

A&P

ANTHROPOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

International Multidisciplinary Journal

Volume 10 – 2009/2010

ARACNE

A&P

ANTHROPOLOGY & PHILOSOPHY

International Multidisciplinary Journal

Editor in Chief

Mariano L. Bianca

Co-Editor

Paolo Piccari

Scientific Committee

Evandro AGAZZI
Università di Genova

Remo BODEI
University of California, Los Angeles

Nicolae BULZ
National Defence College, Bucarest
Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne

Nicola GRANA
Università di Napoli "Federico II"

Luigi LOMBARDI SATRIANI
"Sapienza" Università di Roma

Maria Immacolata MACIOTI
"Sapienza" Università di Roma

Luca MALATESTI
University of Rijeka

Michele MARSONET
Università di Genova

Fabio MINAZZI
Università dell'Insubria

Alberto OLIVERIO
Università "La Sapienza" di Roma

Marc PIAULT
CNRS Paris

Paolo A. ROSSI
Università di Genova

Simone ZACCHINI
Università di Siena

Editor Assistant

Lucia Foglia
McGill University, Montreal

Editorial Address

Università degli Studi di Siena
Dipartimento di Scienze Storico-Sociali, Filosofiche e della Formazione
viale Luigi Cittadini, 33
52100 Arezzo (Italy)
Ph. +39 0575 926357-59
Fax +39 0575 926312
bianca@unisi.it
piccari@unisi.it
www.aep.it

Publisher

Aracne editrice S.r.l.
www.aracneeditrice.it
info@aracneeditrice.it
via Raffaele Garofalo, 133/A-B
00173 Roma
(06) 93781065

A&P is published as one volume

The papers submitted for publication in the A&P are evaluated by referees.

Questo fascicolo è stato pubblicato con il contributo del master in Etica degli affari, del consumo e della responsabilità sociale dell'Università degli Studi di Siena.

Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Firenze n. 4822 del 6 agosto 1998

Special Issue on
Concept Formation
Edited by Mariano L. Bianca and Paolo Piccari

Contents

- 5 **Foreword**
Mariano L. Bianca, Paolo Piccari
- 9 **Conceptual Framework: A Frequency Model**
Mariano L. Bianca, Paolo Piccari
- 31 **Conjunctions of Social Categories considered from Different Points of View**
James A. Hampton, Margaret Dillane, Laura Oren and Louise Worgan
- 59 **The Hidden Strengths of Weak Theories**
Frank Keil
- 81 **Concepts as General Representations in Situated Theories**
Elisabetta Lalumera
- 97 **Against Hybrid Theories of Concepts**
Edouard Machery, Selja Seppälä

Foreword

MARIANO L. BIANCA E PAOLO PICCARI

How comes [the mind] to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence as it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience.

J. LOCKE, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)

In recent years the debate on concepts has been enforced as advances in cognitive science have provided philosophers with new tools refining the traditional dispute. As we know, different hypotheses have been suggested, whose main goal is to explain the nature of concept and its structure. Philosophers have got advantage from empirical studies in such different fields as developmental psychology, evolutionary psychology, cognitive anthropology, neurosciences, linguistics, and ethology. This Special Issue of *Anthropology and Philosophy* devoted to the *Concept Formation* attempts to offer some contributions to the contemporary research and discussion from different perspectives.

In *Conceptual Framework: A Frequency Model* Mariano L. Bianca and Paolo Piccari focus their attention on the nature of empirical concepts. Such concepts are considered as a *conceptual framework* represented by a five-dimensional vector in which, in addition to the merely perceptive content (the identitive and specifying perceptive attributes), non perceptive contents (semantic reference and various significances assigned to concepts by single individuals) are analysed. This model does not consider empirical concepts as the simple result of a generalization conducted on the basis of different perceptive instances, but highlights the relevance of non perceptive contents in their formation.

In *Conjunctions of Social Categories Considered from Different Points of View* James A. Hampton, Margaret Dillane, Laura Oren and Louise Worgan argue that conjunctions of divergent social categories may elicit emergent attributes to render the composite concept more coherent. On the one hand, social categories can be combined in an integrative fashion, taking the positive and negative attributes of each category and combining them into a novel composite prototype. In order to identify a set intersection of instances in the world, it is necessary to create a set union of the criteria that identify them. On the other hand, they have discovered that in certain circumstances, people will resist this integration. Throughout two experiments they showed that: a) when adopting the point of view of one constituent category, people tended to combine the concepts antagonistically, meaning that they attributed to members of the conjunction the more negative aspects of the opposing category; b) this polarizing effect was reduced when the point of view category was itself unusual.

In *The Hidden Strengths of Weak Theories* Frank Keil stresses there has been a strong tradition of assuming concepts as embedded within larger systems of beliefs that help to articulate their structure. He argues there is a newly emerging concern that is much more challenging to address — people's intuitive theories seem to be so impoverished it is difficult to see how they could provide the necessary structure to explain differences between concepts and how they might form in development. One response to this recent challenge is to abandon all views of concept structure as being related to people's intuitive theories and see concepts as essentially structure-free atoms. The alternative proposed in this paper argues that our very weak theories might in fact do a great deal of work in explaining how we form concepts and are able to use them to successfully refer.

In *Concepts as General Representations in Situated Theories* Elisabetta Lalumera addresses the issue of the role of concepts as representations of general knowledge, which seems intuitive, but it is seldom explained. She identifies two kinds of general knowledge, namely, constitutively general (possessed by all members of a category) and behaviourally general (that can be applied to all members of a category). First Lalumera reviews the ways in which traditional theories of concepts have coped with generality, and then focuses on situated or 'embodied' theories, which present themselves as highly revisionary with respect to other models.

In *Against Hybrid Theories of Concepts* Edouard Machery and Selja Sepälä argue that the psychologists of concepts' traditional assumption that there are many properties common to all concepts has been subject to devastating critiques in psychology and in the philosophy of psychology. In this article, they compare two competing approaches, the Heterogeneity Hypothesis and the hybrid theories of concepts, and they present an empirical argument that tentatively supports the former over the latter.

From our point of view these papers can really contribute to develop further studies on the matter. We wish to thank the Authors of the papers who accepted our proposal so allowing the realization of the Special Issue on *Concept Formation*.

MARIANO L. BIANCA
PAOLO PICCARI