Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy Conference 2011
— Internalism versus Externalism —

Department of Philosophy,

Institute for Logic, Language and Computation,

University of Amsterdam, December 16 – 17, 2011

Book of Abstracts

Dear Participants and Guests!

Welcome to the 4th Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy 2011 on the theme 'Internalism versus Externalism,' — and welcome to Amsterdam!

The conference is devoted to explore how this internalism/externalism distinction relates to problems in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, epistemology, and philosophy of action.

We are happy to see that the contributions to the conference resemble the whole breadth of current discussions on the topic. We would thank everyone for their contributions and look forward to hearing the presentations.

This year, the Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy Conference features three keynote speeches by Michael Wheeler, Joëlle Proust, and Martin Kusch. As with the rest of the program, these talks touch on psychological, historical, and epistemological aspects of internalist and externalist philosophies.

By providing a platform for researchers working on various aspects of the debate, we hope to promote fruitful interaction between different branches of philosophy as well as to shed some light on the significance of the distinction itself.

In addition to the intellectual aspect we also hope that you will enjoy the social program and have a pleasant stay in Amsterdam!

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Conference committees

Organising Committee

The Amsterdam Graduate Philosophy Conference is organised by the Department of Philosophy and the Institute for Logic, Language and Computation of the Universiteit van Amsterdam.

The organisers are María Inés Crespo, Mathias Madsen, Johannes Marti, Stefan Pliquett, Dr. Daniele Porello, and César Sainz de Vicuña.

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Local Support

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Philosophy of Language
and Mind Network

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16 2011

9:00 - 9:45	Welcome and registration	
9:45 - 10:00	Opening note of the conference	

Morning session

10:00 - 11:00	**Keynote speech** Michael Wheeler	Perception, Action, and the Extended Mind
11:00 - 11:15	— Coffee break —	
11:15 - 12:00	**Graduate talk** Joey Pollock	Social externalism, communication and subjective understanding *Commentator:* Catarina Dutilh-Novaes
12:00 - 12:45	**Graduate talk** Melsen Tunca Iseri	Does Kant's Self-Knowledge Have External or Internal Content? *Commentator:* Dora Achourioti
12:45 - 14:15	Lunch (provided at the conference venue)	

Afternoon session

14:15 - 15:00	**Graduate talk** Matteo Colombo	Leges Sine Moribus Vanae: Does Language Make Moral Thinking Possible? Commentator: Julian Kiverstein
15:00 - 15:45	**Graduate talk** Jean-Baptiste Guillon	Internalism with Closure: What Pritchard got wrong *Commentator:* Christian Skirke
15:45 - 16:00	— Coffee break —	
16:00 - 16:45	**Graduate talk** Jens van 't Klooster	How do Emotions have a Role in Practical Reasoning? *Commentator:* Machiel Keestra
16:45 - 17:30	**Graduate talk** Lok-Chun Kelson Law	Autonomy in Instrumental Reasoning *Commentator:* Bas Hoorneman
17:45 - 19:30	Opening reception at Kaptein Zeppos	

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17 2011

9:45 - 10:00	Coffee and registration	

Morning session

10:00 - 11:00	**Keynote speech** Joëlle Proust	Is metacognition a form of self-interpretation?
11:00 - 11:15	— Coffee break —	
11:15 - 12:00	**Graduate talk** Johan Gersel	How to resist McDowell's epistemic argument for conceptualism *Commentator:* Martin Stokhof
12:00 - 12:45	**Graduate talk** Han Thomas Adriaenssen	Anti-scepticism and Externalism in the Wake of Descartes. The Case of Pierre-Sylvain Regis *Commentator:* Johan de Jong
12:45 - 14:15	Lunch (provided at the conference venue)	

Afternoon session

14:15 - 15:00	**Graduate talk** Aviram Sariel	Random brains-in-a-vat: a probabilistic defense *Commentator:* Robert van Rooij
15:00 - 15:45	**Graduate talk** Richard Stöckle-Schobel	Prelinguistic concepts – An argument for the social dimension of conceptual development *Commentator:* Michiel van Lambalgen
15:45 - 16:00	— Coffee break —	
16:00 - 17:00	**Keynote speech** Martin Kusch	Naturalised epistemology and the genealogy of knowledge
19:00 -	Conference dinner at Kaptein Zeppos (in room "La Folie")	

ABSTRACTS

Anti-scepticism and Externalism in the Wake of Descartes: The Case of Pierre-Sylvain Regis

Han Thomas Adriaenssen
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

One often hears that Cartesianism saddled philosophy with an internalist theory of mental content that opened the gates for extreme skeptical scenarios. This view is incorrect. One of the most prominent Cartesians of his time, Pierre-Sylvain Regis endorsed an externalistically geared theory of mental content. Moreover, like some contemporary externalists, he was euphoric about the anti-skeptical implications that such a theory appeared to have. In this paper, I assess Regis' claim to the effect that his causal theory of mental content provided a way to silence the skeptic. I conclude that Regis cannot convincingly rebut the internalist theories suggested by his contemporaries Huet and Arnauld. Moreover, the controversy between Regis and his opponent Jean DuHamel reveals that his theory suffers of internal problems that weaken its alleged anti-skeptical potential.

Leges Sine Moribus Vanae: Does Language Make Moral Thinking Possible?

Matteo Colombo
University of Edinburgh

Does language make moral cognition possible? Some authors like Andy Clark have argued for a positive answer whereby language and the ways people use it mark a fundamental divide between humans and all other animals with respect to moral thinking. I take issue with Clark's view and argue that language is probably unnecessary for the emergence of moral cognition. I acknowledge, however, that humans unlike other animals seem to posses what John Haugeland terms 'norm-hungriness': an idiosyncratic need or desire to create and abide by a multitude of norms. Our peculiar norm-hungriness, I suggest, could depend on what can be called florid control rather than on language.

How to resist McDowell's epistemic argument for conceptualism

Johan Gersel
University of Copenhagen

In "Mind and World" and subsequent writings McDowell defends the claim that experiences posses conceptual content. His argument has its outset in a series of assumptions about the rational justificatory potential of experience. In this paper I argue that one can resist McDowell's argument for the conceptuality of experience, all the while one

conserves the crucial assumptions about rationality and justification that form McDowell's key premises. The core of the response comes from arguing that McDowell overlooks that justificatory relations to experience forms a constitutive part of our grasp of observational concepts. However, the solution I suggest does not come for free. It requires us to adopt a strong externalism about the nature of experience in the form of direct realism. A position that involves rejecting that experiences possess representational content.

Internalism with Closure: What Pritchard got wrong

Jean-Baptiste Guillon
CAPHI, Université de Nantes

In *Epistemic Luck*, Pritchard asserts that Internalism is inconsistent with the Closure principle, or more precisely, that Internalism together with Closure

directly entails skepticism, so that any Internalist who doesn't want to endorse skepticism is bound to reject Closure. This contention is made in full awareness of the existence of (non-skeptical) Internalists who do accept Closure, but Pritchard proposes a clever reconstruction of the debate purportedly showing a fundamental flaw in such views. I shall argue that Pritchard's reconstruction is misconceived, and that the problem of skepticism doesn't provide Internalists with any good reason to abandon Closure.

Naturalised epistemology and the genealogy of knowledge

Martin Kusch
University of Vienna

Hilary Kornblith's naturalised epistemology centrally involves the thesis that knowledge is a natural kind like water or aluminium. In his most recent work, Kornblith seeks to defend this

thesis by attacking what he perceives to be the central alternative: Edward Craig's "genealogy of knowledge". As Kornblith sees it, Craig is committed to the view that knowledge is an artificial or social kind.

I argue, against Kornblith, (1) that Kornblith's favoured account of natural kinds -- the account developed by Richard Boyd -- does not allow for a distinction between natural and social kinds: monarchy, liberalism, and even Napoleon are all natural kinds for Boyd; (2) that Kornblith misunderstands Craig's genealogy: Craig is not committed to the view that knowledge is not a natural kind; Craig's account of how the concept of knowledge has developed is compatible with the idea that we often use "knowledge" as a natural kind term; and (3) that Craig's genealogy is in fact congenial to the general programme of naturalised epistemology.

Autonomy in Instrumental Reasoning

Lok-Chun Kelson Law
University of Pittsburgh

I will consider the possibility of autonomism as a theory of practical reason in the context of instrumental reasoning. In particular, I will closely examine two theories, one developed by David Velleman and another by Christine Korsgaard. On the one hand, I shall argue that although Velleman's conception of autonomy in 1996, i.e., the conscious control of one's behavior, is constitutive of intentional action, it fails to explain why practical reasons are possible *qua* reasons. On the other hand, I shall contend that Korsgaard's theory, while apparently more promising in showing that volition is subject to the requirement of rationality, must also accommodate some version of Velleman's theory to explain why a

principle of the autonomy of the will is also a *practical* principle, i.e., one that requires action. And even if the instrumental principle should turn out to be a rule of reasoning that one *cannot* fail, I argue that an account of intentional action like that of Velleman's is nevertheless crucial for any theory of practical reason that relies on a distinction between volition and other conative states.

Social externalism, communication and subjective understanding

Joey Pollock
University of Edinburgh

Social externalism is thought to be well-equipped to explain successful communication of mental content between subjects. Sharing a public language is supposed to make communication easy. In this paper, I argue that the account that a social externa-

list ought to endorse is more complicated than one might have expected. If social externalists desire an attractive account of communicative success, they ought to allow that a significant degree of mutual understanding between subjects is (at least) sometimes required.

Social externalists typically adopt what I will call the 'Same Content' condition on communicative success (SC). This condition states that, for a communicative attempt to be successful, it is necessary that the content caused in the hearer be the same as the content of the initial state in the speaker.

The view that I argue against is one which combines SC with the claim that shared first-personal (or 'subjective') understanding between subjects is never required for communicative success. I distinguish between two kinds of understanding – 'subjective

understanding' and 'correct represen-tation' – and argue that the kind of understanding that the social exter-nalist typically appeals to (correct representation) is not sufficient to facilitate successful communication.

By consideration of examples, I argue that denying that subjective under-standing is ever required between sub-jects results in the misdiagnosis of some communicative exchanges as successful when we have reason to believe that they are unsuccessful. I argue that denying that these examples are cases of miscommunication forces one to also deny two plausible candi-dates for goals of successful communi-cation. Firstly, that successful commu-nication is supposed to bring it about that the hearer is put in a position to navigate the world in the way that the speaker intended; and, secondly, to bring it about that the hearer is put in a position to make sense of the beha-viour of the speaker. This result is unacceptable and, as such, a social externalist who endorses SC should also accept that shared subjective understanding is also (at least some-times) required for communicative success.

Random brains-in-a-vat: a probabilistic defense

Aviram Sariel
Tel Aviv University

Putnam's brain-in-a-vat argument, a classic of semantic externalism, has been described as ineffective in the case of randomly controlled vat-world. This paper claim the countering case can be made, assuming semantics are modified to allow notions of random-ness, and the legitimacy of elementary probability analysis.

Prelinguistic concepts: An argument for the social dimension of conceptual development

Richard Stöckle-Schobel
University of Edinburgh

This paper addresses the issue of the development of conceptual abilities in childhood in light of Christopher Gau-ker's argument against prelinguistic concepts. For this, I will use a Sellars-ian social externalist framework since Gauker shares certain of its main the-ses. I will argue that a Sellarsian view implies that large parts of mindful acti-vity are inherently social. This means that the contents and categories of con-cepts are established by a language community and shared in the 'logical space of reasons'. I will then address the question of how this sociality of the mind is brought about. Gauker (2005) claims that learning a concept is identi-

cal to learning a word and concludes from this that no prelinguistic conceptual activity is possible. I want to object to this and use developmental evidence which sustains the position that children aged 9-12 months already have certain social concepts such as "agency" or "person" at their disposal. If we conceive of concepts as the tools for, or components of, judgments, then we can entertain a position that describes various types of social behaviour, like social referencing and pointing gestures as based on the concept of personhood. In order to point for somebody, we need to categorise this somebody as the type of thing one points for – we need to make a 'person judgment'. This judgment cannot be made unless one is in a position to treat non-persons and persons in different ways. Granting the possibility of prelinguistic concepts however requires a major change to Sellars's original position: Besides an explanation

of concept learning without word learning, which is beyond the scope of the paper, a framework for concepts outside of the socially shaped 'logical space of reasons' is necessary. As a final, constructive point, I will argue that such a framework is possible and consistent with Sellars's perspective.

Does Kant's Self-Knowledge Have External or Internal Content?

Melsen Tunca Iseri
Bogaziçi University

The debate between externalism and internalism about mental content is a recent philosophical problem which is expressed in these terms long after the era of Immanuel Kant. However, given the considerable neo-Kantian influence on contemporary analytic philosophy, a plausible stance that can be ascribed to him on this specific issue seems to worth investigating. In this paper, I

would like to carry out an "archeological dig" and ask whether Kant's position is closer to the internalist or the externalist. The focus of this evaluation will be the original text of the 'Transcendental Deduction of the Categories' in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he introduces the notion of unity of apperception as a capacity of synthesizing acts that enables a possibility of being conscious of the representation 'I think' which is related to a single self-consciousness in a given manifold of intuitions. I believe that Kant's revealing accounts in this chapter provide precious hints about his understanding of mental content of self-knowledge.

He pays great efforts to externalize this content in the B-Deduction. However relying on Henry Allison's 'reciprocity' interpretation, I suggest a third way that posits Kant to be neither an internalist nor an externalist but a 'recipro-

calist' who takes it as internal and external simultaneously.

How do Emotions have a Role in Practical Reasoning? Temporality, Motivation and Discontinuous Development

Jens van 't Klooster
Universiteit van Amsterdam
& Freie Universität Berlin

A difficult question facing different forms of motivational internalism is the relation between emotions and practical subjectivity. Different authors have argued that emotions form the basis for our ability to be motivated by normative practical reasons (e.g., Helm, 2001, Johnston, 2001 and Döring 2007). I will argue that emotions have a specific "momentary" temporality which is irreconcilable with the "non-momentary" way in which normative practical reasons are valid to a practical subject. A practical subject forms a unity in time, exactly by being susceptible, in different moments, to the same normative practical validity. But how then, do emotions fit in? To understand both forms of motivation in one internalist theory, it must be intelligible how one agent can be open to two qualitatively different forms of motivation. This will be possible by describing the relation of affective and rational capacities in terms of of asymmetrical explanatory relations.

References:

Döring, S (2007). "Seeing What to Do: Affective Perception and Rational Motivation." *Dialectica*: 363-392.

Helm, B. W. (2001). *Emotional reason: Deliberation, Motivation, and the Nature of Value*.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johnston, M. (2001). "The Authority of Affect." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63:181-214.

Is metacognition a form of self-interpretation?

Joëlle Proust
Institut Jean-Nicod, Paris

Metacognition is exemplified in all the activities through which one predictively or retrospectively evaluates the cognitive adequacy of one's own mental dispositions, states or properties. Some authors, such as, among others, Josef Perner, and Peter Carruthers, are defending the claim that metacognition is a form of self-directed interpretation, akin to other-directed mindreading. One can agree with these authors that metacognition in humans may involve self-directed interpretations ie. may use the conceptual interpretative resources of mindreading, without accepting the stronger claim that metacognition can never be conducted exclusively on the basis of some form of "introspection". First, evidence from comparative psycho-

logy and from neuropsychology is compatible with the view that metacognition can exist when no mind-reading is present. Second, properties such as causal contiguity, epistemic transparency and procedural reflexivity, present in metacognition, are missing in metarepresentation, while open-ended recursivity and inferential promiscuity only occur in metarepresentation. Finally, recent experimental evidence shows that engaging in self-evaluation or in theorizing about one's own mental capacity respectively produce diverging predictions. These various results suggest that agents have a direct, introspective access to a form of metacognitive experience, which allows them to evaluate their perception or their memory, even in the absence of the relevant interpretive concepts.

Perception, Action, and the Extended Mind

Michael Wheeler
University of Edinburgh

According to the extended cognition hypothesis (henceforth ExC), there are actual (in-this-world) cases in which thinking and thoughts (more precisely, the material vehicles that realize thinking and thoughts) are spatially distributed over brain, body and world, in such a way that the external (beyond-the-skin) factors concerned are rightly accorded cognitive status. David Chalmers, one of the original architects of ExC, has recently articulated an objecttion to the view which turns on the claim that the idea of cognitive extension is in conflict with an intuitive thought that we ought to preserve. Chalmers puts that intuitive thought like this: "It is natural to hold that perception is the interface where the world affects the mind, and that action is the interface where the mind affects the world. If so, it is tempting to hold that what precedes perception and what follows action is not truly mental." Chalmers proceeds to offer a defence of ExC against the worry. In my talk I'll (i) set the scene with some comments about how one ought to understand ExC, (ii) explain Chalmers' objection and his own response to it, (iii) argue that Chalmers' response fails, and (iv) suggest that we should solve the problem by rejecting the intuitive thought. This final move raises some difficult questions that I'll attempt to address, at least in a preliminary way.