



Irrational Ideas: Thinking Against Conventions

In his inaugural article, *Journal of the History of Ideas* co-founder Arthur Lovejoy observed that “an aversion from manifest and admitted irrationality is ... by no means the least pervasive or least powerful of emotions in the creature that has long, and with evident gratification, been accustomed to define himself as the rational animal.” He accepted the postulate that logic is “one of the important operative factors in the history of thought” while also insisting that irrationality constitutes an inextricable part of the history of ideas.

Honoring Lovejoy’s proposition, the JHI Blog invites paper proposals that address irrationality in the history of ideas for its [2021 Graduate Student Symposium](#). The event aims to convene a diverse group of graduate students from different disciplines working on a variety of topics, periods, genres, and regions. For the purposes of the symposium, we conceive of irrationality not only in narrowly philosophical terms, but more broadly as a description of research practices and intellectual interventions that contest hegemonic methods and explore the possibilities afforded by diverse ways of making knowledge.

Accepted participants will be asked to pre-circulate an article-length paper in advance of the Symposium. Papers might engage with such questions as:

- ❑ How have historical subjects justified practices and interventions by reference to principles beyond “reason”?
- ❑ What can intellectual history tell us about the difference between “irrational” and “non-rational” ideas and knowledge? How have historical subjects drawn this distinction?

- ❑ How have established methods of evidence and justification been challenged as fundamentally “irrational” by heterodox thinkers? What do such accusations tell us about the historical conditions in which claims to rationality become ubiquitous?

Exploring these questions, relevant proposals may address topics including but not limited to: science and pseudoscience; utopias and dystopias; paradigm shifts; misunderstandings and (intentional) misreadings.

Proposals should be no more than 500 words long and make clear how the paper responds to this call, the argument it intends to make, the source base, and how this project fits into the larger work of the author (e.g. a seminar paper, dissertation chapter, article to be submitted to a journal, fledgling idea).

Please send your paper proposal along with a one-page CV to blogjhi@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is February 28, 2021. We will notify selected participants by early April.

All questions can be directed to the JHI Blog editors at blogjhi@gmail.com.

About the Virtual Symposium format:

In light of the ongoing pandemic, the 2021 symposium will follow the precedent set by our 2020 symposium and take place entirely online on Saturday, June 26, 2021. Each participant will pre-circulate an article-length paper in advance and record a 15-minute panel presentation based on their papers that will be hosted on our website and made available to registered participants two weeks before the symposium. On the day of the symposium, participants will first workshop their article-length papers in small break-out groups led by a faculty discussant and then convene for a joint Q&A session that will be open to registered members of the public.