
‘Exploring the Realm of the Mental: Cognition, Emotion and Volition’

ABSTRACTS OF SEMINAR PAPERS

Being That Knows and Consciousness that is Mindful

Prof. Sangeetha Menon

If not otherwise asked, the notion of the body is something given and natural to us. But perplexity arises, not just in terms of understanding, but even experiencing, when we reflect upon the possessor, user and witness of the body. The very first thought on these three relations brings to us the question of embodiment. Is embodiment the primary experience bound by certain extremities, such as the exteriority of the skin and the interiority of the private mind? Is embodiment that which gives us the distinction of ‘outside-inside’ and ‘yours-mine’, both fine-tuned by a distinct sense of ‘me’ and ‘the rest of the world’ (other)? The sense of the body—does it ensue from the basic distinction of ‘me and the rest’, or is it the other way round—does the distinction of me and the other arise from the sense of the body (however much inclusive or exclusive it is)? The major limits of current takes on embodiment are: the overt focus on a concept of the body, to retain the conceptual structure of the body without its physicality, and to place the possibility of transcendence as a property of embodied structures and events. The idea of the body in much of the cognitive science literature is skewed and restricted being mostly limited to functional representationalism and contextual body acts. The Platonic dual worlds theory, Cartesian mind body interaction, the Chalmersian easy problems and hard problem divide, which imply dualism and exclusivity of the *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, continue to influence theories of mind and body.

First, I am the one who thinks, feels and responds. Primarily it is the thinking person that relates to the body and is aware of the body. Subsequently, the feeling comes that I have a body. There is a significant difference between the implications of a being self and a having self. The discussions on consciousness are yet to highlight this distinction that is basic to our experience. The experiential primacy of the self is closely tied up with our ability to reflect and introspect. While the brain might have a big say in deciding our states of waking, dreaming, conscious and unconscious states, it is the experiential self that has the capability to go deeper and reflect in a complex and focused manner. The possibilities to discover the reified spaces of the self through reflection and meditative silence bring to us the concept of a core-self that is un-ideated and non-located.

Subjectless Consciousness? Buddhist non-self and inner-world realism

Prof. Mark Siderits

Abstract: Realism about the inner realm of consciousness is common to Buddhists and their Brahmanical opponents of the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā schools. Buddhists, though, deny that consciousness requires the (ultimate) existence of a subject. I examine the coherence of this claim. But rather than investigate any of the many objections to Buddhist non-self raised by their Brahmanical opponents, I explore a new line of attack. The ontological reductionism of Buddhist forms of metaphysical realism is built around mereological nihilism. The result is the ontological scruple that only things with intrinsic nature could be ultimately real. Can the occurrence of a cognition or consciousness event be said to have an intrinsic nature? And if not, would this amount to vindication of realism about the self?

The Primacy of Consciousness: Beyond the Mind-Body Dualism

Prof. Ramesh Chandra Pradhan

In this paper I will argue for the primacy of consciousness in order to show that the mind-body or the mind-matter dualism has failed to explain the nature of consciousness. The Cartesian dualism between mind and matter has been challenged by philosophers as it has divided reality into two incompatible entities, namely the conscious mind and the unconscious matter. This has first of all divided the unity of the cosmos into two irreconcilable parts and has thereby made it impossible to explain how consciousness is possible in a material universe.

The collapse of the mind-matter dualism in the twentieth century philosophy of mind has led to the rise of materialist monism as the philosophers wedded to the idea of a monistic universe have accorded primacy to matter and thereby have refuted the mind-matter dualism as there are no two independent entities as matter and mind. In the materialist monistic account, the mind itself loses its independent metaphysical status and is taken to be either reducible to matter or be dependent on matter for its secondary existence.

The materialist solution to the mind-body dualism has done injustice to the metaphysics of mind and consciousness because it has not recognized the importance of the mind in the cosmos. Besides, consciousness has been made irrelevant to the cosmos thereby impoverishing the cosmos. Such being the case, there can be no reason to accept the materialist monism as metaphysically true.

In this paper I suggest that we can press in the Advaitic metaphysical monism as a way out of the dualist hypothesis. Advaita Vedanta has accepted the primacy of consciousness as a metaphysical reality and has derived the reality of the physical universe from the absolute reality of consciousness. The existence of the physical world is accorded a relative status by supposing that the so-called matter is itself a phenomenal reality that could not be made intelligible in the absence of consciousness.

If we accept the Advaitic standpoint we can resolve the mind-matter dualism by showing that consciousness is a metaphysically absolute reality which can explain everything else including the physical universe and human existence.

Three Modes of Conceptualizing the Mental

Prof. Ranjan Kumar Panda

Rene Descartes' epistemology has initiated the discourse on the mental, making an emphatic claim that the mind is a substance and its existence can be immediately known in the form of self-awareness. In the discourse of conceptualizing the mental, Descartes has, of course, invited many critics, since the last two centuries, sometimes concerning his methodology and more importantly his view on the mental substance. Husserl's phenomenology is one of them which brings out an ontological perspective of consciousness. It uniquely conceptualizes the ontology of the mental as a presupposition of all epistemic discourses whether scientific or teleological. In this paper, I intend to discuss three modes of conceptualizing the mental by referring to the causal, the teleological and the phenomenological theorization of the consciousness or the mind. The conflict concerning these theoretical perspectives can be articulated by contextualizing the art of making something. Though the art of making is primarily an epistemic engagement, still the freedom of thinking and conceptualizing the very form of an artistic object draws the limit of the causal and teleological modes of conceptualizing the mental. This could be shown drawing some insights from phenomenology.

Mind, Body and Consciousness: A Perspective on Husserlian Phenomenology

Prof. Koshy Tharakan

Husserl's motivation for philosophizing stems from his concern with the incompleteness of knowledge claims made by positive sciences. He thus wishes to supplement our understanding about the world derived from the positive sciences with the "rigorous science" of phenomenology. The paper is an attempt to understand Husserl's conception of mind, body and the notion of consciousness.

In *Ideas-I*, Husserl's discussion of the ego and consciousness emphasizes the notion of "pure consciousness" that it has given to certain misgivings about phenomenology as endorsing absolute idealism. *Ideas-II* focuses on the constitution of "material nature" as well as the constitution of "psychic reality" through the body. Lastly, the *Crisis* text brings the realm of the "life-world" in relation to the positive sciences and argues for the need of retaining the first person intersubjective experiences for an adequate understanding of the worldly phenomena.

'Exploring the Realm of the Mental: Cognition, Emotion and Volition' A Limited Critique of Heterophenomenology.

Mr. Abhishek Yadav

Daniel Dennett (1982, 1991, 2003, 2007) proposes and defends a method called heterophenomenology. Heterophenomenology is an attempt to account for the (auto)-phenomenology (or the first-person subjective account) from a third-person objective point of view. The ultimate criteria for whether a statement in a

heterophenomenological account can be considered to be true or false rests with a fully developed neuroscience. Lynne Baker (1998, 2011, 2017) has attempted to highlight that any naturalist account (including heterophenomenology) cannot succeed without accounting for a first-person perspective. In a very recent article, Chan and Andrew (2019) discuss the possibility of methods to study qualia from a third-person point of view yet they deny heterophenomenology to be one such approach.

In this paper, we first present the most charitable and strong version of heterophenomenology and then extend Baker's argument in an attempt to show that heterophenomenology as a method to study the first-person phenomenal aspect of our experience, fails. It turns out on analysis that heterophenomenology is nothing but a rhetorical tool. (Derksen 2005) Our critique of the heterophenomenological approach is limited in the sense that we concede that the approach, being a derivative of folk psychology does work in our day-to-day lives to make sense of other people's first-person experiences, yet the approach fails when it takes away the authority from the first-person subject.

We and I

Prof. Dan Zahavi

In my talk, I will argue that a proper account of collective intentionality must engage with the relation between self and community, between I and we. I will discuss some proposals that ascribe priority to the community and argue that they fail, not only because they operate with too simplistic a conception of what it means to be a self, but also because they misunderstand what it means to be (part of) a we.

How I See Myself – Self-Portraits and Aesthetic and Epistemic Purism

Prof. Madhucchanda Sen

In this paper I intend to counter two kinds of Purism – Purism in Aesthetics and a kind of Epistemic Purism that seems to be prevalent in philosophical literature regarding Self-Knowledge and Self-Awareness. I take self-portraits as a case study that shows how these two kinds of Purism have to be doubtful. The Purism in Aesthetics that I am addressing here is a view that was held by Kant. He believed that aesthetic perception must be pure, that is, "free of all interest." This view is unable to address self-portraits as a truly distinctive art form where the artist cannot be anonymous, but is present with all his/her histories. Self-portraits may be seen as essentially a species of fiction and their aesthetic appreciation is an appreciation of these fictions that they embody. In Philosophy we are keen to know how we see ourselves and what it is that we see when we see ourselves. Do we indeed have privileged and incorrigible access to ourselves? Are we indeed aware of a mere subjective presence? Epistemic Purism regarding self-awareness seems to suggest that we do indeed have a privileged and incorrigible access to ourselves and the things that are presented in such an awareness has to be a mere subjective presence. But if self-portraits are depictions of how one sees oneself then the answer to these questions will be in the negative. I intend to make a brief study of self-portraits to show how Aesthetic Purism and Epistemic Purism regarding self-awareness cannot be correct.

The Dilemma of Self-Knowledge

Mr. Prateek Chaubey

Self-knowledge as metacognition refers to knowledge of one's own mental states. The strongest claim about this kind of cognition is that it is infallible, and we are omniscient about it. While postulating the nature of this claim one could examine its limit. That is to say that is this claim concerning self-knowledge viable. Christopher Peacocke (1999), for instance, modifies the omniscience aspect of self-knowledge to suggest that if anyone is in a state, she is justified in believing that she is, even if she does not actually believe that. This thesis has been further analyzed by Sydney Shoemaker (1994) and Analisa Coliva (2012) who argue for a constitutive relation between the first-order belief and its corresponding second-order belief. Moreover, their views pose two contrasting accounts concerning the direction of the constitution. Shoemaker maintains that believing *p* constitutes the corresponding belief that one believes that *p*, whereas Coliva argues that having a second order belief can constitute the relevant first order belief. In this paper, I intend to discuss these above viewpoints about self-knowledge as metacognition and critically examine them.

However, one could bring the critics viewpoint regarding the very possibility of self-knowledge following the arguments of Eric Schwitzgebel (2002), Peter Carruthers (2011), and Quassim Cassam (2015). Their skepticism is based on the lack of empirical evidence and also some cases where it is hard to reliably confirm its possibility. Therefore, it is awkward to accept its epistemic superiority. In contrast to this view, self-knowledge can only be understood in connection with rational agency and responsibility. Tyler Burge (1996), Akeel Bilgrami (2006), and Richard Moran (2001) have argued for this effect. Bilgrami (2006) regards beliefs as commitments and contends that the very notion of commitment presupposes knowledge of the commitment, that is, the second-order belief. In this connection, a further examination of these two perspectives may be necessary to show whether these camps are discussing the same issue or are speaking at cross purposes. One way of conceiving this idea is to show that there is a dilemma: self-knowledge cannot be possible as traditionally understood, yet it has to be the presupposition for rational agency. Hence, we need a minimal self-knowledge to make sense of rational agency, commitment, and first-person authority in general. Self-knowledge is unique because it is tied to these notions in a way other kinds of beliefs are not. The empirical findings do not undermine the value of self-knowledge in this sense. I conclude by highlighting different issues at stake and what role new empirical findings can play. In our interpersonal engagement our reactive attitudes towards 'agents' do not rest on this dilemma's outcome.

Aesthetic Theory and Ontology of Emotions

Prof. Sharad Deshpande

Contrary to the assumed invariance of human nature in terms of the ontological status of emotions as 'given', one wonders whether emotions are culturally determined and therefore relative to historical periods and civilizational differences making emotion based aesthetic theories culture specific. This presentation addresses this issue with reference to the claim

that emotions of despair, banality, and absurdity are typically ‘modern’ and hence not accounted for in traditional aesthetic theories.

Cognitive Abilities and Machine Intelligence

Prof. Don Dcruz

The success of vision and large language models in the second AI revolution has largely been received with caution. Neural network-based deep learning models are yet to demonstrate anything close to human-like intelligence. In this paper, I will argue that while we are right in dismissing the prospects of machine intelligence, the reasons that are typically given for this skeptical view are weak. My attempt is not to compare machines and human cognition by arguing that the former cannot be conscious or lack affection and volition. I consider an emerging strategy in the sciences of intelligent systems proposed for such comparisons that is motivated by the need to avoid anthropocentric bias. This strategy involves drawing a distinction between cognitive abilities and performance. By showing that the skeptical view is based on identifying performance deficiencies in machines, I make the case that it is not sufficient to rule out machine intelligence. However, the analysis does not support the position that machines can, at least in principle, possess cognitive abilities. It reveals the inadequacies of the proposed strategy to compare humans and machines. I develop the diagnosis to offer a modest proposal of characterizing cognitive abilities in terms of epistemic constraints.

The Freedom in Subject as Freedom: How K.C. Bhattacharyya’s Understanding of Vedānta Informs His Magnum Opus

Profs. Nalini Bhushan and Jay L Garfield

We examine KC Bhattacharyya’s analysis of *mokṣa* in “Advaita and its Spiritual Significance” and show that this provides the key to understanding what he means when he identifies subjectivity with freedom. Subject as Freedom turns out to be a more religious text than it might first appear.

Enactivism and Its Challenge to Cognitivism

Prof. Daniel D Hutto

Enactivism has established itself as a force to be reckoned with in today’s philosophy of mind and cognitive science. At root, enactivists promote ways of conceiving of minds and their place in nature that, if accepted, would have revolutionary implications. This presentation introduces the animating ideas of enactivism and reveals how its radical variants fundamentally challenge the framework assumptions of mainstream cognitivist, representational and computational, conceptions of mind.

Emotions as Rationality-enablers: The Lessons from the Prisoner's dilemma and the Ultimatum Game

Prof. Amita Chatterjee

The relation between reason and emotion has always been a matter of speculation and philosophical disputes. While Plato upheld that emotions should be guided by reason and Kant maintained that the rational understanding of moral imperatives can lead to action even independently of our passionate impulses, Aristotle propounded that reason by itself moves nothing and David Hume famously declared that reason is the slave of passions. Recent findings of the evolutionary and cognitive scientists, however, highlight that reason and emotion are not really vying for supremacy in the human system, rather these are supportive of each other. Drawing on the findings of cognitive scientists I would like to show that, contrary to the common belief, in most cases of human decision making the role of emotions is more of an enabler than of a blocker. Deliberations on the Prisoner's Dilemma and the Ultimatum Game will be used as supporting evidence for our thesis which may lead to a more biologically realistic model than the traditional rational-cognitive model.

Spinoza - A Special Problem of Other Minds

Prof. Maushumi Guha

Spinoza, as we know, is a 'different' philosopher. The concept of mind deployed by him stands in stark contrast with the Cartesian mind and its relation to the body. Whereas Descartes is considered to be the originator of the problem of asymmetry, Spinozistic pantheism may be an interesting arena for a fresh exploration of the problem of other minds.

Descartes, whose mind-body dualism culminated in the dualism of self and other, is considered to be the father of the analytical problem of other minds. His dualism led to the solipsistic possibility that other minds don't exist at all. To solve this matter, which he himself raised, Descartes' proposed solution in the form of the argument by analogy, turned out to be a logician's nightmare! Then came Spinoza with no religious encumbrances, who seemingly relieved philosophy from Cartesian Dualism. But then the question remained: did Spinoza also get rid of the excess baggage associated with Cartesianism in philosophy of mind? Did his Monism permanently remove the asymmetry, the scepticism and the possibility of solipsism? Even if it did, how would his pantheism explain the seemingly undeniable asymmetry between knowledge of self and knowledge of other minds? How can Spinoza's philosophy of mind tackle these age-old epistemological issues? Given my interest in the problem of other minds both in its classical and contemporary forms, I will explore these questions in my paper to the best of my capability.

**Emotion, Empathy and Moral Cognition:
Insights from the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva**

Prof. C. D. Sebastian

The eighth century Buddhist monk and philosopher Śāntideva's work the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* "stands as one of the greatest classics of world philosophy and of Buddhist

literature.” The text gives an overall structure of Buddhist moral commitments with a level of generality and theoretical power that is a rarity elsewhere in Indian thought. The Bodhicaryāvatāra presents a pedagogy which engages the reader of the text emotionally and cognitively in developing a virtuous and ethical attitude. The most important invention of the text is the installation of ‘compassion’ as the fundamental moral value and the prototype of the Bodhisattva’s engagement with the world. The proposed paper attempts to analyse the role of emotion, particularly that of empathy, in moral cognition as it is neither a reflexive emotional response nor a sheer desire. Empathy emanating from compassion is a genuine commitment which makes one have moral cognition resulting in thought, speech and action.

Reflections of Self-Knowledge and Moral Agency

Prof. Smita Sirker

This paper will explore the interconnections between self-knowledge and moral agency, on the basis of the assumption that self-knowledge, our knowledge of our own states of mind, is a primary requirement of our moral agency – in making rational moral choices and decisions. Our moral life evolves within a normative domain constitutive of moral values and moral commitments; involving the process of making rational moral choices. Human beings as moral agents make rational choices (Bilgrami, *Self Knowledge and Resentment*, 2006). The reflection is on the question of how we become moral agents. Unless a moral agent is aware of her own moral beliefs, commitments and values, can she engage in making moral decisions and choices of any kind? Self-knowledge, at least in an implicit sense, about one’s own beliefs and desires (moral, normative choices and commitments) becomes an integral part of being a moral agent. The notion of moral agency is not simply about making choices, but what conditions determine the moral choices of a person; and the complexity lies in the interplay between self-knowledge of one’s own moral beliefs, values, commitments on one hand; and how such knowledge leads to moral decisions, on the other. It is probably in certain tough moral contexts (like in case of moral dilemmas or moral conflicts) that a moral agent navigates consciously about one’s own moral beliefs, values and commitments; thereby having self-knowledge of one’s own repertoire of beliefs, etc. in an explicit sense.

The Role of Language in Emotion-Experience

Ms. Suchitra Srivastava

“I can’t help falling in love with you!”, “This fills my heart with joy unspeakable!”, “I was driven by anger”, “Struck by jealousy”, “Felled by shame”. Do these expressions not resonate with our everyday lives? Emotions, surely, constitute a very important part of the human system and condition, and their communication is indeed vital for individual development and the community. But, could it be so, that this communication through language actually shapes our emotion-concepts, which in turn shapes our emotions? Common sense tells us that language does not have much to do with emotion. Certainly, what people say affects our feelings, and we may use words to explain our emotions after their occurrence. However,

the relationship between language and emotion is generally believed to end there. This common sense viewpoint is shared by many contemporary models of emotion. Emotions, according to these perspectives, are bodily types that are distinct from language or mental processing. Yet, growing research points to a deeper role of language in the very having of an emotion. Our emotions control the way we see the world at any given time. In addition, though, the world around us also shapes our emotions and in various cultures, emotions are felt individually and often collectively in distinct ways. In Korea, for example, “han” refers to the sensation of sadness and hope at the same time, an emotion that may not be recognized in other cultures. So, the idea behind this paper is that language helps shape emotion-concepts which shapes our emotions. To understand this in a better light, we need to look at emotional development in children. Because emotions are rather peculiar being abstract as well as felt and embodied representations and not concrete physical types, they do not have a singular prototype. Therefore, emotion-concepts arise out of extrapolation from various instances, combining a number of factors, like the cause and consequence of, and typical verbal and non-verbal behavior and linguistic practices associated with the emotion. All this seems to point to an interesting feature of emotion-experiences, that is, learning to recognize an emotion and being able to have an emotion, may go hand in hand, at least in certain cases. So, if one is to say that having emotions is constitutively linked with our recognition of those emotions and if recognition of emotion is related to language, then is one to say that language plays a constitutive role in our having of the emotion? If this is the case, then emotions in a way, are not as irrational and untutored as they once typically seemed to be. In fact, this might lead to the stronger claim that how we think about an emotion may actually determine or affect how we feel it and how we feel an emotion is largely manufactured by the kind of linguistic community we are born into. In order to substantiate this claim, I take up two case studies. First, I would discuss how certain metaphors that are used to describe emotions have shaped the very felt aspect of those emotions. Second, I would talk about how epics and folk tales have been instrumental in shaping the emotional psyche of a culture group. All this is true notwithstanding the fact that we might have certain “basic” emotions.

Pains that don't hurt

Prof. David Bain

It can seem to be an obvious piece of common sense that all pains hurt. In my talk, I'll ask whether this really is obvious, indeed whether it is even true. I will discuss various kinds of cases in which pain seems to occur without its characteristic unpleasantness. Some, I will argue, are not in the end counterexamples to the piece of common sense. But pain asymbolia, a fascinating and rare condition, just might be. And it might in addition tell us something about what, when it is present, pain's unpleasantness consists in.

Understanding Other Minds: An Experimental Philosophy Approach

Ms. Annie Mukherjee

This paper sits at the intersection of philosophy of mind, experimental philosophy and metaphilosophy.

We know that Theory of Mind involves theories about ascriptions of mental states to ourselves and others, and it helps us explain and predict human behaviour and actions. There has been extensive philosophical research during the latter half of the twentieth century which gave rise to two families of theories of mind—namely—*theory theory* and *simulation theory* whilst trying to explain our mind reading skills. Now, experimental philosophy is a new methodological movement which brings together the kinds of experimental methods traditionally associated with psychology and cognitive science to address philosophical questions. In this paper I explore the possibility of application of this new method to the questions of Theory of Mind, focussing on the case of identifying which theoretical method is being used by an agent in a particular situation. I look at some of the vignettes employed in my own research thus far and try to see if the experimental methodology adds significantly to the philosophical understanding of the issue.

I also try to understand whether there is a possibility of establishing philosophical hypothesis by the use of experimental methodology. The use of the experimental methodology in this connection has to be rigorous enough to provide categorical pointers towards any possible gaps in the philosophical understanding of the matter. Such dynamics between conventional methods of philosophising and experimental methodology is expected in my opinion to lead to greater clarity in terms of the rational understanding of the issue. This exercise shouldn't only be seen to be of help to philosophy, rather designing of experiments by philosophers themselves may lead to experimental refinement, not only in the human sciences but in other domains as well.

The Self as a Center of Aesthetical Relish

Mr. Nilambar Chakrabarti

When the audience in a play or cinema, the reader of a literary piece, or the viewer of a painting relish these works of art, whose emotion is it that they enjoy or relish? Are they enjoying their own emotions or do these emotions belong to those whose creations they are? It seems that these transmuted, distanced emotions that are relished as aesthetic experiences do not have any particular owner and they as if are free-floating — since there is no egocentric tie by which they can be tied to any individual subject. These experiences are as though ownerless. Yet they appear as startling revelations of the human condition because these emotions do invite the enjoyer to have intimate subjective emotional encounters. For example, it is difficult to find someone who is not subjectively affected after reading Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* where the author depicts human suffering born of a deep self-alienation.

I find this idea of ownerless experience, that is, the idea of an experience being experienced without being experienced as mine, to be theoretically oxymoronic. This is

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because the aesthetic relish that is initiated within us while we enjoy literature, music or art is only possible through the identification of the emotion that is expressed as somehow 'mine'. Though it is possible for someone to theoretically conceive aesthetical emotions in their essence, yet if these emotions lack subjective ownership, can they enjoy a space in one's felt realm? In this paper, I shall argue against the no-ownership thesis of aesthetic experience. I shall also aim at showing that aesthetic emotions are also like other felt emotions. They are integrally situated in our subjective sphere.
