

# Brain and Mind – from Concrete to Abstract

»DELUSIONS AND THE BRAIN« | MAY 9TH 2023

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKSHOP BETWEEN MSH  
AND ST HILDA'S COLLEGE OXFORD UNIVERSITY

## Dr Anita Avramides

Anita Avramides is Senior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St Hilda's College in Oxford. She is the author of »Other Minds«, published by Routledge, »Meaning and Mind: An Examination of a Gricean Account of Meaning«, published by MIT Press, and co-editor of »Knowing Other Minds«, published by Oxford University Press. She has written many articles in the philosophy of mind.

## Dr Rick Adams

»Bayesian explanations for delusions«

In recent years, 'Bayesian' explanations of phenomena in psychosis (and other mental disorders) have become popular: these accounts propose that psychotic symptoms are generated by an overweighting of new sensory data against prior knowledge during the inference process. Delusions seem completely at odds with such accounts however, as they are highly resistant to any form of new evidence. In his talk Dr Rick Adams shows that delusions can form in a purely Bayesian agent, if one incorporates in the model the influence of actions, emotions and confidence on beliefs. In fact, delusions arise in the agent not despite its Bayesian nature, but because of it.

*Dr Rick Adams trained in medicine and neuroscience at Cambridge University, and qualified in medicine and psychiatry. He is currently a Future Leaders Fellow in the Centre for Medical Image Computing and Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience. His main research interest is in using computational models of cognitive processes and neural circuits to understand both the symptoms and the neurobiology of psychosis from behaviour and brain imaging data (respectively). He also works as a Consultant Psychiatrist in psychosis and neuropsychiatry clinics.*

## TIMETABLE

18:00

Introduction by Dr Anita Avramides,  
St Hilda's College, Oxford, UK

18:10

»Bayesian explanations for delusions«  
Dr Rick Adams, Future Leaders Fellow  
at University College London

18:30

»Content out of context: Temporal context  
memory bridges everyday déjà vu experiences  
and psychoticism«  
William Nichols Koller, Clinical Psychology  
at Yale University

18:50

Discussion and break

19:25

»Strange Experiences and Bizarre Beliefs:  
The Philosophy of Delusional Thought«  
Dr Matthew Parrott, Fellow and Tutor in  
Philosophy at St Hilda's College, Oxford

19:45

Discussion and Dinner

20:15

End

## William Nichols Koller

*»Content out of context: Temporal context memory bridges everyday déjà vu experiences and psychoticism«*

Psychosis is characterized by thought content that is experienced as salient, intrusive, and bizarre, yet analogues of psychotic experiences are common in the general population. In his talk, William Koller examines aspects of memory (dys)function that may contribute to psychotic-like experiences in the general population – focusing on the ability to organize memories in time. In so doing, he identifies several processes that are closely related to both psychoticism and more everyday odd experiences like déjà vu, highlighting how the associative memory system may be closely tied to ineffable subjective experiences across a spectrum from illness to health.

*William Koller is a fourth-year Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Psychology at Yale University. His research focuses on memory and learning processes that may give rise to or maintain psychosis and psychotic-like experiences. Prior to beginning graduate school, William Koller was a research assistant at the Yale School of Medicine, where he helped conduct clinical trials examining the efficacy of real-time functional MRI neurofeedback. In his undergraduate work, Koller studied Psychology and French at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Outside of academic pursuits, he enjoys surfing and doing improv comedy.*

## Dr Matthew Parrott

*»Strange Experiences and Bizarre Beliefs: The Philosophy of Delusional Thought*

*People develop delusions in association with a number of different conditions, including schizophrenia, dementia, and traumatic brain injury. Typically, individuals experiencing delusion have extremely odd beliefs about the world, such as that their mother is an imposter. How do they come to hold these strange beliefs? The leading scientific theories of delusion aim to address this question, but, in doing so, they raise a number of philosophical questions - including questions about the relationship between experience and belief, about human rationality. This presentation will consider some of these questions.*

*Matthew Parrott is Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at St Hilda's College, Oxford. Prior to this, he was a Birmingham Fellow at the University of Birmingham and a Lecturer in Philosophy at King's College London. His research focuses on questions in philosophy of mind, cognitive science and philosophy of psychiatry.*



**Future Brain & Mind:**

*Taste and the brain on Tuesday, 17th October 2023  
Sound and the brain on Tuesday, 30th January 2024*