MindGrad 2018: Perception and Perceptual Knowledge

Attracting a large number of attendants, including more than thirty young researchers from both the UK and outside the UK — including Edinburgh, UCL, KCL, Oxford, Tuebingen, Nottingham, Manchester, Pittsburgh and Miami — MindGrad 2018 has proved to be a very successful edition of this conference. The conference, organised by PhD students of the Department of Philosophy, was aimed at bringing together research on the themes of Perception and Perceptual Knowledge. The choice of focusing the conference on one particular research area has enabled fruitful connections and overlaps between the talks. The conference also functioned as a platform for all attendants to extend their knowledge of the area and to contribute to the discussion of the subject matter of each particular talk.

The conference featured 8 speakers, both from Philosophy and in Psychology, including 4 invited speakers and 4 graduate speakers selected through blind review of submitted papers. Azenet Lopez (University of Miami) and Alisa Mandrigin (University of Stirling) opened the conference with two papers on phenomenal consciousness of objects and bodily awareness, respectively. They tackled philosophical problems by drawing on results from experiments in psychology. Maximilian Tegtmeyer (University of Pittsburgh) approached the issue from a purely philosophical perspective, arguing that for a subject to possess a capacity for objective experience s/he must be able to grasp the *formal concept of objective experience.* Bill Brewer (KCL) gave an incredibly rich talk on the source of our belief that objects continue to exist even unperceived.

Paul Snowdon (UCL) opened the following day with a philosophical reflection on how we know that it is through perception that we acquire knowledge of the world, which was followed by a challenge to scepticism by Charles Goldhaber (University of Pittsburgh). His leading question was ‘Can we defeat the sceptic by deploying merely weapons that the sceptic would accept as legitimate?’. In the afternoon, the focus shifted back to experiment-based talks, delivered by Louise Richardson (University of York) and Kathryn Nave (University of Edinburgh). Louise presented a view about the nature of smell and addressed the implications for theories of perception, while Kathryn argued that perception can be considered determinate while also probabilistic — under the predictive coding hypothesis.

Besides offering a platform to share knowledge, understanding of perception and perceptual knowledge, MindGrad also strengthened some professional relationships and laid the basis for some more. Among these, Paul Snowdon, for example, was part of a conference on Self-awareness and Perception held in Fribourg in September, organised by some members of the Department of Philosophy at Warwick. The talk he gave for MindGrad was the second part of the talk he gave in September, and it will become part of an edited collection. Alisa Mandrigin has been working on a project on the senses and will be involved in future events on the perception of events, organised in collaborations with members of the Department of Philosophy at Warwick.

In conclusion, MindGrad has provided an incredible opportunity to collaborate and discuss research questions which, taken together, contribute to the understanding of the field of perception and perceptual knowledge. The conference has strengthened research links within Warwick and between Warwick and researchers from other institutions, opening the possibility of future collaborations.