

Hume's theory of concepts is generally taken to be subjectivistic and atomistic and thus presented as standing in stark opposition to the pragmatistic and holistic doctrines that gained much attention during the 20th century. In this talk, I shall argue, however, that Hume's theory of concepts is indeed much more akin to the proposals of pragmatist thinkers (like Peirce, James, Dewey, and, with certain qualifications, Wittgenstein) than many, including pragmatists themselves, probably might have suspected. As I try to show, Hume anticipates many themes central to pragmatist views on language and meaning, and actually takes initial steps towards both an anti-subjectivistic and anti-atomistic cognitive science.