

PHIL 405 / 505 – Philosophy of Mind 'Conceptual Analysis'

Winter Term 2010

Tue, Thu 11:00–12:20, ASH 2-02A

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A. Course overview and aims

Conceptual analysis is the topic of this seminar. Philosophers often view it as their aim to analyze central philosophical concepts, e.g. 'knowledge', 'reference', 'causation', 'intention' or 'morally wrong'. A widely used method to arrive at such accounts is conceptual analysis, i.e., the use of intuitions as to how the concept applies to various imagined situations. Our task will be to scrutinize what assumptions about the nature of concepts and concept possession underlies this practice and/or can be used to defend it. As the seminar is about metaphilosophy and general philosophical method, it ties into several philosophical disciplines, but due to importance of the notion of a concept, philosophy of mind plays a central role. Issues to be addressed include a priori knowledge, intuitions, conceptual truths, the analytic-synthetic distinction, thought experiments, experimental philosophy, two-dimensional semantics, and semantic change.

To set a background, we start out with Quine's critique of analyticity and a priori knowledge, Putnam's claim that meaning is not inside the head, and Bealer's defence of a priori armchair philosophy. Thought experiments seem to yield a priori knowledge even in empirical science, so we take a look at philosophical debates about the epistemology of thought experiments. Then we discuss two-dimensional semantics, which—unlike most other philosophical defences of the use of intuitions—offers an explicit account of concepts and concept possession that justifies the philosophical practice of conceptual analysis. 2D semantics has been prominently used to argue that one can show a priori that consciousness is not identical to any physical property.

Given the relevance of concepts, after reading week we take a look at psychological theories of concepts, and discuss whether concepts being innate matters and what the relation between the psychological study of concepts and philosophy is. Then it is time to scrutinize a recent movement that is getting enormous attention: experimental philosophy, which claims to do away with the armchair analysis of philosophical concepts by using questionnaire data. Finally, we discuss some recent defences of armchair philosophy and the use of intuitions. I shall eventually suggest that the phenomenon of conceptual change in science points to a more fruitful practice of putting forward philosophical concepts than conceptual analysis, both of the armchair and experimental philosophy variety.

B. Prerequisites

To take the class as an undergraduate (PHIL 405), you must have previously completed two philosophy classes (including one class at the 200-level or higher) or obtain my permission.

C. Required texts

The required readings consist in journal articles and book chapters, and are listed below in Sections G and H. Most of the readings can be accessed online via our course website. I may change the list of readings and the schedule of classes as the term proceeds.

D. Course requirements

- Term paper(s) 70%
- Oral presentation 20%
- Participation 10%

Term paper(s) (70%): You must write **either one long term paper**, worth 70% of credit, **or two short term papers**, each of which is worth 35% of credit. An electronic version of the long term paper is due on Monday, April 19 at 2 pm. If you choose the second option, an electronic version of the first short paper is due on February 25 at 11 am, and the second one is due on April 19 at 2 pm.

Approximate length of a long paper: 4000–5000 words if you are an undergraduate student (signed up for PHIL 405); 5000–7000 words if you are a graduate student (PHIL 505).

Approximate length of each short paper: 2000–2500 words if you are an undergraduate student; 2500–3500 words if you are a graduate student.

I am happy to provide comments on term paper drafts. In the case of the long paper and the 2nd short paper, I guarantee comments if you provide me with a draft by April 9.

Oral presentation (20%): Every student has to give one oral presentation. Your task as a presenter is to briefly summarize this meeting's readings (highlighting points that you find particularly relevant) but primarily to start the discussion by having prepared some questions (e.g. about problematic issues in the readings). Alternatively, you may present on other material that is relevant to our topic. In either case, I ask you to (a) prepare a short handout and email me a draft in advance so that I can provide comments, and to (b) make copies of the final version for the whole class, so that everyone has a summary of your presentation.

Participation (10%): Attendance and active participation is important for this class. It is the responsibility of each student to come to class prepared to actively engage in discussion. Each of you will probably have picked up different points from the readings or have questions or objections, so please share them! You can also obtain participation credit by starting topics and replying to posts at the discussion forum on our website.

E. Course website

The course has a website at <http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~twelz/moodle/course/view.php?id=77>.

Some assigned readings (and some additional literature) can be accessed via this site, and I use it to post presentation handouts. The site also contains a discussion board.

Create an account at <https://www.arts.ualberta.ca/efsboard/login/signup.php> (Arts Moodle). When accessing our course for the first time, use the enrolment key [undisclosed]

F. Academic integrity and plagiarism

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards and to uphold the policies of the university in this respect. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with the Code of Student Behaviour (online at <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/governance/StudentAppeals.cfm>) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the university. For a summary please see <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/governance/StudentAppealsCheatsheet.cfm>

The Code of Student Behaviour defines plagiarism as follows:

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

The library has a general website on plagiarism: <http://www.library.ualberta.ca/guides/plagiarism>. See in particular the section on "Avoiding Plagiarism" (sidebar on the left, among "Resources for Students").

G. Schedule of classes

Jan 5	Introduction.
Jan 7	Background 1. Quine, "Two dogmas of empiricism"
Jan 12	Background 2. Putnam, "The meaning of 'meaning'", pp. 215–47, 249–51, 256, 268–71
Jan 14	Background 3. Bealer, "A priori knowledge and the scope of philosophy"
Jan 19	Background 4. Hintikka, "The emperor's new intuitions"
Jan 21	Thought experiments 1. Brown, "Thought experiments: a Platonic account"
Jan 26	Thought experiments 2. Norton, "Are thought experiments just what you thought?", pp. 333–345, 347–349, 354–362
Jan 28	2D semantics 1. Jackson, <i>From Metaphysics to Ethics</i> , Chapter 2, pp. 28–52
Feb 2	2D semantics 2. Chalmers, "The components of content", Sections 1–7 and 10
Feb 4	2D semantics 3. Chalmers, <i>The Conscious Mind</i> , Ch. 3, Sections 1, 2, 4, and 6
Feb 9	2D semantics 4. Brigandt, "The epistemic goal of a concept: accounting for the rationality of semantic change and variation"
Feb 11	2D semantics 5. Brigandt, "A critique of two-dimensional semantics from the perspective of natural kind terms in biology"

Reading week

Feb 23	Psychology of concepts 1. Laurence and Margolis, “Concepts and cognitive science”, Sections 2–4 optional: Murphy, <i>The Big Book of Concepts</i> , pp. 49–60
Feb 25	Psychology of concepts 2. 1st short term paper due at 11 am Gelman and Wellman, “Insides and essences”
Mar 2	Psychology of concepts 3. Gopnik, “The scientist as child” Griffiths, “What is innateness?”
Mar 4	Psychology of concepts 4. Rey, “Concepts and stereotypes”
Mar 9	Psychology of concepts 5. Margolis, “How to acquire a concept”
Mar 11	Experimental philosophy 1. Knobe and Nichols, “An experimental philosophy manifesto” Nadelhoffer, “Bad acts, blameworthy agents, and intentional actions”
Mar 16	Experimental philosophy 2. Machery, “The folk concept of intentional action”
Mar 18	Experimental philosophy 3. Nichols and Knobe, “Moral responsibility and determinism”
Mar 23	Experimental philosophy 4. Mallon et al., “Against arguments from reference”
Mar 25	Experimental philosophy 5. Livengood and Machery, “The folk probably don’t think what you think they think: experiments on causation by absence”
Mar 30	Intuitions in philosophy 1. Kauppinen, “The rise and fall of experimental philosophy” Knobe, “Experimental philosophy and philosophical significance”
Apr 1	Intuitions in philosophy 2. Sosa, “A defense of the use of intuitions in philosophy” Stich, “Reply to Sosa”
Apr 6	Intuitions in philosophy 3. Liao, “A defense of intuitions”
Apr 8	Summing up.

Apr 19 Long term paper / 2nd short term paper due at 2 pm

H. Bibliography of readings

Bealer, George (1996) “A priori knowledge and the scope of philosophy”, *Philosophical Studies* 81: 121-142.

Brigandt, Ingo (in press) “The epistemic goal of a concept: accounting for the rationality of semantic change and variation”, *Synthese*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11229-009-9623-8>.

——— (unpublished) “A critique of two-dimensional semantics from the perspective of natural kind terms in biology”.

Brown, James R. (1991) “Thought experiments: a Platonic account”, in T. Horowitz and G. Massey (eds.), *Thought Experiments in Science and Philosophy*, Savage: Rowman and Littlefield, 119-128.

- Chalmers, David J. (1996) *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (2002) “The components of content”, in D. Chalmers (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 608-633.
- Gelman, Susan A., and Henry M. Wellman (1991) “Insides and essences: early understandings of the non-obvious”, *Cognition* 38: 213-244.
- Gopnik, Alison (1996) “The scientist as child”, *Philosophy of Science* 63: 485-514.
- Griffiths, Paul E. (2002) “What is innateness?”, *The Monist* 85: 70-85.
- Hintikka, Jaakko (1999) “The emperor’s new intuitions”, *The Journal of Philosophy* 96: 127-147.
- Jackson, Frank (1998) *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defense of Conceptual Analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kauppinen, Antti (2007) “The rise and fall of experimental philosophy”, *Philosophical Explorations* 10: 95-118.
- Knobe, Joshua (2007) “Experimental philosophy and philosophical significance”, *Philosophical Explorations* 10: 119-121.
- Knobe, Joshua, and Shaun Nichols (2008) “An experimental philosophy manifesto”, in J. Knobe and S. Nichols (eds.), *Experimental Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-14.
- Laurence, Stephen, and Eric Margolis (1999) “Concepts and cognitive science”, in E. Margolis and S. Laurence (eds.), *Concepts: Core Readings*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 3-81.
- Liao, S. Matthew (2008) “A defense of intuitions”, *Philosophical Studies* 140: 247-262.
- Livengood, Jonathan, and Edouard Machery (2007) “The folk probably don't think what you think they think: experiments on causation by absence”, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 31: 107-127.
- Machery, Edouard (2008) “The folk concept of intentional action: philosophical and experimental issues”, *Mind and Language* 23: 165-189.
- Mallon, Ron, Edouard Machery, Shaun Nichols, and Stephen Stich (2009) “Against arguments from reference”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 79: 332-356.
- Margolis, Eric (1998) “How to acquire a concept”, *Mind and Language* 13: 347-369.
- Murphy, Gregory L. (2002) *The Big Book of Concepts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nadelhoffer, Thomas (2006) “Bad acts, blameworthy agents, and intentional actions”, *Philosophical Explorations* 9: 203-219.
- Nichols, Shaun, and Joshua Knobe (2007) “Moral responsibility and determinism: the cognitive science of folk intuitions”, *Noûs* 41: 663-685.
- Norton, John D. (1996) “Are thought experiments just what you thought?”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 26: 333-366.
- Putnam, Hilary (1975) “The meaning of ‘meaning’”, in Hilary Putnam (ed.), *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 215-271.
- Quine, Willard Van Orman (1953) “Two dogmas of empiricism”, *Philosophical Review* 60: 20-43.
- Rey, George (1983) “Concepts and stereotypes”, *Cognition* 15: 237-262.
- Sosa, Ernest (2005) “A defense of the use of intuitions in philosophy”, in D. Murphy and M. Bishop (eds.), *Stich and His Critics*, Malden: Blackwell, 101-112.
- Stich, Stephen (2005) “Reply to Sosa”, in D. Murphy and M. Bishop (eds.), *Stich and His Critics*, Malden: Blackwell, 228-237.