

# David de Bruijn



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## Academic Employment

Visiting Lecturer, University of Pittsburgh 2017-present

## Education

University of Pittsburgh 2013-2017

Ph.D., Philosophy, Co-Directors: John McDowell, Stephen Engstrom.

University of Pittsburgh 2007-2011

M.A., Philosophy

University of Cambridge, 2006-2007

M.Phil., Philosophy (Honors)

University College Utrecht, 2003-2006

B.A. Philosophy (Summa Cum Laude)

University of California, Berkeley 2005-2006

Visiting

## Specialization

AOS: Kant, Philosophy of Perception.

AOC: Early Modern Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind, 18<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy, Ethics/Political Philosophy

## Dissertation:

“Experiential Self-Consciousness: Rationalism about Perceptual Experience.”

Does perceptual experience represent? I argue that an unappreciated factor in deciding this question is the *subject* of experience. Rational, thinking subjects enjoy a distinctive self-awareness of themselves *as* thinking subjects. I argue that a similar type of self-knowledge plays a role in structuring perceptual consciousness. Several conclusions follow. Experience *does* represent, insofar as it presents the environment specifically for judgment, or in judgeable form. Moreover perceptual representation grounds a distinctive type of experiential unity, and explains the distinctive presentational character of experience. Understood this way, I argue that



perceptual representation is the expression of a rationalist approach to experience, an approach with early modern roots in Kant and Leibniz.

## Peer-Reviewed Publications

(Forthcoming 2018) "Perception and Empirical Reason: Comment on Brewer." *Analytic Philosophy*.

## Presentations and Workshops

"The Achilles after the Paralogisms", Leuven Kant Conference, KU Leuven	June 2017
"The Achilles after the Paralogisms", Kant on Mind and Action, AUB Beirut	May 2017
"Contemporary Reinholdian Heresy", Reinhold Conference, KU Leuven	April 2017
Perceptual Experience and Empirical Reason (Commentator), Pittsburgh	October 2016
Workshop on Self-Knowledge, Harvard University, Cambridge	March 2016
"The Achilles after the Paralogisms", Dissertation Seminar, Pittsburgh	November 2015
Aquinas on Contemporary Ethics, Witherspoon, Princeton	July 2015
"The Understanding and the Imagination", SCSP, Spartanburg	March 2015
"The Understanding and the Imagination", Israel Phil. Association, Tel Aviv	February 2015

## Scholarships and Awards

John McDowell Andrew W. Mellon Research Fellowship	2016-2017
Rescher Dissertation Fellowship	2016
Tikvah Advanced Institutes Fellowship	2014
University of Pittsburgh Teaching Fellowship	2009, 2011, 2014, 2015
University of Pittsburgh Graduate Student Fellowship	2008, 2010, 2013
Cambridge First Degree, <i>Highest Honors</i>	2008
HSP Huygens Program Full Scholarship, for University of Cambridge	2008
Dr. Hendrick Muller's Patriotic Fund, for University of California, Berkeley	2007
Foundation of De Vrijvrouwe van Renswoude, for University of California, Berkeley	2006

**Languages:** Dutch (Native), English (Fluent), German (Fluent Reading, Intermediate Speaking), French (Fluent Reading, Intermediate Speaking), Hebrew (Basic), Latin (Basic).



## Teaching

Introduction to Philosophy of Mind, <i>Lecturer</i>	Spring 2018
Philosophy and Public Issues, <i>Lecturer</i>	Fall 2017
Introduction to Ethics, <i>Teaching Assistant</i>	Fall 2014, 2015, Spring 2016
Minds and Machines, <i>Teaching Assistant, University of Pittsburgh</i>	Spring 2011, Fall 2010
History of Modern Philosophy, <i>Teaching Assistant, University of Pittsburgh</i>	Spring 2009
Concepts of Human Nature, <i>Teaching Assistant, University of Pittsburgh</i>	Fall 2008
Essay Supervision, <i>Individual Tutor, University of Cambridge</i>	Fall 2007

## Professional Services

Mentor, University of Pittsburgh Graduate-Undergraduate Mentoring Program,	2015
Referee, University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Mellon University, Graduate Conference	2015
Referee, University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Mellon University, Graduate Conference	2014
Reviewer, Intra-Departmental Peer Review System, Preston Stovall Writing Sample	2014
Referee, University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Mellon University, Graduate Conference	2011

## References

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## **“Experiential Self-Consciousness: Rationalism about Perceptual Experience.”**

Does perceptual experience represent? A positive answer to this question provides a satisfying account of several intuitive features of perception, including the way in perception objects look (“red”, for example) and the way perception rationally informs belief (by providing corresponding perceptual contents).

But critics have argued that representationalism has been given insufficient systematic motivation, and is often adopted by default. In particular, while it can seem *prima facie* tempting to assimilate perception to intentional doxastic representation, such an analogy is far from innocent, and risks (i) underplaying the *sui generis* character of experience; (ii) failing to attach appropriate significance to experience’s phenomenal character; and (iii) reversing various types of explanatory priority of experience over doxastic attitudes.

My dissertation provides representationalism with a novel systematic motivation and a new angle on its explanatory benefits.

On the view I develop, a representational view of experience can be grounded in a type of *rationalism* about the *subject* of experience. On this rationalist account, thinking subjects enjoy conscious visual experience in a distinctive way. Specifically, the character of rational conscious life is constituted partly by a form of non-introspective self-awareness. For a subject *S* to enjoy a conscious experience *E* is partly for *S* to be self-aware of enjoying *E*. In my terms, for rational subjects perception takes the form of a type of “experiential self-consciousness.” I argue that “experiential self-consciousness” grounds a compelling representationalist account of various epistemically and phenomenally significant aspects of experience.

Epistemically, experiential self-consciousness provides a novel account of perceptual knowledge. In enjoying a perceptual experience, a rational subject is self-aware of enjoying the sort of experience in which her environment is perceptually presented to her for knowledge. That is: the subject is self-aware of being perceptually presented with certain environmental features, i.e. the objects of knowledgeable judgment. Perceptual representation captures this idea.

Phenomenally, experiential self-consciousness aligns perceptual representation with the *unity* of conscious of experience. On the understanding I develop, the unity of experiential consciousness *just is* the subject’s self-awareness of a certain unity. Mental representation (including perceptual representation) accounts for this type of self-awareness. The type of self-consciously constituted unity that characterizes conscious experience is distinctive of the unity of thought-contents, viz. the unity that binds together the various elements of the proposition. The unity of experience is accordingly an expression of a representational link between thought and experience.

In sum, I argue that perceptual representation is not a notion primarily supported by certain specific explanatory benefits. Instead, it is the centerpiece of a more systematic and fundamental approach to the relation between conscious experience and the nature of thought. Perceptual representation explicates that systematic connection.