Newsletter

european society for cognitive psychology

Number 3, January 1987

Haren, January 14, 1987.

Dear Colleagues,

Let me first take this opportunity of wishing all of our members a happy and productive New Year.

1987 will be an important milestone in the development of our Society: not only will it see the organisation of our first Summer School but it will also bring the first opportunity for our larger membership (which now exceeds 150) to meet together in Madrid in September. We wish the Society much success in all its ventures in this important year.

While plans for future events are, in general, progressing very smoothly, one at two hiccups have appeared along the way. The most important one relates to the Summer School. Since we have been so successful in attracting such an excellent teaching staff, we also hope to receive applications from high calibre participants. For this we need your help. Please circulate information about the Summer School to other young researchers and institutions in your own country. Perhaps one reason so few applications have been received to date is that you have been awaiting the arrival of the promised posters for distribution. I apologise for the delay in sending these to you. Unfortunately, as you are no doubt aware, the wheels in Universities do not always turn smoothly!

Since there has been this delay in publicity, however, we have decided to prolong the application period. Please note: the final date for applications will now be March 20.

The final dates for receiving your abstracts for the Madrid Conference remains March 30, 1987. As mentioned earlier,

these should in the first instance be sent to my address in Haren. Any other information you may require about the Conference can be obtained from Dr. M.V. Sebastian.

Please keep sending any information you think would be of interest to our members.

I have also enclosed an up-to-date membership list which I hope will be of interest and use to you. If you notice any spelling errors or incorrect information, please inform me. The production of such a booklet does of course cost money! Since we have so little of this commodity, I look forward to collecting a small contribution (something in the region of Dfl. 3.00) from you when we meet in Madrid.

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THE STUDY OF COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY IN EUROPE

Our second report in the series which aims to explore our different educational backgrounds comes from Belgium.

Cognitive Psychology in Belgium

Géry d'Ydewalle

The growth of psychology in Belgium into a full-fledged discipline and recognized profession is probably more intimately linked to the historically important research work of some individuals than may be the case in other countries; see for example the work of Plateau (1801-1883) in Ghent, Delboeuf (1831-1896) in Liège, Decroly (1871-1932) in Brussels, and Michotte (1881-1965) in Louvain. Although the research in psychology was of high quality at the different universities, it took a long time before regular programs of psychology were made available. Moreover, in almost all universities, psychology grew out within the programs in educational sciences. It is only after World War II that psychology programs started to emancipate from the Institutes of Educational Sciences. The number of students enrolling for psychology increased very rapidly from 1965 till the mid-1970s.

There are now six main universities in Belgium. The Catholic University of Louvain/Leuven was divided in 1968 into two new universities: one Flemish speaking, which stayed in Louvain/Leuven, and the other French speaking, which moved to a new campus, Louvain-la-Neuve. The same language split occurred at the Free University of Brussels, although in this case both universities remained in the same vicinity, near the centre of Brussels. The two remaining universities, Ghent (Flemish speaking) and Liège (French speaking), are state universities, although all of them (including the two Louvains and Brussels) are supported by the state almost at about the same level. In response to the large increase in students at the end of 1960s, regional universities were established. This decentralization, however, was not carried out for psychology (except Mons which has educational programs, where psychology is included).

After secondary school, there are no special admission rules to start a psychology program. A typical psychology program begins with two years that lead to the title of "candidate". This diploma is of no immediate career value. It is followed by two to three years during which the student specialises in one or another field of psychology and has to write a master's thesis to earn the diploma of "licentiate" (sometimes the specialisation is mentioned in the title). Only a very few continue on to a doctoral degree (either with fellowships from a few science foundations or with an assistantship from the University). It takes four to seven additional years to finish a doctoral dissertation, and some universities require an official publication before the degree is conferred.

There are no special programs in cognitive psychology. Students who are interested in cognitive psychology choose a program either in experimental or theoretical psychology. There are more and more close ties between cognitive psychology on the one hand and research fields in neuropsychology, ergonomics and human factors on the other hand.

In Belgium, a distinction is made between legal programs (e.g. Law, Medicine, etc.) and scientific programs (Psychology, Business School, etc.): the main difference is that the core group of lectures to be given is not regulated by law in the scientific programs.

Although psychology is a scientific program, leaving freedom to each university to decide what should be on the program, there is a fairly large amount of similarities between the psychology programs at the six universities. Accordingly, the teaching position of cognitive psychology is about equal at the six universities. Although each Psychology Department has its own strong fields, giving local flavour in the main research interest, research training is almost equally high at all universities. Outside the Psychology Departments, there is not much research being carried out. The industry and other agencies generally try to develop research programs, together with governmental help through some foundations, within the universities.

Some parts of the text have been taken over from "Psychology in Belgium", in R.J. Corsini (Ed.), Encyclopedia of Psychology. Vol. 3.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

European Workshop on Imagery and Cognition

Michel Denis

Director of the Workshop
Centre d' Etudes de Psychologie Cognitive
Université de Paris-Sud, Orsay, France.

The European Workshop on Imagery and Cognition (EWIC) was held at the Université de Paris-Sud, Orsay, France, 24-26 September 1986. The decision to organise this meeting initially came out of discussions among European imagery researchers who agreed upon the importance of enhancing their level of scientific exchange. It was the purpose of the workshop to present the most recent theoretical and empirical advances in this domain, by European researchers involved in cognitive psychology and neuropsychology. In addition, the workshop was aimed at assessing prospects for research in those areas that emerged as the most promising.

The relationships between mental imagery and visual perception received a significant amount of attention in the papers presented at the workshop. A second major topic was the relationship between imagery and language processing, focusing in particular on the translation of linguistic information into visual images. The role of imagery in the acquisition of motor skills and in the representation of movement also appeared as a new and promising area of research. Finally, the workshop clearly testified to the strength of research in neuropsychology and neurophysiology, oriented towards a more detailed characterisation of the neural substrate and mechanisms of imagery.

The workshop brought together 80 participants. Eleven European countries were represented. In addition, leading North American scientists

in imagery research took part as invited discussants and keynote speakers, among them A. Paivio and S. Pinker. There were a total of 36 papers presented during the workshop. The EWIC was supported by NATO, as NATO Advanced Research Workshop, and by MRES and CNRS, as part of the European Laboratory Networks program. M. Denis and M. Cocude (Université de Paris-Sud, Orsay, France), J. Engelkamp (Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken, F.R.G.), and J. Richardson (Brunel University, Uxbridge, England) were in charge of the organisation of the workshop.

The proceedings of the EWIC will be published (in English) by Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, in a volume edited by M. Denis, J. Engelkamp, and J. Richardson.

Workshop on Aspects of Consciousness and Awareness
Bielefeld, 1-3 December 1986

Philip Smith

University of Reading, Reading RG6 2AL, England.

With the financial assistance of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and its considerable organisational powers, we were able to hold a workshop in Bielefeld last December. It was jointly organised by Philip Smith (on behalf of the European Society for Cognitive Psychology) and by Peter Bieri, who is a philosopher at Bielefeld. Thirty people attended, divided roughly 50-50 between psychology and philosophy. We were able to include 4 speakers from the U.S.A. The discussions were long and for the most part mutually intelligible.

The speakers were Barbara von Eckardt (Cornell), Robert van Gulick (Syracuse), Ansgar Beckermann (Göttingen), James Reason (Manchester), Keith Oatley (Glasgow), Kathleen Wilkes (Oxford), Jochen Brandstädter (Trier), George Mandler (La Jolla), Beatrice de Gelder (Tilburg), José Morais (Brussels), Anders Ericsson (Boulder), Neil Hayes (Oxford), Alan Leslie (London) and Gerd Lüer (Göttingen). A small number of copies of some of these papers are available direct from Zentrum für interdisciplinäre Forschung, Universität Bielefeld, Wellenberg 1, D-4800 Bielefeld, F.R.G.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Practical Aspects of Memory

The Welsh Branch of the British Psychological Society are happy to announce The Second International Conference on Practical Aspects of Memory.

The Conference will take place at University College Swansea from 3-8 August, 1987. For further information please contact Dr. Michael Gruneberg, Department of Psychology, University College of Swansea, Wales.

Artificial Intelligence: Supercomputers

The Conference will take place at Umea University, Sweden, from 22-24 June, 1987. The theme of the Conference is the relation between computational problems and computer architecture. The state of the art in two very different fields - Supercomputers and Artificial Intelligence - will be presented.

Further information can be had from Professor L-G. Nilsson, Umea University, S-90187 Umea, Sweden.

Fourth International Conference on Event Perception and Action August 24-28, 1987. University of Trieste, Italy

Although the main topic of this Conference is perception, depending on demand, one or two symposia could be devoted to some further aspects of cognition. If you have any ideas or wish further information, please contact the Scientific Organiser: Professor Walter Gerbino, Visiting Professor, NIAS, Meijboomlaan 1, 2242 PR Wassenaar, The Netherlands.