features in established realisms, and (potentially) in variations of realism still to be established? What is the relation of the Real to facticity?
5. Subjectivity and anthropocentrism: How to do realism without rewinding posthumanist theory, which rejects all philosophy that can conceive of ‘the world’ only through the premise of subjective access and correlation? Could something like a ‘symmetrical anthropocentrism’ exist?
6. Realism and/as therapy: If we give up the distinction of realistic and imaginary as radical dichotomy, do we then need to reformulate the notion of ‘traversing the fantasy’ as emancipatory act? Are we seeing an ‘attack on the imagination’ in contemporary culture and politics?

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HOW TO SUBMIT

Submissions will be collected from September 1 to October 31, 2025.

To submit an article for this special issue of *Open Philosophy*, authors are asked to access the online submission system at: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/opphil/>

Please choose as article type: Realism, Psychoanalysis, and Critique

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All contributions will undergo critical review before being accepted for publication.

Further questions about this thematic issue can be addressed to Martin Bartelmus, Friederike Danebrock, and Christian Wilken (martin.bartelmus@uni-duesseldorf.de, friederike.danebrock@uni-duesseldorf.de, Christian.Wilken@uni-duesseldorf.de).

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