Title and Abstracts of the Contributions to

the 5-th PLM workshop
Delusion in Language and Mind
Philosophy of Language and Mind Network
Amsterdam, October 23–24, 2020.

Michel Croce and Tommaso Piazza (Lisboa)

Epistemic Vices and Responsibility in Fake News Consumption

Extant remedies to the proliferation of fake news range from promoting reform of individual epistemic conduct to implementing systemic interventions. Remedies at the individual level are appropriate only if fake news consumers can be legitimately expected to reform their conduct, and they can be legitimately expected to reform their conduct only if they can be blamed for it. This paper aims at addressing whether social media users are to be blamed for consuming fake news. The current debate in the epistemology of fake news seems to elicit the following diagnosis, namely that the social media users are epistemically blameworthy for believing in fake news in ordinary information environments, but less and less so when they are in malign environments such as epistemic bubbles and echo chambers. This paper purports to undermine this diagnosis by showing that the epistemic conduct of fake news consumers may well be worthy of epistemic blame in malign environments too.

Comments: Corine Besson (London) and Brice Bantegnie (Praha)

Anna Drożdżowicz (London)

Auditory illusions in speech sound and voice perception and what they can teach us

What can we learn about experiences of hearing speech sounds in a voice from auditory illusions? I will address this question by looking at four cases of such illusions: (1) the temporal induction illusion in speech, (2) the phantom words illusion, (3) the McGurk effect, and (4) the voice-over translation illusion. I will argue that (1)-(4) jointly support the claim that the mechanisms responsible for speech sound and voice perception are (at least to some degree) constructive in the following sense. Hearers' expectations, assumptions and background knowledge about the upcoming speech signal can steer the perception of speech sounds and the process of tracking the source that is intentionally producing them. I will also discuss one interesting consequence that this proposal has for the epistemology of spoken language understanding.

Comments: Tadeusz Ciecierski (Warszawa)

Benjamin Icard (Paris) and Raul Fervari (Cordoba)

Dynamics of Misdirection

Misdirection can be defined as the deliberate action of indulging some kind of misrepresentation in the perception of an agent, or of a group of agents. Such misrepresentations can be of a different nature: amongst other forms, they can be verbal (as the result of linguistic communication) but they can also be visual (as the result of observation). Various types of verbal misdirection have been investigated formally, regarding lies and strategies of bluffing for instance, based on existing analyses of those notions in the epistemological literature. However, no much attention has been paid to visual misdirection in particular. In this paper, we introduce a new framework based on dynamic epistemic logic, the aim of which is to model verbal misdirection that affects agents' beliefs, as well as visual misdirection on agents' observations of their environment. The logic contains two modalities for capturing verbal and visual perception, and a dynamic modality for executing actions either on the agent's beliefs or on her observations. We also provide a sound and complete axiom system for the logic, and illustrate the usefulness of the framework by formalizing a classical scenario of visual misdirection: the French Drop magic trick.

Comments: Deb Marber (St. Andrews)

Kamil Lemanek (Warszawa)

Inferentialism, Scorekeeping, and Earnest Delusion

Inferentialism may be adapted to provide an account of delusions that may be extended to communities. The notion of community oriented proprieties, which are so central to inferentialism, substantiate a clear picture of commitments (and so beliefs) in communities. They may be used to describe and assess both commitments that we might consider sound and commitments that we might consider delusional. That's precisely what this presentation aims to address. Following Brandom, the inferentialist position and these central mechanisms are reconstructed in deontic terms. They are then applied to a set of cases, illustrating how they might be used to account for standard commitments, for delusional commitments, and lies – differentiating them from one another along theoretical lines. These basic cases are then extended to a more complex social context with actors in addition to the assessor and assessee. In closing, a number of potential extensions to the proposed framework are briefly considered and supplemented with a few remarks relating this approach to the broader context of delusions.

Comments: Triinu Eesmaa (Wien)

Patricia Mirabile and Zachary Horne (Amsterdam and Arizona)

Features of conspiracy theories and of conspiracists' minds

Conspiracy theories are "alternative" explanations of well-understood events or phenomena. What makes them attractive explanations to so many people? Our proposal is to distinguish two sources of conspiracist belief. On the one hand, as suggested by research in social psychology, individual differences contribute to a tendency to conspiracist ideation, which makes certain people more likely to endorse conspiracy theories. On the other hand, a range of usually reliable cognitive processes, such as the consideration of the explanatory features of a theory, can also make conspiracies appear to be appealing and believable theories, akin to those that one is generally warranted to adopt. In order to test the unique contribution of both of these sources of conspiracist belief, we undertake an investigation of how people attribute explanatory virtues to conspiracy theories in three preregistered behavioral experiments (total N = 1480). Our results suggest that explanatory considerations, which normally guide us to rational inferences, may play a more central role in conspiracist beliefs than was previously thought.

Comments: Teresa Marquez (Barcelona)

Hana Möller Kalpak (Stockholm)

Delusions and other question-sensitive beliefs

Some think that delusions are belief states (e.g., Bortolotti, 2010; DSM-5, 2015), and others think that they are not (e.g., Berrios, 1991; Campbell, 2001; Currie, 2000). Those of the latter conviction contend that delusions do not behave sufficiently like beliefs to qualify as such, partly because they tend to be less inferentially integrated with subjects' other beliefs. Responses to this contention (e.g., Bayne & Pacherie, 2005) have appealed to independently motivated treatments of belief systems as *fragmented*: as comprised of compartmentalized subsystems which need not be mutually consistent, and which need not be simultaneously accessible to the subject (Cherniak, 1986; Stalnaker, 1984).

This talk investigates the extent to which delusions can still be accommodated as beliefs within Yalcin (2016)'s analysis of belief as both fragmented and *relativized to questions*, understood as partitions of logical space. It is also an investigation of this framework itself, aiming to take some first steps towards formulating satisfactory constraints on *rationality* of fragmented, question-sensitive beliefs. Those who want to classify delusions as beliefs typically do not want to classify them as just any type of beliefs, but minimally as *irrational* beliefs (Bortolotti, 2010). Without added constraints on rationality, Yalcin's model runs the risk of classifying too many beliefs as rational; including, I will argue, delusions (if understood as beliefs).

Comments: Dirk Kindermann (Wien)

Valentina Petrolini (Salzburg and Basque Country)

'I Am the Greatest': Adaptive and Disruptive Varieties of Overconfidence

In this taIk I take a deeper look at the phenomenon of overconfidence and I explore some of its varieties. Generally speaking, confidence may be characterized as the ability to assess one's performance or degree of fluency in a certain area. A significant loss of confidence may bring about phenomena such as pathological self-doubt and lack of self-trust, which are common among individuals affected by depression and borderline personality disorder. By contrast, an exaggerated sense of confidence may give rise to the feeling of grandiosity that is typically observed in schizophrenic delusions, narcissistic personality disorder, and psychopathy. Here I discuss four case studies to show that overestimating one's abilities in the face of contrary evidence may be disruptive or adaptive in different circumstances. At the individual level, overconfidence may be beneficial when it contributes to foster optimistic beliefs about one's skills and to counter performance anxiety. Yet, a similar set of thoughts and beliefs can be found in the so-called grandiose delusions, which usually center on the idea of possessing special skills, powers, or abilities. At the collective level, forms of overconfidence may be detected in the ideals and visions that inform social and political change. However, an exaggerated collective confidence runs the risk of generating dangerous forms of tunnel vision or misperception, as we witness in the case of wars or pandemics. I conclude by offering some preliminary suggestions on how we may distinguish between disruptive and adaptive varieties, and I do so by focusing on the notion of calibration.

Comments: Michiel van Lambalgen (Amsterdam)

Andrea Rivadulla (Barcelona)

Can fragmentationism help a doxastic account of delusions?

Davies and Egan (2013) have recently offered a doxastic and Bayesian account of delusions from the perspective of fragmentationism, the view according to which our belief system is fragmented, in opposition to it having a single structure or unified web. In the present paper I'll assess the explanatory potential of the account in light of an objection frequently raised to doxastic accounts of delusion: the Behavioural Objection. According to this objection, these accounts leave unexplained the fact that delusional subjects do not act following the behavioural profile that would be expected if they really believed the delusion. I shall conclude that, because of its commitments to Bayesian laws of belief formation and revision, Davies and Egan account leaves unexplained rather 1) the persistence of the delusional belief once adopted or 2) the inconsistent behaviour exhibited by the subject. My aim will then be to model delusions in another fragmented (Mandelbaum and Bendana forthcoming), non-Bayesian model (Mandelbaum 2019), and conclude that it can better account for the behavioural profile of delusions and its doxastic nature, since it takes into account the relation between the subject beliefs and motivational factors concerning the self.

Comments: Brice Bantegnie (Praha)