



University of Cyprus
Department of Classics
and Philosophy

SYMPOSIUM:

Mind, Language, Knowledge: The perspective *of* Philosophy

(Νους, Γλώσσα, Γνώση: Η οπτική της Φιλοσοφίας)

June 29, 2012
Cultural Centre, Axiotheas street

Organized by **Demetris Portides**
Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cyprus

Chair: Demetris Portides

10:30 Welcome Address by *Professor Ioannis Taifacos, Head of the Department of Classics and Philosophy*

10:45 **Andreas Georgalides**

“The unclarity of the notion *Gegenstand* in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”

Synopsis: In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein attempting to discuss the relationship between language and the world formulates the so-called *picture theory of the sentence*, which roughly claims that fragments of language, namely names, correspond to fragments of reality, namely objects. In order to do this it is necessary for Wittgenstein to create a conception of the structure of the world. The whole terminology of this conception is based on the crucial German term ‘Gegenstand’ (translated into English as ‘object’) which is completely vague on purpose. In their effort to escape from the problem of *Gegenstände* (objects), many commentators have argued that the terminology of the *Tractatus* is obscure. But this is not obvious. It must be proved by shedding light on the specific issue at hand here.

SYMPOSIUM Mind, Language, Knowledge

11:30 **Christos Kyriakou**

“Epistemic Goals and Ought to Believe”

Synopsis: The working hypothesis of many epistemologists is that the (epistemic) goal of inquiry is to believe the truth and avoid falsity (cf. Sosa 2003; Elgin 2004). But further reflection on this goal of inquiry reveals that the two conjuncts of the goal are in tension. For reasons I explain, the two conjuncts are inversely proportionate: the more we satisfy the one conjunct the less we satisfy the other and vice versa. Call this 'the James point' in tribute to William James (1897) whom, to the best of my knowledge, first made the point. The James point is often acknowledged in the literature but mostly in passing (cf. Kelly 2003; Wedgwood 2008) and I think its importance has gone rather under-appreciated. In this paper I explain how the James point bears importantly on the ethics of belief debate. I argue that, because of the tension between the two conjuncts, we need to weigh the two goals and adjudicate which goal is primary and which secondary. Two rival pictures of belief formation emerge on the basis of how we weigh these goals and these pictures give different incentives about what one ought to believe. I call the first picture epistemic liberalism and the second epistemic conservatism. I examine their respective virtues and vices and close with some ruminations on how philosophers with different methodological sympathies might opt for the one or the other.

12:15 **Harris Hatzioannou**

“The Non-epistemic Foundations of Modal Rationalism”

Synopsis: The version two-dimensional semantics advocated by David Chalmers has been put forward as a modal rationalistic framework that ties together the concepts of meaning, rationality, knowledge and modality. This construction is based, on the one hand on a realistic conception of possibility and, on the other, on epistemic notions such as apriority, epistemic possibility and conceivability. In this paper I argue that Chalmers has actually misconstrued the epistemic character of the latter notions so that the proposed link between the epistemic and the metaphysical domains has been rendered trivial. After presenting the essential features of the framework, I examine different philosophical accounts of epistemic possibility and compare them with Chalmers', drawing attention to the fact that the latter lacks the essential relativity that is present in all of the former. I then advance three arguments intended to demonstrate the misrepresentations in Chalmers' picture. First, I argue that the assumption of ideal rationality that goes into his account distorts the concepts of knowledge and rational inference, on which his construal of the epistemic modalities is based. Second, I argue that his commitments regarding the plenitude of epistemically possible scenarios cannot be justified against the background of a purely epistemic conception of possibility. Third, I examine the requirement of completeness that Chalmers places on his construal of conceivability, arguing that it cannot be fulfilled by an epistemic notion. I conclude with some remarks in favour of the Kripkean separation of the epistemic categories pertaining to the a priori / a posteriori distinction, from the metaphysical categories pertaining to necessity and possibility.

13:00-15:00 Lunch break

15:00 Ioannis Zeimbekis

“Type demonstratives”

Synopsis: It’s frequently admitted that thoughts can have perception-dependent referring constituents. Here, I defend the claim that they can also have perception-dependent attributive constituents: mental type-demonstrations (TDs) whose contents are properties. Comparable proposals have been put forward by Levine (2010) and Heal (1997). TDs are often non-conceptual. Adapting proposals by Perry (1993) for indexicals, and by Horgan (1998) and Recanati (2002) for recognitional concepts, I argue that in inferential thought, the contents of TDs can be represented by conceptual descriptions which are truth-conditionally equivalent (eg: ‘that colour = the colour of the Opera’s dome’). The concept of mental TDs has several useful applications for the understanding of action, memory and perceptual belief. Eg, where action is concerned, Israel et al’s (1993) ‘beliefs-how’, and Pacherie’s (2008) proximal intentions, are claimed to be states whose attributive contents are mental type demonstrations. I suggest that this helps us account for how proximal (nonconceptually represented) intentions inherit the goals of prior (conceptually represented) intentions.

15:45 Ioannis Votsis

“Arguing for Scientific Realism: Some Lessons from Confirmation Theory”

Synopsis: The most commonly cited argument for scientific realism is the so-called ‘no miracles’ argument. According to this argument, it is highly implausible to claim that the predictive success enjoyed by some scientific theories is the product of a long series of lucky coincidences. A more plausible, indeed some argue the only plausible, claim is that the corresponding theories are true, or, at the very least, contain some non-negligible truth content. The majority of realists deem novel predictive success, roughly the ability of a theory to predict hitherto unknown types of phenomena, to be particularly telling in favour of the second claim. In this talk, I argue against the superiority of novel as opposed to non-novel predictive success. I do so by pointing out that objective standards in confirmation theory can only be had if confirmational assessments remain invariant under anything other than the evidence and the hypothesis under consideration, something that is not true in accounts of novel predictive success. After laying the foundations of what I take to be the correct conception of confirmation relations, I argue that support from evidence to different parts of a theory does not spread as broadly as has been popularly maintained. Among other things, this conception of confirmation relations has crucial consequences for the defence of scientific realism, consequences that I plan to explore in some depth during the last part of my talk.