

JACOB SCOTT BECK

Department of Philosophy
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EMPLOYMENT

Texas Tech University, Assistant Professor, from August 2008

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Ph.D. Philosophy, anticipated June 2008

University of Pennsylvania, B.A. *Summa Cum Laude*, *Phi Beta Kappa*, May 1999

Major: Philosophy & Science

Minor: Cognitive Science

Pembroke College, Oxford University, Visiting Student, 1997-1998

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

Philosophy of Psychology, Philosophy of Mind

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Science, Epistemology, Moral Philosophy

DISSERTATION

The Structure of Thought

While there are widespread debates about whether perceptual experiences are conceptual or nonconceptual, most philosophers assume that thoughts must be conceptual. My dissertation challenges this assumption, drawing on empirical findings from the cognitive sciences to argue that some thoughts are nonconceptual. I focus on so-called *analog magnitude thoughts*, which exploit an internal mental magnitude to represent worldly magnitudes such as number, time, distance and rate. Analog magnitude thoughts are nonconceptual, I argue, because they fail to exhibit essential structural properties of conceptual thought, such as being composed of word-like elements, or concepts, that can recombine freely. My view that some thoughts are nonconceptual has important implications for several issues in the philosophy of mind, including the possibility of animal thought, the nature of human rationality, and the potential for conceptual mental states to enter into rational relations with nonconceptual mental states.

Committee: Susanna Siegel (Chair), Richard Heck, Alison Simmons, Susan Carey (Psychology)

ACADEMIC HONORS & AWARDS

Harvard Bechtel Prize (for best essay in philosophy by a graduate student), 2006

Graduate Society Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard University, 2006-07

Harvard Merit Fellowship, Spring 2006

Richard M. Martin Prize Fellowship in Philosophy, Harvard University, Spring 2005

JACOB SCOTT BECK

Harvard Bok Center Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Spring 2004

Mind, Brain & Behavior Graduate Student Award (to visit Harvard's Laboratory for Developmental Studies under the supervision of Professors Susan Carey and Elizabeth Spelke), Summer-Fall 2004

Harvard Graduate Society Summer School Tuition Waiver, Summer 2001

Elizabeth F. Flower Prize (for best essay in philosophy by an undergraduate student), 1999

PRESENTATIONS

"Thought: Conceptual and Nonconceptual"

Cognitive Science Symposium, City University of New York, November 2007

Texas Tech University, January 2008

Washington University, February 2008

"The Generality Constraint and the Structure of Thought"

Society for Philosophy and Psychology, York University, June 2007 (poster)

City University of New York Graduate Student Philosophy Conference, April 2007

Warwick Graduate Conference in the Philosophy of Mind, December 2006

"The Language of Thought Reconsidered"

Cognition, Brain & Behavior Research Seminar, Harvard Psychology Department, April 2007

"Reflection and the Emergence of Moral Obligation"

Moral Psychology Workshop, Harvard Psychology Department, November 2006

"Indeterminacy and the Structure of Nonlinguistic Thought"

Australian Association of Philosophy Annual Conference, Australian National University, July 2006

"Thoughts without Concepts"

Australian National University Philosophy Society, June 2006

"The Problem of Consciousness"

Mind, Brain and Behavior Graduate Student Seminar, Harvard, March 2004

"Fishing for Content in the Stream of Consciousness"

Friends & Eminees Reading Group, MIT, February 2003

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Tutorial Instructor, Harvard Philosophy Department, Responsible for course content and instruction for seminars of 4-6 undergraduate students

The Analytic and the Synthetic, Fall 2005

Philosophy of Perception, Spring 2004

Teaching Fellow, Harvard Philosophy Department, Responsible for leading discussion sections and grading student work

Philosophy of Science, Peter Godfrey-Smith, Spring 2004

Introduction to the Problems of Philosophy, Anthony Gillies, Fall 2003

Reason and Evaluation, Thomas Scanlon, Spring 2003

Consciousness, Ned Block, Fall 2002

JACOB SCOTT BECK

Teaching Fellow, Harvard Psychology Department, Responsible for leading discussion sections and grading student work

Origins of Knowledge, Susan Carey and Elizabeth Spelke, Fall 2004 and Fall 2007 (Head TF)

The Human Mind, Steven Pinker, Spring 2008

Other Teaching Experience

Mathematics Tutor for “at-Risk” Students, Madison Park High School, Roxbury, MA, 2001-2002

English Language Instructor, Language House, Takamatsu, Japan, 1999-2000

Elementary School Tutor, West Philadelphia Elementary School, 1999-2000

Economics Tutor, Tutoring & Learning Resources Center, University of Pennsylvania, 1996

College Writing Tutor, Summer Writing Program, Russell Sage College, Troy, NY, 1996

GRADUATE COURSEWORK (at Harvard unless otherwise noted; * indicates audit)

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

2nd-Year Paper (Cognitive Phenomenology),

Ned Block

Concepts, Richard Heck

Problems from Perception*, Mike Martin

Perception* (MIT), Christopher Hill

Consciousness*, Ned Block

Color*, James Pryor & Alison Simmons

Other Minds* (MIT), Alex Byrne

Philosophy of Psychology*, Charles Travis

Mental Content* (MIT), Robert Stalnaker

Perceptual Experience*, Susanna Siegel &

Alex Byrne

Introspection*, Daniel Stoljar

HISTORY

The Rationalists, Alison Simmons

British Empiricism, Ed McCann

Plato, Raphael Woolf

EPISTEMOLOGY & METAPHYSICS

1st Year Colloquium (Truth), Charles Parsons

The A Priori, James Pryor

Epistemology*, James Pryor

Realism & Anti-realism*, Richard Heck

Space, Substance, Self*, Matthew Boyle

Intuitions & Philosophical Methodology*,

Selim Berker

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE & LOGIC

Logic & Philosophy, Warren Goldfarb

Frege, Russell & Wittgenstein*, Warren

Goldfarb

Carnap & Quine*, Warren Goldfarb

Sense & Reference*, Richard Heck

Meaning & Communication*, Richard Heck

Reason & Language*, Richard Heck

Topics in Phil Language*, Bernhard Nickel

Meaning, Quantification & Number*, Paul

Pietroski

ETHICS & ACTION

1st Year Colloquium (Norms), Richard Moran

Morality & Action, Tim Scanlon

Kant's Ethical Theory, Christine Korsgaard

Recent Ethical Theories, Christine Korsgaard

Action*, Christine Korsgaard

PSYCHOLOGY

CBB Seminar*, Assorted Speakers

Conceptual Development*, Susan Carey

Language & Thought*, Elizabeth Spelke

Language & Vision*, Patrick Cavanagh

Vision & Brain*, Ken Nakayama

Moral Psychology Workshop*, Joshua Greene

& Marc Hauser

LANGUAGES

French (reading and some speaking knowledge)

German (reading knowledge only)

JACOB SCOTT BECK

ACADEMIC SERVICE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Philosophy and Psychology Reading Group Leader, 2002-2007

Co-founded, organized and participated in reading group for graduate students and faculty in the Philosophy and Psychology Departments

Mind, Brain & Behavior Conference Coordinator, 2005

Spearheaded development and organization of Harvard's first ever MBB interdisciplinary conference for graduate students

Interdisciplinary Workshop Leader, 2005

Oversaw presentations of senior theses by undergraduates in Mind, Brain & Behavior track

Graduate Student Steering Committee Member, Mind, Brain & Behavior Initiative, 2004-2005

Served as Philosophy Department's representative to interdisciplinary committee
Helped facilitate bi-weekly Graduate Student Seminar Series

Friends and Eminees Co-coordinator, 2001-2002

Organized workshop for Harvard and MIT graduate students working in metaphysics and epistemology

REFERENCES

Susanna Siegel: Department of Philosophy, Harvard University, 208 Emerson Hall, Cambridge, MA 02138. ssiegel@fas.harvard.edu

Richard Heck: Department of Philosophy, Brown University, 205 Gerard House, 54 College Street, Providence, RI 02912. rgheck@brown.edu

Alison Simmons: Department of Philosophy, Harvard University, 208 Emerson Hall, Cambridge, MA 02138. asimmons@fas.harvard.edu

Susan Carey: Department of Psychology, Harvard University, 33 Kirkland Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. scarey@wjh.harvard.edu

Peter Godfrey-Smith: Department of Philosophy, Harvard University, 208 Emerson Hall, Cambridge, MA 02138. pgs@fas.harvard.edu

Ned Block: Department of Philosophy, New York University, Room 405, 5 Washington Place, New York, NY 10003. ned.block@nyu.edu

