

Presentation Abstracts

Matthew Traylor

In the philosophy of mathematics, there is expressed a form of, and is perhaps one of the strongest arguments for, platonism: by Quine's criterion for ontological commitment and indispensability argument, we are committed to the existence of at least some abstract entities.

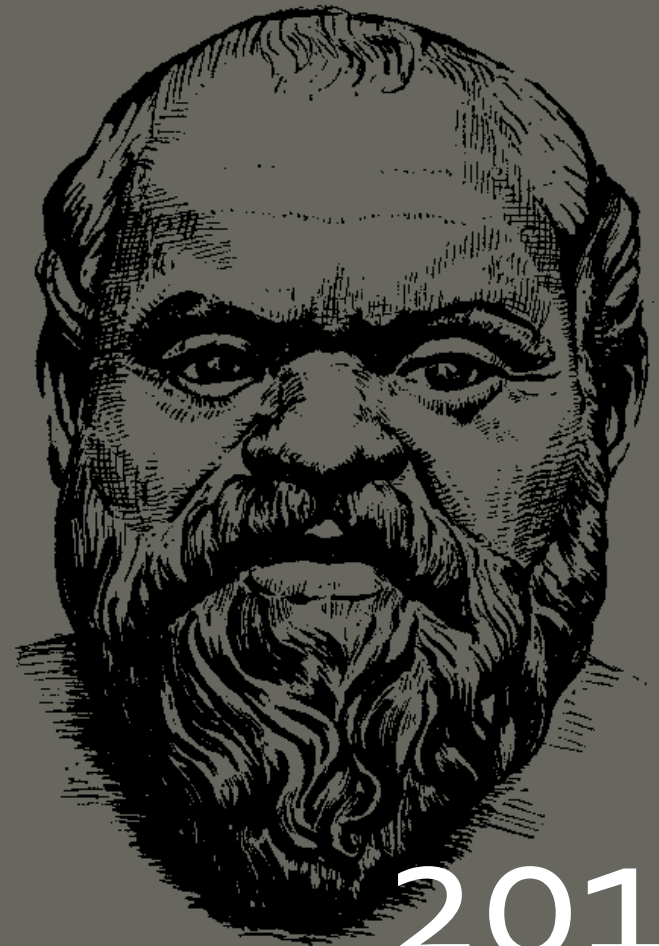
This paper examines whether the use of mathematical statements really commits us to an ontology containing such entities by questioning whether analytic statements make any ontological claims at all.

Jordan Wilkerson

The right to privacy has been a right acknowledged by the Supreme Court since 1965. However, there is much controversy regarding how technological advancements have expanded the capabilities to invade privacy. A notorious innovation developed by Google is content extraction, the ability to read customer's e-mails and store them in a massive data base. This presentation will explore the significance of this technology and how badly it fits into the right to privacy's trajectory.

Brian York

In this paper I intend to demonstrate the intimate relation between metaphysics and ethics by exploring the philosophies of Plato and the Advaita Vedantists. I will first explore what the good man is for each of these philosophies, then explore their metaphysical beliefs concerning human nature. I will conclude by showing how specific differences in metaphysics lead to differences in ethics.



2010

University of Memphis Philosophy Department Presents:

Mid-South Undergraduate Philosophy Conference

March 5 -6, 2010

Schedule

FRIDAY 5 MARCH

1:30pm

Keynote Address

3:00-3:30pm: Session I
Domination, Individuality, and Moral Chaos: Nietzsche's Will to Power
Cooper, Angel M. Room A

3:30-4:00pm: Session II
The Heraclitean Season
Extended Too Far?
Goehring, Billy-Dean Room A
Gomez-Lavin, Javier Room B

4:00-4:30pm: BREAK

4:30-5:00: Session III
The Influence of Feuerbach on Freud
Refuting Anselm's Ontological Argument
Harris, Ross Beau Room A
Hodges, Joshua Room B

5:00-5:30: Session IV
Democracy as Practice in Balibar's 'Spinoza and Politics'
Holmes, Amanda Room A

6:00 - 'til: Social Event

SATURDAY 6 MARCH

10:00-10:30am: Session I
Powers & Properties: On Causal Relevance and the Metaphysics of Mind
Emotions & Intentionality: A Defense of the Propositional Attitude School
Klimaski, Joanna Room A
Libassi, CI Room B

10:30-11:00am: Session II
Strong Rationalism, Neo-Empiricism, and Schematizing as Discursive Activity
The Failure of Rule-Based Ethics: Ethical Fuzziness and Virtue Ethics
Ramesh, Vijay Krishna Room A
Reuter, Shane Room B

11:00-11:30am: BREAK

11:30-12:00pm: Session III
Untangling Realism & Anti-Realism
Maintaining First-Person Authority in Finkelstein's *Expression and the Inner*
Richey, Charles Room A
Russo, Marcala Room B

12:00-12:30: Session IV
Cultural Relativism: Synonym for Intolerance
A Phenomenological Critique of the Frege-Russell Theory of Language
Shah, Ayesha Room A
Somma, Bethany Room B

12:30-1:45pm: LUNCH

2:00-2:30pm: Session V
Trust Me or Don't
Intentionality & Moral Responsibility
Swanson, Stanton R. Room A
Torres, Danielle Room B

2:30-3:00pm: Session VI
Platonism in Mathematics & Ontological Commitment
Traylor, Matthew H. Room A
The Right to Privacy Against the Rise of Technology
Wilkerson, Jordan Room B

3:00-3:30pm: Session VII
Plato & Vedanta: The Necessary Bond Between Metaphysics and Ethics
Locating Arendt in *Inalourous Bastards*
York, Brian Room A
Mills, Amanda Room B

3:30-4:00pm: BREAK

4:00-4:30pm: Session VIII
All Flesh Is Grass: A Phenomenological Approach to Ecological and Posthumanist Ethics
Montaño, Spencer Room A

4:30-5:00pm: Session IX
Love, Otherwise
Katsman, Anna Room A

5:30-'til: DINNER

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Angel Cooper

I argue that Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the will to power may lead to *the problem of moral chaos*, or the problem of endorsing violent immoral acts, such as murder and torture. I first explain three common interpretations of the will to power: (1) a metaphysical description of nature; (2) a psychological drive; (3) a myth about human existence. I argue that the correct interpretation of the will to power is that it is a psychological drive directed inwardly towards bettering ourselves. Finally, I show how this interpretation will save Nietzsche's philosophy from the problem of moral chaos.

Billy-Dean Goehring

While Greek philosophers—both his contemporaries and otherwise—would endeavor to demonstrate the characteristics and delineate the categorical boundaries of Being, it has been said that Heraclitus—from what one can gather from such a fragmented text or texts—strove to establish a Becoming in Being's stead. I claim it is rather that Heraclitean Becoming assumes a predominant role from which Being is now derivative, a model which may account for the stability of and transition among categorical distinctions. By grounding his project in a spirit of empiricism unclouded by distinction, Heraclitus is able to conciliate the nonhuman activity of gradation with the human activity of discernment.

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Javier Gomez-Lavin

In Andy Clark's and David Chalmers' 1998 paper, 'The Extended Mind', they posit that, in certain circumstances, mental states can extend outside the skull. For example, in some circumstances, certain environmental artifacts, such as iPhones and notebooks, can become part of the vehicles of beliefs and desires. Needless to say, some people, including Adams and Aizawa (2001), have issues with this thesis. Their objection relies on a distinction between intrinsic and derived mental contents and their respective roles in cognition. In my paper I critically assess this objection, finding it overly restrictive, and thus defend Clark's thesis.

Ross Beau Harris

The nineteenth century was a period of great philosophical development with many thinkers emerging and influencing each other in their works. One philosopher of this period who was very influential was Ludwig van Feuerbach. This paper will examine Feuerbach's concept of God and how it influenced the work of Sigmund Freud.

Joshua Hodges

The ontological argument presented in Saint Anselm's Proslogion is an intriguing and powerful attempt to prove the existence of God through pure reason. There have been numerous attempts to refute this argument throughout the history of philosophy. This paper critiques two such refutations: one offered by Gaunilo of Marmoutier and another offered by William L. Rowe. I then construct an alternative refutation based upon Hilary Putnam's "Brains in a Vat" thought experiment.

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Amanda Holmes

In this paper I evaluate Etienne Balibar's claim that Spinoza assigns a double theoretical inscription to democracy in the *Theological Political Treatise*. Balibar claims that Spinoza assigns two meanings to democracy: "on the one hand, democracy is a particular kind of political order and on the other it is the truth of all political order" (Balibar 33). I argue that despite the cogent argument Balibar offers, this understanding of democracy threatens to obscure the important insight that Spinoza gives in the TTP about the role of democracy in all political organization; that an attempt to understand democracy as, on the one hand, a particular type of political order, and on the other, the underlying truth of all political order will result in a circular argument.

Anna Katsman

Under conditions of pervasive phallocentrism, is love possible? Love, as conceived of and practiced in phallogentric culture, names that experience where women are termed by and for men. This paper explores the possibility of refiguring this relationship such that women can assume the status of subjects and thereby engage in genuinely intersubjective relations with men. Drawing on Luce Irigaray and Drucilla Cornell, I interrogate phallogentric love and attempt to delineate terms that would enable a love, otherwise. Love, otherwise, I argue, has the capacity to undermine phallogentric culture and so is a necessary condition of possibility for women assuming subjecthood.

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Joanna Klimaski

The mental causation debate in philosophy of mind addresses the causal relevance of physical and mental properties. Some theorists query the possibility of causation between the physical and the mental, citing that the disparate natures of these phenomena preclude any ontological interaction. Alternatively, those who do grant causal efficacy to both physical and mental properties encounter the problem of causal overdetermination. According to causal overdetermination, an event cannot have more than one sufficient cause, or a cause whose presence guarantees the event's occurrence. In this paper I draw on emergentism, a prevalent non-reductive physicalist theory, in order to present the problem of causal overdetermination in philosophy of mind.

CJ Libaski

Through his argument in *What Emotions Really Are*, Paul Griffiths effectively demonstrates the need to expand the methodological practices of theories of emotion by showing the scientific basis for altering the conventional view of the "emotion" category. He also successfully establishes the limitations of the propositional attitude school through many of his substantive objections. However, one of these substantive objections in particular fails to address issues unique to the propositional attitude school of thought on emotion. Specifically, Griffiths's claims that propositional attitude theorists must contend with the existence of "objectless emotions" is applicable to all alternative approaches to understanding emotion that Griffiths presents.

Amanda Mills

In 2009, director Quentin Tarantino released Jewish revenge film *Inglourious Basterds* to much acclaim. Its star villain, Colonel Landa (Christoph Waltz), is often compared in personality and treachery to Arendt's account of Nazi Adolf Eichmann. Arendt famously identified the "banality of evil" in her piece "Eichmann in Jerusalem," and I evaluate to what degree this fits Landa. More, I explore how *Inglourious Basterds*—as historical fiction predicated on an assumed collective revenge fantasy—invokes other Arendtian themes, such as the importance of imagination, the significance of understanding, and the power of storytelling. I ultimately conclude, however, that *Inglourious Basterds*' reliance on violence demeans these political tools.

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Shane Reuter

For Socrates ethics is the study of how we ought to live, and thus the subject matter of his ethics is human behavior. The complexity of this subject, however, presents many problems for ethics. In this paper I develop an Aristotelian-based ethics modified to account for the complexity of human behavior. I first detail several problems of rule-based ethics. I then introduce what I call ethical fuzziness attempting to quantify the complexity of human behavior. Concluding I discuss the benefits of integrating ethical fuzziness into Aristotelian virtue ethics.

Charles Richey

"The debate between realism and antirealism is the result of differing language and goals, and is, in a sense, not a problem of philosophy. I explain how different notions of knowledge, justification, and acceptance have lead realism and antirealism to be "fleshed out" in divergent ways. The reason there for argument between the two is because both sides want to be "right." The debate is stuck in a race with no finish line. The relationship between realism, antirealism, and what they describe, is viewed more clearly as exploration than conquest."

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Marcella Russo

In this paper, I am responding to a contemporary account of first-person authority made by David Finkelstein. I begin by laying out Finkelstein's criteria for an adequate account of such authority. Then, I present Finkelstein's account of first-person authority. Lastly, I argue that because he fails to recognize the relation between our sensations and our expressions as causally understood, he does not sufficiently meet the "intimacy" condition. I conclude that in order to account for the intimacy we exhibit in the avowals we make about our inner experiences, we must acknowledge the crucial role our sensations play in our expressions.

Ayesha Shah

The post-modernist outlook has for a long time been mistaken to elicit a tolerant attitude due to its apparent non-confrontational disposition. In this paper, I argue that cultural relativism is not synonymous to tolerance rather; it leads to an attitude of indifference and injustice that is detrimental to mankind at large. The paper also tackles the recent controversy regarding the French headscarf ban that has been deemed discriminatory by many. The claims of discrimination against the French government in regards to the ban are dismissed in the paper and potential benefits of the proposed ban at public schools are discussed.

Bethany Soma

This paper argues against the analytical conception of language as it is found in the philosophy of Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell. It advocates the phenomenological viewpoint portrayed in work of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl. It raises three objections to the analytic philosophy of language: the logic of language cannot be considered apart from language itself, meaning in language cannot be considered purely analytically, and thought cannot be segregated from language. Presenting language as a holistic practice, phenomenology accounts for that which analytic philosophy cannot and allows for a more comprehensive understanding of language.

Presentation Abstracts

Stanton R. Swanson

An easy to understand exploration of the epistemic questions having to do with the "hows" and "whys" of trust. How do we arrive at trust? Why do we trust complete strangers? These questions and many others will be answered by using Bayesian Theory in conjunction with Computational Theory of Mind.

Danielle Torres

Intentionality is the term used to refer to the ability of our thoughts to be about certain objects, topics, or events. The two main factions of intentionality are externalism and internalism. In his book, *From an Ontological Point of View*, Heil makes an argument for internalism, combating the previous objections posed by the externalist camp. Heil's view of intentionality, based in the dispositional aspects of a sentient agent's physiological nature, necessitates a deterministic view in regards to moral responsibility. After discussing the account of intentionality provided by Heil and distinguishing between internalism and externalism, I will offer some criticisms of what Heil's account might mean for moral life.

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