

Research topics

History of knowledge; psychology and philosophy of mind; philosophy of science and epistemology; affective sciences; aesthetics; language sciences; German-speaking area

Current research

1) History of German-speaking psychology (late 18th to early 19th centuries)

For many years, I have striven to investigate the ins and outs of psychological thought as it prevailed for about one century in German-speaking countries from Herbart's seminal studies in the early 19th century. Although I am focused on the 1810s-1910s, my field of investigation covers the period from the late decades of the 18th century to the early 1930s. An expert of the Germanic area, I am nonetheless interested in American, British, French, and Danish psychologists who were active throughout this period. From a methodological point of view, I try to reinstate the conceptual history of psychology while insisting on the epistemological significance of the psychological concerns and contemplating them from an overtly cross-disciplinary perspective. The core of my research is that, beyond the variety of scientific individualities and schools of thought, the psychological investigations carried out in Germany and Austria between the early 19th and early 20th centuries basically pertain to one unique scientific paradigm, a paradigm whose foundations, core concepts, research programs, and evolution and interaction with other disciplinary fields I try to analyze. Regarding the evolution of the paradigm of German psychology, my aim is to highlight the way in which, after having emerged at the beginning of the 19th century, it flourished for almost a century, before dramatically ebbing at the beginning of the 20th century, virtually disappearing for several decades, and finally (partly) re-emerging in the second half of the 20th century. On the other hand, I study the impact of German psychological thought on philosophy and *Geisteswissenschaften* by specifying the conditions and modalities of the "psychologization" of knowledge in mostly Germanic but also European and American contexts. A significant proportion of my work as a historian is now devoted to affective psychology as it emerged from the late 18th century onward with the "making" of feeling (*Gefühl*) and developed, throughout the 19th century, as an autonomous field of investigation within the new German psychological science. In addition to analyzing the theory of feeling and the research programs proposed by affective psychologists until the early 20th century, I am interested in the question of the "affective turn" that, as I have demonstrated, concerns psychology and the various disciplinary fields influenced by it from the second half of the 19th century onward. In this respect, I try in particular to reassess the importance of the role played by the German psycho-affective paradigm in aesthetics, theory of knowledge, and language sciences. Generally speaking, I champion *the history of affective sciences*, as opposed to what is usually referred to as "the history of emotions," the latter approach being still largely predominant today and basically having to do with cultural history, the history of ideas, and the history of sensibilities, which, in my opinion, does not succeed in correctly grasping the authentic scientific and epistemological stakes of the notion of affectivity.

2) History of German and Austrian philosophy (19th century to early 20th century)

As a historian of the German-speaking philosophical tradition, my studies concern first and foremost the theory of knowledge, its relationships with logic, ontology, language philosophy, and the philosophy of emotions and have more particularly to do with issues such as the theory of experience, the naturalization of epistemology, and the foundations of objective knowledge. More specifically, I have developed expertise in the study of two authors who are still largely neglected

by historiography: Theodor Lipps (1851-1914), who was one of the most influential thinkers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and to whom I have notably devoted an edited collection to be published in the Editions Universitaires de Dijon, and Heinrich Gomperz (1873-1942), who was the theorist of "pathempiricism" (*Pathempirismus*), a positivist-oriented doctrine that aimed to refound epistemology on the psychological concept of feeling. My other focuses of interest include immanence positivism and empiriocriticism (Mach, Avenarius, Petzoldt), as well as a number of philosophers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Wundt, Riehl, Külpe, and Volkelt, who belonged to the field of critical realism and ideal-realism.

3) Psychological aesthetics (history and theory)

Generally speaking, I am interested in aesthetic science in its relationship to psychology, more specifically, to affective psychology. From a historical point of view, my research is about the emergence and development of psychological aesthetics in German-speaking countries between about 1850 and 1914. As I have striven to demonstrate, German and Austrian psychological aesthetics of that period basically pertained to a "psycho-affective" paradigm, the psychological turn that started in the mid-19th century being also for aesthetics a turn of an affective nature – the psychological notion of feeling then establishing itself for more than a half a century as the core concept of aesthetics. Thus, my research is largely devoted to the issue of aesthetic feelings (*ästhetische Gefühle*). In this respect, I study the way in which the theorists of that time strove to make aesthetic feeling an authentic scientific concept, by analyzing, within the framework of various theoretical models, the nature, function, and typology of the affective processes that are involved in the manifestation of the experience of the beautiful. During the last few years, I tried to reinstate a number of central figures of the German psycho-aesthetic paradigm who had almost fallen into oblivion, such as Theodor Waitz, Joseph Wilhelm Nahlowsky, and Konrad Lange. Among the many other aestheticians who I am interested in, it is worth mentioning Theodor Lipps, the famous – but still insufficiently studied – theorist of aesthetic empathy. Here I advocate the idea that Lipps and most of the "professional" theorists of that period, in particular Hartmann, K. Lange, Groos, and Volkelt, supported the same psycho-aesthetic current, what Charles Lalo, in 1910, referred to as "the new affective sentimentalism" and what I have called the "holistic" paradigm of aesthetic feelings, in contrast to the "elementarist" paradigm, as epitomized by Waitz, Nahlowsky, and Wundt. Moreover, I am interested in two major questions that, in all these authors, underpin the issue of the experience of the aesthetic object: a) the question of how form and content articulate with each other and b) the question of how the parts relate to the whole and are integrated into it. In this respect, I focus on the investigations of "form-feeling" (*Formgefühl*) that were carried out in the 1880s-1910s by Wundt, Wöllflin, Göller, Lipps, and other theorists. However, my research in the field of psychological aesthetics is not confined to the study of aesthetic feeling, nor does it boil down to the historical dimension only. I strive to establish a link between the German-speaking psycho-aesthetic paradigm and the most recent advances of psychological thought – here my thesis being that current psycho- and neuroaesthetic studies correspond, to a large extent, to the resurgence of issues that emerged in Germany and Austria in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. This is in particular the case for empathy and aesthetic feelings (emotions), two topics that, for some years, have aroused renewed interest among both theorists and experimentalists. Beyond investigating the re-emergence the Germanic psycho-aesthetic paradigm, I aim to show how the theoretical models that were elaborated within it can constitute a major source of inspiration for current aestheticians.

4) Affective epistemology

In keeping with my research on the history of psychology and philosophy, a significant part of my

investigations is devoted to the issue of affective epistemology, that is, the study of the place of feelings or emotions in the acquisition, manifestation, and justification of epistemic processes. In other words, I am interested in analyzing the functional implications of what philosophers of mind now commonly refer to as "epistemic feelings" or "emotions" (also called "cognitive" or "noetic" feelings or emotions) – the affective states that, unlike those that express nothing but pleasure and displeasure, are the carriers of a definite form of knowledge (familiarity, doubt, certainty, expectation, surprise, etc.). As I have striven to demonstrate, affective epistemology, contrary to the widespread view that it suddenly emerged in the last few decades, is a field of investigation that appeared as early as the beginning of the 19th century and that considerably developed until the early 20th century, mostly, but not exclusively, in German-speaking countries. In this respect, I am interested, first and foremost, in the contributions of two authors, Lipps and Gomperz (who were probably the most important theorists of affective epistemology of their time), by analyzing their way of contemplating the involvement of feelings in the making of thought, language, logical processes, and forms of conscious experience. My main ongoing project is to study the ins and outs of pathempiricism (*Pathempirismus*), the philosophical system expounded, in 1905 and 1908, by Gomperz in his unfinished book, the *Weltanschauungslehre*, which aimed, no more and no less, to refound epistemology on the basis of affective psychology. Here my hypothesis is that the pathempiricist doctrine advocated by Gomperz was the epitome of a "strong" research program on affective epistemology whose origins can be traced back to the 1820s (Beneke) and that found its expression in the empiriocriticist tradition (Avenarius, Petzoldt), as well as in some of Lipps's writings. Here, beyond the fact of revisiting the history of this strong program, my intention is to address the question of its significance in light of current philosophical debates. Although most theorists of today advocate a rather "weak" view of the relationships between affectivity and epistemology, my intention is to raise a number of arguments in favor of a radically internalist epistemology, naturalized on the basis of affective psychology.

Responsibilities

Member of the steering committee of the program "Biomorphism: Sensitive and conceptual approaches of life forms," headed by Julien Bernard and Sylvie Pic.

Referee for *Dialogue*, *Canadian Philosophical Review/Revue Canadienne de Philosophie*, Palgrave Macmillan, and Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal.

Member of the Herbart-Gesellschaft, the Société Française d'Esthétique, the Gardens Trust, the Lutyens Trust, and the Charles Rennie Mackintosh Society.

Teaching

Academic year 2018-2019 (second semester): Lectures and tutorials on the philosophy of biology within the framework of the master's degree "Neurosciences," Aix-Marseille University.