Scientific Programme Postgraduate Course "The Metaphysics of Representation"

Towards a better understanding of ourselves as parts of the natural world

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In the form it has taken during its recent *renaissance*, metaphysics is the philosophical investigation of the natural world, interested in the ontological nature of things such as stones and electrons. It has tried to elucidate them deploying concepts such as essence and nature, mereological and non-mereological structure, relative and absolute simplicity and has tried to understand the interplay of these substances with non-substantial items of the furniture of the world, such as properties and powers. Even though natural things, such as stones and electrons, are already quite puzzling in themselves, issues have become especially thorny with respect to things that involve us humans, such as statues, banknotes, tables, colours and values.

Faced with these persistent difficulties, it may be useful to take a step back and widen the metaphysical perspective to include things that traditionally, in Aristotle and the medieval thinkers, fell within its purview, but have since then been largely forgotten: namely ourselves. Humans, and other intentional and representational systems, are part of the natural world and their relations to stones and electrons are part of what a successful metaphysics would explain. The study of these intentional and representational systems, however, has largely been confined to the philosophy of mind, which rarely pays attention to the metaphysical questions raised by its topic.

The aim of the present postgraduate course is to bring metaphysical tools and concepts to bear on the main problem of a metaphysics of the mind, the relation of representation. Intentional states – thinking, perception, feeling and emotions – are special in that they *represent* things other than themselves. They have contents, whereas stones – at least when considered independently of their potential use by intentional systems – have not. It is, however, still entirely mysterious, not just what content is, and how it is to be individuated, but also how it is even possible for a relation like representation to hold between us and other parts of the natural world.

The aim of the present postgraduate course is to pursue these questions, within an educational framework designed to maximise the academic benefits of the participating PhD students, most of which are part of the pro*doc programme „Metaphysics of the Mind", with the activities of which the course will be closely linked. The postgraduate

course also links in tightly with the interests of the researchers in the Sinergia project "Intentionality - the Mark of the Mental"(CRSI11_127488), and with the Swiss part of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network "Perspectival Thoughts and Facts" (PETAF).

Topics of the workshops

A striking fact about ourselves, and arguably the most important feature of intentional system like ourselves, is that we are able to be in states that have **content**. But what is it for a state to be contentful, and for it to have the content that *p*, say of representing the world as one where it rains, Maria is sad, a storm is to be expected or a dangerous dog is just in front of us? Three different answers to this question have been proposed, respectively studied in the three Sinergia subprojects: a Russellian answer analyses the having of content as a form of uptake, openness to a world that *itself* contains essentially tensed, located and egocentric facts; a second, Fregean, answer matches contentful states with abstract objects, understanding them as ways to grasp representations that are shared between subjects; a third, Husserlian, approach finally asks what it is for these states to be successful, correct or accurate, taking one of these notions as primitive. The speakers of the **first workshop** will discuss and contrast these approaches, thereby offering the graduate students (particularly those involved in the Sinergia project) an opportunity to test their own work.

A venerable approach to the problem of content goes back to Kaplan's and Perry's distinction of a "subjective" or "indexical" content of our thoughts, contrasted with their more objective and truth-conditional aspects. The study of what they call "character" has led to the development of two-dimensional semantics and a revival of Neo-Fregean theories of content. Subsequent to its use in arguments for dualism (Chalmers 1996), two-dimensionalism has known a massive burst of popularity, especially in Continental Europe, at the end of the nineties and the beginning of the last decade. Despite all the buzz it created, it has since fallen from fashion, even though it survives in academic niches here and there. The **second workshop** will try to take stock, trying to assess what the insights and shortcomings of this philosophical fashion trend were.

The **third workshop** discusses the two main elements of the representation relation, reference and predication. A contentful state, such as a perception, a thought, an emotion or a feeling, is *about* something, and represents that things *as such and such*. But can we really separate these two aspects in this way? Are the states of seeing Maria's anger, thinking about Paris, feeling afraid of a dangerous dog or feeling irritated really to be analysed in terms of a subject and of what it is represented to be? During the third workshop, these questions are to be addressed from both a foundational and a semantical perspective: does it make sense to distinguish reference and predication even at the linguistic, or more generally symbolic, level? and even if it does, can we equally speak of two different *acts* of predication and reference respectively?

The **fourth workshop** is devoted to the recent revival of these much older speech-act theories, as they were then called. Building on earlier noncognitivist theories in ethics, recent expressivists have tried to analyse content not in terms of what is said (by an utterance, say, that I am sorry), but in terms of what it expresses (my regret, a certain state of mine). In the wake of Mark Schroeder's very influential book *Being For*, much recent work has explored the possibility of giving expressivist analyses not just of moral talk, but of evaluative – and perhaps even descriptive - language in general.

The last and **fifth workshop** will try to bring these different strands together, and to apply the lessons learned (we hope) to the case of perception and emotion. Older discussions of conceptual vs. non-conceptual content, direction of fit, appropriateness and correctness conditions have suffered from insufficient attention to the similarities of perceptions and emotions to other contentful states. Recently, some attempts have been made to understand them as special cases of a more general phenomenon of evaluative intentionality. We will discuss some recent proposals going in this direction, and examine their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Programme

The present graduate school aims at organising a series of five workshops, devoted to the following aspects of the metaphysics of representation: (i) approaches to content; (ii) the legacy of two-dimensionalism; (iii) reference and predication; (iv) expressivism; (v) perception and emotion.

1st workshop: Content, 16th and 17th of March 2012
provisional list of speakers: Jérôme Dokic (EHESS, Institut Jean Nicod), Mike Martin (UCL), Seth Yalcin (Berkeley)

2nd workshop: Two-Dimensionalism, 6th and 7th of April 2012
provisional list of speakers: Diego Marconi (Turin), Richard Heck (Brown), James Pryor (NYU)

3rd workshop: Reference and Predication, 27th and 28th of April 2012
provisional list of speakers: Wolfgang Schwarz (Köln), Daniel Nolan (ANU), Zoltan Gendler Szabo (Yale)

4th workshop: Expressivism, 25th and 26th of May 2012
provisional list of speakers: Josh Parsons (Oxford), Mark Schroeder (University of Southern California), Richard Holton (MIT)

5th workshop: Perception and Emotion, 8th and 9th of June 2012
provisional list of speakers: Uriah Kriegel (Arizona), Alex Byrne (MIT), Michael Smith (Glasgow)

Apart from the invited speakers and (some of) the 50 PhD listed below, the following will take an active part in the five workshops:

Prof. Kevin Mulligan (University of Geneva)
Prof. Fabrice Correia (University of Geneva)
Prof. Julien Deonna (University of Geneva)
Prof. Gianfranco Soldati (University of Fribourg)
Prof. Michael Esfeld (University of Lausanne)
Dr. Philipp Keller (University of Geneva)
Dr. Julien Dutant (University of Geneva)
Dr. Anne Meylan (University of Geneva)
Dr. Ghislain Guigon (University of Geneva)
Dr. Christian Sachse (University of Lausanne)
Dr. Vincent Lam (University of Lausanne)
Dr. Fabrice Teroni (Universities of Berne and Geneva)
Dr. Jiri Benovsky (University of Fribourg)

Budget

The organisation of the five workshops at the University of Geneva allows us to take advantage of the existing infrastructure and reduces accommodation costs as a large number of the participating PhD students live in Geneva and can provide accommodation for the PhD students coming from elsewhere. On the 16th of March, Seth Yalcin (Berkeley) is invited by the Geneva students' association PhilEAs, who will cover part of the costs of his stay and his travel costs.

The organisation of the past workshops has shown that the chosen format is particularly cost-effective. The costs of meals and coffee breaks for the expected number of 20 participating PhD students to 8000 CHF. We calculate with 8100 CHF for the accommodation for the invited speakers (50 nights at 110 CHF, 60 CHF for meals per day) and with 8900 CHF for their travel costs (6x400 CHF for Great Britain, Germany and France, 7x800 CHF for the US and 1x800 for Australia).

To total costs of the series of five conferences therefore amount to **25000 CHF**.

Contribution to the scientific competence of the participating PhD students

The principal aim of this "école doctorale" is to give some of the 50 PhD students the opportunity to improve their knowledge of philosophy, acquire dialectical and scientific skills and to learn from the invited experts and each other. In particular, the "école

doctorale” will be very closely integrated with the pro*doc programme and its teaching module. We plan to continue the tradition started during the 2011 workshop series (cf. the final scientific report) to have “round tables” and “open discussions”, maximising the active participation of the PhD students. The participating senior philosophers will offer preparatory meetings, reading and discussing some of the relevant literature, to optimally prepare the PhD students for the workshops and to encourage them to ask questions. As the projects bring together a total of 50 PhD students, 5 professors and 8 scientific collaborators, they provide an ideal environment for fruitful graduate workshops.

Experts

We propose the following as internationally respected experts:

- Prof. Peter Simons, University of Leeds, England (p.m.simons@leeds.ac.uk)

- Prof. E.J. Lowe, University of Durham, England (e.j.lowe@durham.ac.uk)

Participating PhD students

- Robert Michels, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Emma Tieffenbach, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Willy Manseya, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Paolo Bonardi, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Damiano Costa, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Olivier Massin, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Sebastian Aeschbach, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Janna Hastings, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Damiano Costa, Université de Genève (supervisor: Kevin Mulligan)

- Davide Fassio, Université de Genève (supervisor: Pascal Engel)

- Ariel Cecchi, Université de Genève (supervisor: Pascal Engel)

- Katsuya Takhashi, Université de Genève (supervisor: Pascal Engel)

- Arturs Logins, Université de Genève (supervisor: Pascal Engel)

- Jacques Vollet, Université de Genève (supervisor: Pascal Engel)

- Akiko Frischhut, Université de Genève (supervisor: Fabrice Correia)

- Johannes Stern, Université de Genève (supervisor: Fabrice Correia)

- Amanda Garcia, Université de Genève (supervisor: Fabrice Correia)

- Salim Hirèche, Université de Genève (supervisor: Fabrice Correia)

- David Furrer, Université de Genève (supervisor: Julien Deonna)

- François Jaquet, Université de Genève (supervisor: Julien Deonna)

- Marion Hämmerli, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Pietro Snider, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Michael Sollberger, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Laurent Cordonier, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Matthias Egg, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Jakob Sprickerhof, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Tim Raez, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Antonio Vassallo, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Michael Esfeld)

- Michael Hertig, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Alexandrine Schniewind)

- Rim Essafi, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Alexandrine Schniewind)

- Martine Vonlanthen, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Alexandrine Schniewind)

- Mael Goarzin, Université de Lausanne (supervisor: Alexandrine Schniewind)

- Jack Darach, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Coralie Dorsaz, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Andrea Giananti, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Jean Bohnert, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Thomas Jacobi, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Patryk Dziurosz-Serafinowicz, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Marek Dobrzeniecki, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Federico Lauria, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Alain Pé-Curto, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Flavio Marelli, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Julia Schärer, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Gianfranco Soldati)

- Jacob Naito, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)

- Emmanuel Baierlé, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)

- Franziska Müller, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)

- Fabrice Theler, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)

- Guido Speiser, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)

- Peter Ulber, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)

- Tzu-Keng Fu, Université de Fribourg (supervisor: Martine Nida-Rümelin)