

Abduction in Philosophy of Mind

SPEAKERS

- * Nicole Dolby-Rathgeb
- * Christian Feldbacher-Escamilla
- * Alexander Gebharter
- * Jan G. Michel
- * Maria Sekatskaya
- * Corina Strößner

Salzburg, September 7, 2023
Satellite Workshop SOPhiA 2023

Organization: Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla,
Alexander Gebharter, Maria Sekatskaya



DFG Deutsche
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Inductive
Metaphysics

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SOPhiA 2023

Abduction in Philosophy of Mind


Workshop Details

- Date: September 7, 2023
- Venue: University of Salzburg (in the course of the SOPhiA 2023 conference)
- Funding: German Research Foundation (DFG), research unit: *Inductive Metaphysics* FOR 2495. The goal of the research unit is to establish how empirical sources and inductive forms of inference play a role in metaphysical research.
- Organisation: Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla (University of Cologne) & Alexander Gebharder (UNIVPM, Ancona) & Maria Sekatskaya (University of Düsseldorf)
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- Nicole Dolby-Rathgeb, University of Zürich
- Christian Feldbacher-Escamilla, University of Cologne
- Alexander Gebharder, Marche Polytechnic University
- Jan G. Michel, University of Düsseldorf
- Maria Sekatskaya, University of Düsseldorf
- Corina Strößner, Ruhr University Bochum

Aims & Scope

his workshop will address questions of metaphysics and epistemology of the mind, including possible topics such as (non-)reductionism, mental causation, the role of mental terms in scientific and everyday explanations of actions, the role of normative considerations in explaining reasoning as a psychological phenomenon, and the role of epistemic virtues in the choice between competing explanations of mental phenomena in particular and theories of mind in general.


Schedule: September 7, 2023 (CET)

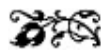
16:00 – 16:30	Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla, “Supervenience and Carnap’s Account of Empirical Confirmability”
16:30 – 17:00	Alexander Gebharder, “Mental Causation, Interventionism, and Probabilistic Supervenience”
17:00 – 17:15	Pause
17:15 – 17:45	Jan Michel, “The Paronymy of ‘Pain’”
17:45 – 18:15	Nicole Dolby-Rathgeb, “Pragmatism vs Intellectualism about Belief”
18:15 – 18:30	Pause
18:30 – 19:00	Corina Strößner, “Abduction to Rational Explanation in Cognitive Science”
19:00 – 19:30	Maria Sekatskaya, “An Abductive Account of Free Will”

Abstracts

Pragmatism vs Intellectualism about Belief


Nicole Dolby-Rathgeb

 argue that a dispositional analysis can account for the most important features of belief and discuss whether an intellectualist or a pragmatist version is best by considering their respective advantages and disadvantages. According to intellectualism the belief that *p* is a disposition that is manifested in sincere assent to *p* or in explicit endorsement of the relevant sentence. According to pragmatism, on the other hand, belief is a multi-track disposition or a 'dispositional profile' comprising a variety of different behavioural dispositions, along with phenomenal and cognitive ones. The distinction was coined by Eric Schwitzgebel, who is perhaps the most important contemporary proponent of a pragmatist view. In the talk I shall point out some of the merits of an intellectualist position that he seems to overlook or underestimate.

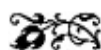


Supervenience and Carnap's Account of Empirical Confirmability

Christian J. Feldbacher-Escamilla

udolf Carnap was one of the earliest proponents of logical positivism/empiricism who explicitly discussed reductionism in relation to the mental from a philosophy of science perspective. To address early criticism, Carnap's account underwent several modifications. An important aspect of the 'mental to physical' reduction endorsed by the later Carnap is empirical confirmability. According to this concept, such a reduction can only be successful if it allows for the confirmation or refutation of mental claims based on physical claims. While other modifications of Carnap's reductionistic

account have already been linked to the modern philosophy of mind debate (cf. von Kutschera 1991), the role of empirical confirmability in the context of the modern philosophy of mind debate remains unexplored territory. In this presentation, we will address this question. As we intend to demonstrate, in the philosophy of mind, we also find relevant modifications concerning minimal physicalism and supervenience. Furthermore, we will show that a shift from the metaphysical notion of supervenience towards an epistemic derivative of it can be closely related to Carnap's constraint of empirical confirmability. We will also indicate how this not only sheds light on Carnap's reductionist program from a modern philosophy of mind perspective but also how the modern debate can benefit from more traditional accounts within the philosophy of science.




Mental Causation, Interventionism, and Probabilistic Supervenience

Alexander Gebharder

Mental causation is notoriously threatened by the causal exclusion argument. A prominent strategy to save mental causation from causal exclusion consists in subscribing to an interventionist account of causation. This move has, however, recently been challenged by several authors. In this paper, we do two things: We (i) develop what we consider to be the strongest version of the interventionist causal exclusion argument currently on the market and (ii) propose a new way to overcome it. In particular, we propose to replace strict supervenience in the assumption that the mental supervenes on the physical by probabilistic supervenience and show how this move has the potential to license the inference to mental causation. Finally, we argue that probabilistic supervenience captures some of the most important intuitions that strict supervenience captures and discuss possible objections to weakening strict supervenience in the way we suggest.

The Paronymy of "Pain"


Jan Michel

ain is C-fibre stimulation. This sentence has persisted with astonishing tenacity for more than 50 years as a favorite in discussions of the philosophy of mind, especially in connection with the so-called identity theory of mind. In my contribution, I take a fresh look at this old sentence, showing that all of the relevant expressions this sentence contains are paronymous, i.e., that different occurrences of the same expressions have slightly and subtly different meanings. This insight allows us to draw some interesting conclusions concerning both the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of science – from our everyday to scientific ways of speaking about pain, as well as the relationship between these ways of speaking. I argue that once we acknowledge that "pain" is paronymous, we can better understand why one can meaningfully speak of pain as C-fibre stimulation, both in the context of identity and metaphysics and in the context of explication and scientific discovery.



Abductive Account of Free Will

Maria Sekatskaya

ree will is commonly understood as the capacity for intentional action possessed by certain conscious and cognitively sophisticated agents. Traditional accounts of free will generally fall into one of two categories: those that claim that in order to have free will an agent must satisfy some metaphysically necessary conditions, and those that consider free will to be a purely psychological phenomenon requiring no metaphysical grounding. This paper argues that both of these approaches are flawed and proposes a new abductive account to address these shortcomings. This abductive account is based not only on the intuitions of philosophers, but also on the intuitions of the folk as explored in the experimental philosophy, as

well as on the social practices of human societies in the perspective of cultural evolution. Employing inference to the best explanation of the available data, I will argue that a 'weak' notion of free will—common to both philosophers and the folk—should be considered 'real,' in the sense that it is manifest in both human brain activity and behavior.



Abduction to Rational Explanation in Cognitive Science

Corina Ströbner

Hardly anything seems as obvious as the fact that humans are not perfectly rational. Accordingly, there is a difference between rational reasoning and those we would expect from humans (and other animals). The former belongs to the domain of logic or formal epistemology and is dominated by normative arguments. The latter one is addressed by behavioural science and a matter of empirical research. Nevertheless, cognitive scientists, especially in the Bayesian camp, often assume that rational models offer better explanations for psychological data than non-rational models (Anderson, 1991). The legitimacy and explanatory usefulness of rational norms within cognitive science, however, has been rejected by other scholars (Bowers and Davis, 2012; Crupi and Calzavarini, 2023; Elqayam and Evans, 2011). Following up on this debate, my talk discusses the legitimacy of an abduction to the most rational (or most optimal) explanation in behavioural science: Given a model or theory M that explains behaviour B without appeal to its rationality and an alternative model or theory M^* (that also normatively prescribes B), can we say that M^* is a better model because it also makes rational sense of B ? What potential (metaphysical) commitments are involved in this type of reasoning?