

Mini workshop on Imagination

Monday 11th July 2022

Practical information:

Room B110 (Bastions)

No registration required

Organized by Julia Langkau & Patrik Engisch

Program:

12:00: *lunch*

13:30-14:30: Amy Kind (Claremont-McKenna, CA) - *The Impoverishment Problem*

14:45-15:45: Steve Humbert-Droz (UniGE) - *Mental Images: Single or Double Content?*

16:00-17:00: Patrik Engisch (UniGe) - *Works of Fiction as a Special Epistemic Opportunity*

drinks & dinner

Please let us know if you would like to join us - especially if you would like to join us for lunch and/or dinner (Julia.Langkau@unige.ch).

Abstracts:

➤ Amy Kind - *The Impoverishment Problem*

Work in philosophy of mind often engages in descriptive phenomenology, i.e., in attempts to characterize the phenomenal character of our experience. Nagel's famous discussion of what it's like to be a bat demonstrates the difficulty of this enterprise (1974). But while Nagel located the difficulty in our absence of an *objective* vocabulary for describing experience, I argue that the problem runs deeper than that: we also lack an adequate *subjective* vocabulary for describing phenomenology. We struggle to describe our own phenomenal states in terms we ourselves find adequately expressive. This paper aims to flesh out why our phenomenological vocabulary is so impoverished – what I call *the impoverishment problem*. As I suggest, this problem has both practical and philosophical import. After fleshing out the problem in more detail, I draw some suggestive morals from the discussion in an effort to point the way forward towards a solution.

➤ Steve Humbert-Droz - *Mental Images: Single or Double Content?*

When mental images pop in our mind or when we decide to create mental images, we may distinguish two aspects of the whole experience: the *phenomenal* (or imagistic) aspect and the *interpretive* (or stipulative) aspect. As many philosophers point out, a mere phenomenal

experience is not sufficient to determine what mental images are about (see Descartes, 1641; Fodor, 1975; Wittgenstein, 1953). Experiencing cake-like features is not sufficient to determine whether I imagine a cake, a wax cake, or my brother's birthday (via the symbolic image of a cake). Both phenomenal and interpretive aspects are necessary to determine the intentionality of mental images.

The default view on mental images assumes that these two aspects are a combination of two kinds of content - aka the *Double Content View* (Arcangeli, 2019; Langland-Hassan, 2015, 2016, 2020; Peacocke, 1985; Kung, 2010; Tooming, 2018). The core idea is that the two contents can exist relatively autonomously: arguably, the same "imagistic content" (or phenomenal experience) can be accompanied by different interpretations or "non-imagistic contents" – this is the *multiple-use thesis* (Noordhof, 2002).

The Double Content View has rarely been challenged. In this talk, I will join its few critics (e.g., Hutto, 2015; Wiltsher, 2016; 2019; Stock, n.d.) and argue in favor of the idea that mental images possess only one kind of intentional content - i.e., its interpretive aspect. That is the *Single Content View*. After criticizing the multiple-use thesis, I argue that the phenomenal aspect is better captured not as a kind of representational content but as a way (or mode) of processing a single content - as originally suggested by Jean-Paul Sartre (1940).

➤ Patrik Engisch: *Works of Fiction as a Special Epistemic Opportunity*

A long-standing issue in the philosophy of fiction concerns the question of whether works of fiction can bear epistemic value. One problem with this question is that it can be understood in different ways. It can be understood in a demanding way, e.g., in terms of propositional knowledge, or in a weaker way, e.g., in terms of the mere stimulation of one's curiosity. But complexity doesn't stop here. Issues surrounding this question don't concern merely the question *whether* works of fiction can bear epistemic value, but also whether they can bear epistemic value in a *somewhat* special way. Accordingly, a further issue is whether the relation between works of fiction and epistemic values is accidental or whether works of fiction constitute a special opportunity when it comes to the imparting of cognitive values. In this paper, I argue in favor of the following thesis:

(I) The relation between works of fiction and epistemic values is not accidental and works of fiction constitute a special opportunity when it comes to the imparting of epistemic value.

(I) is not a new thesis and many have offered defenses of it (see, e.g., Gibson 2007, Vendrell Ferran 2018). My intention is to offer a new defense of (I) that takes into account the underdiscussed distinction between a) constitutive epistemic conditions and b) enabling epistemic conditions. Namely, the distinction between conditions that, when met, result in the transmission of epistemic value and b) conditions that, when met, merely influence the transmission of epistemic value.