

PHILOSOPHY MEETS COGNITIVE SCIENCE



Stiftung
Mercator



Mercator
Research Group

Organization and contact: Prof. Dr. Markus Werning.

Website: www.rub.de/phil-lang.

Venue: Thursday, 22 July 2010, 16-18, in room HMA 40.

All interested students, scientists, and scholars are cordially invited to the following talk of the research colloquium:

Simone Duca

(University of Bristol, UK)

Anti-Expertise and Rationality

In this paper, I defend the claim that agents can never rationally hold themselves to be anti-experts (Egan & Elga 2005). Recently, this view has been criticized for its appeal to an allegedly unrealistic notion of rationality. In particular, it has been suggested that self-attributions of anti-expertise are rational and indeed standard attitudes for agents "like us" (Bommarito 2009). I offer two arguments against this view: 1) Argument from theoretical rationality: Self-ascribed anti-experts also violate Reflection, which is a highly desirable principle of rationality. 2) Argument from empirical evidence: Robust results on the Above-Average effect show that we usually overestimate our performance at a large variety of tasks. This suggests that not only self-ascriptions of anti-expertise are unusual, but also that agents "like us" positively see themselves as experts. In conclusion, I firstly dismiss Bommarito's argument as imprecise and unsound; I then suggest that self-attribution of expertise is indeed a powerful heuristic to get by in day-to-day tasks; finally, I propose a way to relate anti-expertise to memory.

Duca is a PhD student in Philosophy at the University of Bristol, where he works under the supervision of Hannes Leitgeb. Before coming to Bristol, he got a BA and an MA in Philosophy from the University of Milan in Italy. Currently, he is working on his thesis, which is titled Logical Constraints on Metacognition. The basic idea is to investigate the formal constraints on introspective capacities of rational agents. This analysis pulls together ideas from many fascinating areas of research, such as belief change, conditionals, probability, epistemic paradoxes, rational choice theory and, last but not least, evolutionary psychology.