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Abstracts

Biological species as autonomous subjects of cognition and their communication with individuals

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I consider the phenomenon of a rapid and involuntary recollection of events of one's whole life in the face of the close death. I suggest that the real nature of this subjective effect is that a species swaps to its data bank the information stored in the dying person's brain. Personal reports show that predominating in the recollections is ethical content. A person renders unbiased judgments of one's own deeds throughout life: were they good and right or bad and wrong. Ethics in recollections is solicited by a species itself. It seeks to fetch information on ethicality or non-ethicality of a conduct, i.e. whether a person acted in favor of the species of or to its harm. The acquired corpus of information is used to correct a species' strategy in directing future individuals' conduct. It fosters favorable behavioral patterns and inhibits harmful ones. The overall aim is evolutionary propagation of a species. The other form of the species - individual communication is prompts from the species 'headquarters' in response to requests from newborn animals on how to apply instincts in unfamiliar perplexing situations. My further hypothesis is that semiotics of the species - individual communication might be geometrical patterns of the moire origin. Moire patterns are as universal as all geometrical forms. They can develop themselves on any type of the regular wave substrate. Being fractal, they can reproduce themselves in exact self-similarity at many hierarchical levels at once. A set of moire patterns generated by overlap and interference of regular wave oscillations in brain is in a ceaseless meaningful change according to uniform geometrical and mathematical algorithms of transformation. The moire patterns flux is the inherent language of brain both in its self-discourse and in the inter-level communication with the species an individual belongs to.

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The Self, awareness of time, and its disorders: philosophic-neuroscientific critique of representational theories of mind

The self and its brain - cortical midline structures as neural correlate?

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The question of the self has intrigued philosophers and psychologists for a long time. More recently distinct concepts of self have also been suggested in neuroscience. However, the exact relationship between these concepts and neural processing across different brain regions remains unclear. This presentation reviews neuroimaging studies comparing neural correlates during processing of stimuli related to the self with those of non-self-referential stimuli. All studies revealed activation in the medial regions of our brains' cortex during self-related stimuli. The activation in these so-called cortical midline structures (CMS) occurred across all functional domains (e.g., verbal, spatial, emotional, and facial). Cluster and factor analysis indicate functional specialization into ventral, dorsal, and posterior CMS remaining independent of domains.

Taken together, our results suggest that self-referential processing is mediated by cortical midline structures. Since the CMS are densely and reciprocally connected to subcortical midline regions, we advocate an integrated cortical-subcortical midline system underlying human self. We conclude that self-referential processing in CMS constitutes the core of our self, and is critical for elaborating experiential feelings of self, uniting several distinct concepts evident in current neuroscience.

Neuroimaging the self as vulnerability: abnormalities in schizophrenia and other neuropsychiatric disorders

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Disturbances of the experience of self comprise one of the most puzzling challenges in neuropsychiatry. Recently, fMRI has made inroads in studying the brain systems underlying self-representation. However, human self is not merely self-representation which is fundamentally retrospective and late in cognitive processing. It is also prospective or oriented to a future which is unknown. Existentialist philosophers define the self paradoxically (as a process): maintaining identity while, at the same time, extending ecstatically beyond oneself into an unknown future. In these terms, the I is prospective while the me is retrospectively based. The temporal nature of self may provide a key to understanding its disruption in neuropsychiatric disorders. We discuss experimental and theoretical reasons to consider that this prospective self is compromised in schizophrenia and other neuropsychiatric disorders. By accident, it was discovered that one way to study disruptions of prospective self-experience is to examine abnormalities of the coherent default mode network or so-called daydreaming mode, i.e., brain areas which consistently become deactivated during focal cognitive tasks. Invariably, these involve the same midline structures that have been shown to play a role in retrospective construction of self as self-representation. We present data from meta-analyses as well as original data which make a compelling argument to reconsider the self in neuropsychiatry.

In-depth body and the origins of the subjective perspective: representation or auto-constitution?

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In this presentation, we pay attention to the way in which the in-depth body and its interceptive dimension is presented as constitutive for the subjective perspective. We borrow material from the neurosciences (Craig, Damasio), and approach this material from an epistemological point of view, inspired by Husserl's account of inner-time consciousness. More in particular, we investigate whether a (re)-representation of the in-depth body can eventually lead to a subjective perspective. In the neurological account of Damasio, such is the case, although a number of difficulties arises. From a phenomenological account, it can be doubted whether a perspective can be based on representations, since the content of a representation is constituted (from within a perspective) and not constitutive (for a perspective). Starting from Husserl's account of the auto-constitution of consciousness, we provide an account in which the subjective perspective has interceptive 'thickness', but is not based on representations. However, we do not follow Husserl's
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account of auto-constitution as a matter of formal constitution, but add content to it.

S31
Philosophy, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology: variety and integration of methodologies for the study higher of mental dysfunctioning

Rationality and the formation of delusions.

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In his important paper Campbell discusses both empirical and rational models of delusion formation. The empirical approach is characterized by the notion that a delusion is the rational response to some anomalous experience, and is hence termed by Campbell as 'bottom up'. The rational approach to studying the formation of delusions, by contrast sees delusion as 'a matter of top down disturbance in some fundamental beliefs of the subject'. This paper will present data from a cohort of subjects referred to the Outreach and Support in South London (OASIS) clinic at the Maudsley Hospital in London. This clinic was explicitly created to access clients who were in the prodrome of psychosis and as such exhibited the 'at risk mental state' (ARMS). In general, the ARMS clients demonstrate abnormalities that are consistent with the description of anomalous experiences but are necessarily not deluded (as they are all pre-psychotic). Further, despite not meeting formal criteria for a psychotic illness such as schizophrenia the ARMS clients share many abnormalities with those who have already experienced their first episode of psychosis. In conclusion, the work from OASIS, and from cognitive psychology and therapy more broadly, supports Campbell's conceptual analysis. Empirical factors are not sufficient for the genesis of delusions and the transition to psychosis. Thoughts relating altered rationality to biology will be discussed in light of McDowell's work and the neurodevelopmental model of schizophrenia.

Emotion and the sense of self: neuroimaging studies in depersonalization disorder.

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This talk will present findings from a series of fMRI studies of primary depersonalization disorder (DPD). Patients with this condition report a persistent and unsettling disturbance in their sense of self, and their interactions with other people and their surroundings. The symptoms typically include a loss or diminution in emotional reactivity. These studies focus on this aspect of the condition, and aim to probe abnormal emotional function in the context of a pervasive disturbance of the sense of self. The overall pattern of results suggests that patients with DPD show little distinction in neural response to aversive or neutral material. This is consistent with self-reported changes in qualitative emotional experience. Patients with DPD do not show activations in amygdala or anterior insula seen in healthy controls in response to aversive stimuli, and prefrontal cortical areas appear to play a key role in inhibition of normal emotional processing. More recent data indicate that a positive response to pharmacotherapy is associated with normalisation of neural response to aversive stimuli. These findings will be interpreted in the light of current biological and psychological models of DPD. More generally, I will argue that emotional "colouring" of subjective experience is a key element of healthy psychological functioning, and that the dissociated sense of self described by patients with DPD hinges, at least in part, on an altered quality of emotional experience.

Kant and mental capacity in psychiatry

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The medico-legal concept of Mental Capacity is increasingly discussed in medical law and there is growing attention to its role in psychiatry (Grisso and Appelbaum, 1998; Richardson, 1999; Dawson, 2005). Mental Capacity is closely tied to the concept of autonomy. The concept of autonomy was given its fullest meaning within the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. In this paper I will attempt to trace the way in which the concept of mental capacity appears to have its grounding in the Kantian concept of autonomy. I will discuss some strengths of this grounding as well as some possible unintended consequences in relation to psychiatry. A key issue here is the nature of the disorder seen in psychopathological states and whether this is primarily deficit in the ability to represent things; or rather biases of the meaning and value of the things represented. I will also discuss how the concept of mental capacity in psychiatric research is developing and how conceptual work can improve the quality of empirical work and vice versa. I will draw on examples taken from research underway at the Institute of Psychiatry, London on Mental Capacity in psychiatric settings.

S32
History

Psychosis and subjectivity – what psychiatrists can learn from Friedrich Hölderlin

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Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) is known as an important and most influential German poet of the 18th century. Being a student of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814) in Jena Hölderlin wrote a philosophical fragment „Urteil und Seyn“ (Judgement and Being) between 1794 and 1795. In this fragment Hölderlin puts forward a philosophical method that can be described in the sense of Michel Henry’s statement (1922-2002): „It is not thought that gives us access to life; life itself allows thought this access to it.“ This way of thinking seems especially significant for psychiatry since it offers a fundament for the understanding of subjectivity. It will be shown that Hölderlin also offered an understanding of the subjective experience of schizophrenia in an acute psychotic state and especially in the chronic state of schizophrenic alienation. As is well known the acute psychotic state can be understood phenomenologically as an understandable caused by an oversaturating with meaningfulness. In his late work Hölderlin expressed incomparably the enlivening of the schizophrenic alienation. His offer for understanding is based on the dwindling away of a previous oversaturated meaningfulness and an alienation in the sense of an uninvolved view on everyday life.