Representing Reality

Saturday May 6, 2017
Kellas 102, SUNY Potsdam
**SCHEDULE**

Continental Breakfast (Kellas Hall Lobby) – 8:00-9:00

**SESSION I – 9:00-10:00**

Cartesian Critters Can’t Remember – Devin Sanchez Curry

In this talk, I will argue that Descartes held the following view of memory: to remember is to reproduce an idea that you intellectually recognize as a reproduction. To have an intellectual memory is to intellectually reproduce an abstract idea that you recognize as a reproduction, and to have a sensory memory is to neurophysiologically reproduce a corporeal idea that you recognize as a reproduction. This interpretation unifies all of Descartes’s various remarks about memory, from the 1628 Rules for the Direction of the Mind through the 1649 Passions of the Soul. It also rebuts a prevailing thesis in the current secondary literature—that Cartesian critters can remember—while allowing for the corporeality of sensory memories.

**SESSION II – 10:15-11:15**

Emotional primitivism and appraisal theory – Jordan Taylor

The dominant approach to theorizing about emotions in contemporary psychology sees the physiological and affective responses brought about during emotions as triggered by some sort of appraisal. The role of the appraisal mechanism, in such theories, is to process a perceptual stimulus to determine its impact on our well-being. Since we humans are cognitively sophisticated creatures, the appraisalist approach appears to be an apt means of describing the variety of objects and events that can function as emotional stimuli. However, appraisalism is not the only game in town. This paper will offer an alternative view, what I’ll call emotional primitivism. This is the idea that emotions can be triggered directly, without mediation by internal, cognitive machinery such as appraisal mechanisms. The process of emotion elicitation is better described in terms of physiology, or psychophysiology, than psychology: rather than relying on a psychological mechanism to produce the physiological changes of an emotional reaction, it is the physiological changes that occur during an emotion episode that give rise to the psychological changes we experience as emotions.
Session III – 11:30–12:30

Attitudes and Intentions - Marie Barnett

Attitudes are sometimes described in dispositional terms. So are intentions. Intentions are sometimes described as consisting of beliefs and desires. So are attitudes. How do attitudes and intentions differ? How are they related? This talk will explore some potential answers to these questions.

Lunch (Kellas Hall Lobby) - 12:30 – 1:45

Session IV- 2:00-3:00

Neural Dynamics and Inner Representations - Ben Baker

This paper uses prevailing neuroscientific theory and practice in order to explicate and defend the idea that the physical, functional structures that explain our mental abilities are not classical, encapsulated processes that trade in inner representations, and are not properly understood in terms of abstract input-output relations. Rather, these processes are continually reshaped by their immediate temporal and neural context, and it is this disposition to reshape their functional profiles (in particular ways) that is fundamental in giving rise to mental activity. I discuss several general, well-established neuroscientific methods for describing and investigating the significant goings-on in the brain. Broadly, these examples reveal that standard neuroscience does not vindicate (though it sometimes assumes) the classical computational framework. The crucial neural mechanisms should be understood in terms of their dynamic relationships with their surroundings, putting us in touch with external objects not via inner symbols for them, but via an orchestra of spatio-temporal feedback with them.

Session V – 3:15 – 4:15

Kant’s Organic Mind - Nabeel Hamid

In this talk I sketch an account of Kant’s theory of the cognitive faculties as an organic system. By organic, in general, Kant means a being 1) whose parts are possible only in relation to a whole, in such a way that 2) those parts are reciprocally the causes and effects of one another. While the standard example of such an entity is an organism such as a tree or a rabbit – the roots, stems, leaves, and flowers acquire their functional or formal profiles only in virtue of their interlinked causal roles in the economy of a particular kind of system – I propose that it is also an accurate model of Kant’s view of the human mind. Reason, understanding, sensibility, judgment, and the emotions, each standing in functional connection to the other, constitute the whole purposive being that Kant calls “mind” (Gemüth).

Free Time – 4:30-5:30
Dinner - 5:30-7:30
Perceptual Realisms and the Geometry of Visual Space – Dr. Gary Hatfield

Let’s assume that perception is informative about a world apart from us. Philosophers have long sought to understand how this can be so by considering the relation between how things appear perceptually and how they are. This talk focuses on the recent trend in the philosophy of perception to embrace a “direct realism.” After surveying the variety of perceptual realisms and their commitments, I introduce some reflections on the phenomenology of visual space that cause trouble for most forms of direct realism. These reflections pertain to the perception of objects in the distance and, secondarily, to the perception of shapes at a slant. There is no geometrical or optical requirement that things seen at a distance appear smaller, and yet they do, a fact that causes problems for the most popular forms of direct realism. I argue that one of the lesser known varieties of perceptual realism, critical direct realism, can meet the challenges offered by the facts of spatial perception.

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ALL WITHOUT WHOM NOTHING