

# EMOTION, EXPRESSION, AND LANGUAGE – A WORKSHOP WITH MITCH GREEN

MONDAY 4 NOVEMBER 2019, 1–6 PM

UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA, BASTIONS, B214

All are welcome, no registration is required.

For more information, contact [constant.bonard@unige.ch](mailto:constant.bonard@unige.ch) (main organizer).

## SCHEDULE

1:00 – 2:15 pm – **Mitch Green** (philosophy, UConn) "Expression in Language, Expression of Affect, and their Intermingling"

15' break

2:30 – 3:15 pm – **Constant Bonard** (philosophy, Geneva and Antwerp) "Neither Natural nor Non-Natural"

5' break

3:20 – 4:05 – **Benjamin Neeser** (philosophy, Geneva) "The Incantatives"

5' break

4:10 – 4:55 – **Cristina Soriano** (linguistics/affective sciences, Geneva) "Affective meaning in language"

15' break

5:10 – 6:00 – Commentaries on the three talks by Mitch Green and roundtable discussion

## ABSTRACTS

### MITCH GREEN – EXPRESSION IN LANGUAGE, EXPRESSION OF AFFECT, AND THEIR INTERMINGLING

I first set out a general approach to expression that I have been refining over the last two decades. On this approach, expression is a special type of signal, itself understood as designed transmission of information. ('Design' does not entail an intelligent or sentient designer.) Expression is then a type of signal designed to convey information about a creature's psychological state. In favorable cases it also shows that state.

Cognitive, conative, affective, and possibly also phenomenal (qualitative) states may be expressed. For some behaviors, whether they are expressions rather than just manifestations of a psychological state can only be settled empirically. One can produce behavior expressive of a psychological state without expressing one's psychological state. We may be open to the possibility of one creature expressing another's psychological state, or a state of an earlier stage of itself.

I next argue that some expressive behavior makes what is expressed perceptible. To this end we will consider an argument that emotions may in some cases be perceived, and will consider the upshot of this argument for our knowledge of other minds.

In the third part, I will consider expression in language. One locus of such activity is in speech acts, which often mandate a psychological state as their sincerity condition, while also expressing such states. We will ask why speech acts do these two things. This discussion will also put us in a position to ask how language makes possible conventional means of emotional expression. We'll end with a look at "charged" language such as pejorative terms and slurs, and consider a view of them as conventional means of expression of attitudes like contempt and disgust.

## CONSTANT BONARD – NEITHER NATURAL NOR NON-NATURAL

My partner sighs and I understand it to mean something quite specific: she would have liked to go see the movie. This is remarkable because sighs, by themselves, don't carry much information and are correlated with people being relieved, sad, frustrated, relaxed, and more (Teigen 2008, Vlemincx et al 2009, 2015). In other words, we sometimes manage to understand a sigh to mean a lot more than what correlations can tell us. In such cases, the meaning of sighs falls outside the scope of what Grice (1957) called 'natural meaning' (see also Dretske 1982 or Scarantino 2015). However, it might also fall outside the scope of Grice's 'non-natural meaning' (a.k.a. speaker meaning) since a sigh is often not intended for communication.

In this talk, I will present several other cases of meanings that are neither 'natural' nor 'non-natural' and how I believe we should theorize about them. In particular, I will distinguish between the cases that nevertheless allow an appeal to a Gricean Cooperative Principle and the cases that don't. In the process, I will introduce what I call the *Extended Gricean model*, a model of information transfer which shares many features with existing Gricean models, but which extends beyond non-natural meaning.

## BENJAMIN NEESER – THE INCANTATIVES

While different kinds of speech acts can contribute to the construction of social reality, contemporary philosophers have focused on declarations. We defend that there is another kind of speech act that is operative in the construction and the maintenance of social facts: the *incantatives*. Examples of incantatives include mottos, anthems, sermons, battle cries, and more. The main function of incantatives as speech acts is to express and generate collective emotions about shared values. We argue that through this function they can contribute to the existence of social groups such as communities. (This talk is based on joint work with Constant Bonard.)

## CRISTINA SORIANO – AFFECTIVE MEANING IN LANGUAGE

Affective meaning is pervasive in language. In this talk, I will give examples of affective meaning at different levels of linguistic analysis, with special attention to the lexicon. I will start discussing two types of affective meaning (denotative and connotative) and three ways to account for it (categorical, dimensional and feature-based approaches) transversal to all levels of linguistic analysis. I then provide examples from different languages about how affect is communicated in phonology, morphology, syntax, and the lexicon. The discussion of the affective lexicon is further organized around two variables: (a) grammatical class (the differences between nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs); and (b) figurativeness, where I will discuss the privileged link between metaphor and emotion.

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- The [philosophy department](#), Geneva.

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David Blunier and Constant Bonard, organizers.