

# KBNS Network Workshop 1

## Self-Knowledge and the A Priori

18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> December 2017, Stirling Court Hotel, University of Stirling

The project's first Network Workshop will be held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at the Stirling Court Hotel, a conference centre on the University Campus.

The Workshop is open to all, and there is no registration fee.

### Programme

#### Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December

- 10.00 – 11.30 **Åsa Wikforss** (Stockholm): Knowledge of Belief and the Asymmetry Thesis
- 11.30 – 11.45 Coffee
- 11.45 – 1.15 **Indrek Lobus** (Stirling): Self-Knowledge via Ontological Embezzlement
- 1.15 – 2.15 Lunch
- 2.15 – 3.45 **Rob Rupert** (Colorado): There Is No Personal Level in Nature
- 3.45 – 4.00 Break
- 4.00 – 5.30 **Giovanni Merlo** (Stirling): The metaphysical problem of other minds
- 5.30 – 6.30 Buffet Dinner
- 6.30 – 8.30 **2<sup>nd</sup> KBNS PUBLIC LECTURE: Åsa Wikforss** (Stockholm):  
Fact resistance: what is it, and how can it be cured?

#### Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December

- 10.00 – 11.30 **Annalisa Coliva** (UCI): Disagreeing with myself. Rationality, Moore's paradox and belief revision
- 11.30 – 11.45 Coffee
- 11.45 – 1.15 **Joshua Thurow** (UTSA): Understanding to the Rescue
- 1.15 – 2.15 Lunch
- 2.15 – 3.45 **Marie Guillot** (Essex) and **Lucy O'Brien** (UCL): Self Matters
- 3.45 – 4.00 Break
- 4.00 – 5.30 **Giacomo Melis** (Stirling): Brute errors and warranting roles (of experience)
- 7.00 Dinner: Stirling Court Hotel

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## ABSTRACTS DAY 1

### **Åsa Wikforss** (Stockholm), "Knowledge of Belief and the Asymmetry Thesis"

The epistemological problem of other minds is typically set against the background of the asymmetry thesis: The idea that we know our own minds in a very different way than we know the minds of others. Whereas self-knowledge is direct, non-inferential, and secure, it is held, knowledge of others is indirect, inferential, and unreliable. However, the asymmetry thesis is not beyond dispute, and it has been questioned both by psychologists and philosophers, in particular when it comes to the propositional attitudes. In the talk I focus on the asymmetry thesis as applied to the case of belief. I argue that first-person knowledge of belief is best understood as inferential. I then discuss what the implications are for the asymmetry thesis, and for the traditional problem of other minds in the case of belief.

### **Indrek Lobus** (Stirling), "Self-Knowledge via Ontological Embezzlement"

Jane Heal (2001) proposes an account of first-person authority on which mental states are constituted by first-person thoughts about those mental states but which purports to avoid any conflict with naturalism about the mind. Her explanation to how the conflict is avoided is that a naturalistic account of the mind provides an outline for a mental state that can be filled in by a second-order thought. It is far from clear, however, what this means. Building on the works of Charles Travis, I will introduce the idea of shifting ontological standards as a way of understanding Heal's explanation, in the hope of making it not only intelligible but plausible. Once set up, the framework of ontological standards does make some parts of Heal's original proposal superfluous but also introduces interesting implications to it, notably the possibility of third-person authority.

### **Rob Rupert** (Colorado), "There Is No Personal Level in Nature"

Many philosophers of mind accept the existence of an ontologically distinctive personal level, while also taking work in cognitive science to bear on debates in philosophy of mind. It is common to wed these two commitments by joining the following claims: (a) humans have privileged access to personal-level facts, about personal-level states, capacities, abilities, or competencies; (b) those facts constitute the explananda of cognitive science; and (c) the job of cognitive science is to identify the (perhaps fascinating) subpersonal ways in which those states, capacities, or abilities are realized, implemented, or made intelligible. I argue that this collection of claims is, from the standpoint of cognitive science, unstable. To the extent that cognitive science tells us anything about the personal level, it would appear, at present, to be that the personal level does not exist.

### **Giovanni Merlo** (Stirling), "The Metaphysical Problem of Other Minds"

It is customary to distinguish an epistemological and a conceptual version of the problem of other minds. The epistemological problem challenges our claim to know that others have minds like our own. The conceptual problem challenges our ability even to conceive of other minds as similar to ours. This paper discusses a different, 'metaphysical' version of the problem of other minds. The metaphysical problem aims to show that – quite independently of any limitations concerning what we can know or conceive to be the case – other minds cannot be like our own. I will argue that one main source of this problem lies in the infamous principle that, when it comes to consciousness, no distinction can be sensibly drawn between appearance and reality. I will then suggest that, insofar as we do not want to call that principle into question, we should seriously consider the possibility of embracing the conclusion of the problem, while reconceiving facts of consciousness as subjective rather than objective in nature.

## KBNS PUBLIC LECTURE

### **Åsa Wikforss** (Stockholm), "Fact Resistance: what is it, and how can it be cured?"

As a result of the political events during 2016 the concept of fact resistance, together with post-truth, has become prominent. Professor Wikforss will examine fact resistance from a philosophical point of view. She will also consider the psychological mechanisms behind it, and how these interact with the new fragmented media situation. Can we counteract fact resistance?

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## ABSTRACTS DAY 2

**Annalisa Coliva** (UCI), "Disagreeing with myself. Rationality, Moore's paradox, self-deception and belief revision"

In this talk, I explore the idea of intrapersonal disagreement. In particular, I investigate the conditions in which one can be said to disagree with oneself either diachronically or synchronically. I present a puzzling case of intrapersonal synchronic disagreement and explore its consequences with respect to several issues. First, the correct account of belief, which, I argue, is a genus that comes in two species – that is, as a disposition and as a commitment. Secondly, the correct account of self-deception, which, in my view, consists in a conflict between one's beliefs as dispositions and as commitments. Thirdly, the correct account of the condition that needs to be fulfilled in order to have genuine disagreement tout court and of the different ways in which it can be satisfied. Fourthly, the correct account of Moore's paradox and, finally, the relevance of this distinction for belief revision and the nature of rationality norms.

**Josh Thurow** (UTSA), "Understanding to the Rescue":

Timothy Williamson has recently argued that "the a priori-a posteriori does not cut at the epistemological joints" (2013:294). The a priori isn't, in some crucial sense, epistemically important. In this paper I argue that his critique rests on too thin a notion of the understanding that, according to a prominent view, grounds a priori knowledge. A more adequate understanding of understanding will clarify the distinction between experience enabling understanding and experience providing positive evidential support, thereby showing that two premises undergirding Williamson's argument are false. Even defenders of the a priori have sometimes employed too thin a notion of understanding, thus inviting Williamson's critique. I conclude by outlining some constraints, suggested by my response to Williamson, on how to properly understanding the understanding that grounds a priori knowledge.

**Marie Guillot** (Essex) and **Lucy O'Brien** (UCL), "Self Matters"

That something will happen to me is a reason to care about it in a particular way. Suppose I took part in a randomised trial where one of ten participants was given a tablet containing a new drug against migraine, and the others a placebo. Unfortunately, halfway through the trial, the scientists discover that the drug has unwanted side-effects: the person who took it is at risk of getting a permanent headache for the rest of her life. Learning this is a reason for me to feel sorry for the unlucky participant who took the active substance. Learning that I took the active substance, however, provokes a reaction that is not just likely to be stronger, but also of a different kind; shock, fear, perhaps anger. This is what we may call "self-concern": representing a future or possible event as involving me makes it matter in a special way. As Setiya (2015) puts it, it might seem as though there are reasons, in the practical realm, whose force turns on their first-person character. Setiya goes on to reject the self-concern thesis, based on the argument that if we look at how the first-person concept works, we find no grounds for caring particularly about its referent. Our goal, in this talk, is to try and rescue the self-concern intuition. We will challenge Setiya's argument, calling into question his conception of reasons, his understanding of the self-concept and his interpretation of self-concern itself.

**Giacomo Melis** (Stirling), "Brute errors and warranting roles (of experience)"

Taking the lead from the discussion of various cases of epistemic defeat of an ordinary perceptual warrant, I will distinguish between brute errors and cognitive failures. I will then go on to consider the distinction between factors that play an enabling role and factors that play the warranting role in some agent's warrant to believe a proposition P, and will suggest that brute errors always affect what plays the warranting role. I will then focus on a priori warrants and use the framework sketched in the first part of the talk to support the conjecture that a priori warrants are immune to brute errors. I will conclude with some tentative suggestions about possible analogies with the defeat of warrants about one's mental states.

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# KBNS Network Workshop 1

## Self-Knowledge and the A Priori

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### PRACTICAL INFORMATION

#### TRAVEL TO STIRLING

Both Edinburgh and Glasgow airports are very well connected with Stirling by public transport (unless at night times; please let us know if you're arriving after 9pm and before 7am).

##### *From Edinburgh airport:*

There's a shuttle bus ([Airlink, Service 100](#)) from just outside the airport terminal. This service will bring you to either of *Haymarket* and *Waverley* train stations. From either of those you can get a train to Stirling (if you leave the shuttle at Haymarket you'll save some minutes). You don't need to get the train tickets in advance and can do so via machines or at a desk with a human being.

##### *From Glasgow airport:*

There's a shuttle bus ([First Group, Service 500 or 77](#)) from outside the airport terminal. You want to get off the bus at *Glasgow Queen Street train station*. (N.B.: The bus also calls at *Glasgow Central*—a different train station and not the one you want.) From *Glasgow Queen Street* you can get a train to Stirling. You don't need to get the train tickets in advance and can do so via machines or at a desk with a human being.

##### *Journey planner:*

If you want to check times, alternative routes, etc., play a little bit with this (reliable) journey planner: <http://www.travelinescotland.com/>

#### AROUND STIRLING

##### **Accommodation:**

Accommodation for Invited Speakers and Network Members is pre-booked at the Stirling Court Hotel (on campus), which is also the venue of the workshop. <http://www.stirlingcourthotel.co.uk/>  
For those network members not based in Stirling, the default booking is 3 nights, arriving on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> and departing on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Please let us know at your earliest convenience any amendment needed to this default booking.** (Email to: [sr22@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sr22@stir.ac.uk)) Thanks!

##### **Shops on Campus:**

They can be checked here: <https://www.stir.ac.uk/campus-life/campus-facilities/shops/>  
They are all in "The Atrium" (less than 10 minute walk from the workshop venue)

##### **Campus Maps:**

Several maps of the campus can be found here: <http://www.stir.ac.uk/about/getting-here/maps/>

##### **Internet access while on campus:**

The campus is covered with Eduroam signal, so you should be able to access it with your existing accounts. (If you're not an Eduroam user but would like internet access while on campus, please let me know and we'll take it from there.)

#### MAIN FUNDER



## CATERING

### Lunches:

They'll be catered during the workshop. Vegetarian options are standard. If you have any further requirement or allergy, please do let us know.

### Dinner on Monday 18<sup>th</sup>:

This will be a buffet dinner prior to Åsa Wikforss's KBNS Public Lecture.

### Dinner on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup>:

This will be the official Workshop Dinner. Details to be announced.

If you're planning *not* to attend, please let us know. (Email to: [sr22@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sr22@stir.ac.uk))

### Dinner on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>:

Nothing official is planned. The campus has several "eating and drinks" facilities which you can check here: <https://www.stir.ac.uk/campus-life/campus-facilities/catering/>

If arriving late: the latest food options would be as follows:

- The Refresh: Last orders 8:45pm / Open until 10pm
- Stirling Court Hotel Restaurant: Last orders 8:45pm
- Stirling Court Hotel Bar: Last meal orders 9:45pm

(The Refresh is located Willow Court; this is residence n.5 (in yellow). See map here:

<https://www.stir.ac.uk/media/autoimport/documents/maps/Campus-map-Oct-2017.pdf>)

## FURTHER INFORMATION FOR SPEAKERS

### Handout printing:

We can easily print handouts for you if we get them by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> early afternoon. Beyond that point we can still print them, but less easily. (Email to: [sr22@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sr22@stir.ac.uk))

### IT facilities:

The room has projector and PC. It is also possible to connect the projector to your own laptop. But please note: if your laptop is an Apple one, please bring your own corresponding adaptor, as we can't assume this will be available from the venue.

## BOOKING

### Invited Speakers and Network Members:

You will have been contacted individually. Accommodation and meals during the Workshop are pre-booked, and you need only contact us if there are any changes to the standard arrangements described above.

### Other delegates:

Please let us know by email if you are planning to attend (to: [sr22@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sr22@stir.ac.uk)). There is no registration fee, and teas/coffees during the Workshop are provided. You are welcome to join us for meals during the Workshop – lunches, and the Workshop Dinner on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> – but these have to be booked in advance. (Email to: [sr22@stir.ac.uk](mailto:sr22@stir.ac.uk))

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