

The University of Tokyo, Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology
Program for Evolving Humanities and Sociology
Research Visit Report

Personal Information

- Name: Kengo Miyazono
- Major: Philosophy
- Category: 2011, Winter, Individual, PD

Research Theme

A Study of the Relationship between Imagination and Pathological Delusion

Visiting

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Department of Linguistics and Philosophy,
(Prof. Stephen Yablo) Cambridge, MA, USA
- April 1, 2012 – June 30, 2012 (90 days)

Research Report

(1) Research Plan

This study investigates the role of imagination in pathological delusion. Delusional patients claim that their family members are replaced by imposters, that they are always followed by CIA agents, that some thoughts are put into their heads by someone else, etc. These delusions are in an intuitive sense “imaginative”. But, is this just a metaphor, or an imprecise way of talking? Or, is there a real, interesting relationship between delusion and imagination? If there is an interesting relationship between delusion and imagination, what kind of relationship is that? This study aims to answer these questions.

(2) Results

I presented and examined two possible hypotheses on the relationship between delusion and imagination. According to causation hypothesis (e.g. D. Hume), the relationship between them is that of causation. Some imaginative mental states are

playing causal roles in delusion formation and maintenance. According to identity hypothesis (e.g. G. Currie), the relationship between them is that of identity. Delusions are (identical with) some imaginative mental states. Based on empirical and philosophical considerations, I concluded that identity hypothesis is not plausible, but causation hypothesis is promising. My arguments for this conclusion were presented on the following occasions.

- “The Role of Imagination in Delusion: Two Hypotheses”
American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, 86th Annual Meeting
(April 4-7, 2012, Seattle, WA), [Poster]
- “Delusions as Malfunctioning Beliefs”
The 38th Annual Meeting of the Society for Philosophy and Psychology
(June 21-24, 2012, Boulder, CO), [Poster]

(3) Future Research

Causation hypothesis is usually committed to “doxasticism about delusions”, namely, the idea that delusions are (identical with) beliefs. In the next step of my research on delusion, I will defend doxasticism about delusions from what I call “problem of functional roles”. The problem is that doxasticism about delusions is in tension with the dominant view on the nature of belief in philosophy of mind, namely, functionalism. My basic idea is that the tension between doxasticism and functionalism should be resolved by rejecting functionalism and replacing it with what I call “teleo-attitude functionalism”. Some of my thoughts on this issue will be presented at the following venues.

- “Can Delusion Doxasticism Be Defended”
2012 Early-Career Philosophy Researcher Forum
(July 22, 2012, National Olympics Memorial Youth Center, Tokyo), [in Japanese]
- “A Theory of Belief for Delusion Doxasticists”
First Conference on Contemporary Philosophy in East Asia
(September 7-9, 2012, Academia Sinica, Taipei)
- TBA
Tokyo Forum for Analytic Philosophy
(October 4, 2012, at The University of Tokyo)