**Session I**

**What Do the Holocaust, Global Warming,** **and the Filioque Have in Common?**

Paul Viminitz, ULethbridge & Pamela Lindsay, ULethbridge

In this paper we offer a conjecture as to how it’s possible that people of identical epistemic integrity – by which we mean pretty close to none – can and do nonetheless arrive at polar opposite views about history, the environment, the ontological status of divine entities, and questions of similar real-world import. None of us comes out well. But neither do any of us come out worse than anyone else.

**Rehabilitating the World of Meaning: An Analysis of Hannah Arendt’s Existentialism**

Nathan Todd, McMaster

Hannah Arendt is often cited as an existentialist thinker, and while I think this designation is appropriate, I believe that modern scholarship does not adequately acknowledge the significant way in which she departs from the tradition’s emphasis on self-disclosure and individuality as a means to meaning and authenticity. I make the case that for Arendt, meaningful life requires valuing immortality and human history, and that she understands existentialism to be bound up in a broader philosophical tradition that fails to acknowledge the importance of these values. To make these arguments, I first draw together Arendt’s criticisms of modern thought post-Galileo in *The Human Condition* with her analysis of existentialism in two of her essays. I then turn back to Arendt’s theory of action and read it as a response to these criticisms and as a unique answer to the question of meaning in life.

**Session II**

**Testimony and the Effects of Dismissal on Marginalised Knowers**

Jordan Wadden, University of British Columbia

This paper analyses the effects dismissal has on marginalised knowers in the context of the epistemology of disagreement. I begin by outlining the testimonially dependent nature of human life, and address the objection that we could conceive of a testimonially independent individual. In the following section, I look at testimonial injustice between two experts using an example from Miranda Fricker. I then modify the example in order to consider how discrepancies in credential assignment might act differently in cases where one expert belongs to a marginalised group. Following this, I focus on understanding how both interlocutors ought to act when they find themselves in a disagreement involving credential discrepancy and marginalisation. Finally, I conclude the paper by questioning how a so-called ‘neutral’ third party should act when brought in as an mediator between the two individuals.

**Against the Rejection of Public Reason**

Zahra Shojaei, USask

According to John Rawls’s political liberalism, we need public reasons to justify the binding

laws in pluralistic democratic societies. On the contrary, Nicholas Wolterstorff believes that

asking citizens to give public reasons in public political discussions is restrictive and unfair, and

violates the integrity of religious citizens. In this paper, I will argue that Rawls’s inclusive view,

which allows for nonpublic reasons when they support the ideal of public reason, and his wide

view, which allows for nonpublic reasons provided that appropriate public reasons are

introduced in due course, are not unfair to religious people, nor do they result in them losing

their integrity. In the first section, I will give an overview of Rawls’s view on the role of reasons

and public reasons. In the second section, I will explicate Wolterstorff’s objections regarding

integrity and fairness. In the final section, I will highlight some weaknesses of Wolterstorff’s

arguments.

**Human Lethality, Extraterrestrials, and Divine Hiddenness**

Roger Petry, Luther College, UofR

NASA's recent discoveries of significant numbers of exoplanets in the Goldilocks Zone of other solar systems suggests a high likelihood of other planets with life. If so, why have we not been contacted by alien life forms? Stephen Hawking contends most forms of so-called “intelligent life”, including our own, lack a particular kind of intelligence, namely the ability to live sustainably on their home planets. Their own lethality leads to their self-destruction prior to established communications with other planets and/or successful colonization of other worlds. An alternative explanation to this lack of contact is that intelligent alien species choose deliberately to remain hidden. This paper will employ Richard Swinburne's response to the traditional problem of divine hiddenness in the philosophy of religion in defending this alternative explanation. This defense also relies on the unsustainable state (or even lethality) of current human production and consumption systems.

**Session III**

**Inarticulate Forgiveness**

Emer O’Hagan, USask

Pamela Hieronymi argues that any account of forgiveness must meet the challenge of being both articulate and uncompromising. It must explain the revision in judgment that results in a forgiver’s loss of resentment toward the transgressor, and must do so without compromising a commitment to the transgressor’s responsibility, the wrongness of the action, or the victim’s selfworth. Non-articulate accounts, which tend to rely on indirect strategies for reducing resentment, such as recalling one’s positive history with the transgressor, or reflecting on his bad childhood, can fail to meet this challenge. Do they need to? I take up several objections to non-articulate accounts, arguing that they fail to demonstrate their conceptual inadequacy. Expanding on Strawson’s objective and participant attitudes, I claim we can hold a transgressor responsible while, to some extent, objectifying him. I conclude that not all of accounts of forgiveness must be both articulate and uncompromising.

**The Evolution of Human Higher Cognition**

Andrew Brigham, University of Ottawa

The co-discoverers of evolution by natural selection, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace, disagreed about whether evolutionary processes, and natural selection in particular, could explain human higher cognition, such as the capacities for mathematics and philosophy. Darwin affirmed that natural selection explained higher cognition, while Wallace argued that other teleological mechanisms would have been required. This disagreement continues to persist in the present in a variety of ways and is perpetuated by the difficult task of reconstructing human cognitive evolution. Thus, my aim in this paper is to analyze evidence from cognitive science and show that an inference to the best explanation supports Darwin's view.

**Redirecting Constructive Empiricism: From Belief to Knowledge**

Daniel Munro, University of Toronto

Van Fraassen’s “constructive empiricism” entails that it is rational to withhold belief in the unobservable entities science posits (e.g., electrons, microwaves). Yet, as van Fraassen argues, we seemingly have no choice but to conceptualize the world as if they exist. For this reason, I argue that constructive empiricism fails on common-sense grounds much like arguments that we should withhold everyday beliefs (e.g., that I have hands) because our evidence does not rule out skeptical scenarios (e.g., that I am a brain-in-a-vat). I then argue that skeptical arguments targeted at knowledge, rather belief, can be successful in cases where there is a certain kind of epistemic gap between one’s empirical justification and the proposition one believes. Given that our belief in unobservable entities exhibits such a gap, I conclude that constructive empiricism can be successfully reworked by redirecting its target from belief in unobservable entities to knowledge of them.

**Non-Ideal Theories and the Fact of Historical Injustice**

Susan Dieleman, USask

In “Racial Liberalism” (2008) and *Black Rights, White Wrongs* (2017), Mills argues that the liberal social contract tradition’s reliance on ideal theory obscures histories of racial injustice. Mills concludes that liberalism can be saved if we adopt a non-ideal theory approach. Similarly, Bashir has argued, in “Reconciling Historical Injustices” (2012), that theories of deliberative democracy are unable to meet the demands raised by the historical injustices that shape settler colonial societies. He concludes that deliberative democracy ought to be kept, but should be complemented by the politics of reconciliation. In this presentation, I interpret these efforts as attempts to complement “the fact of reasonable pluralism” with “the fact of historical injustice.” I argue that, in the same way that liberalism can account for the fact of historical injustice if it is conceived in non-ideal-theory terms, so too can deliberative democracy if it is similarly conceived in non-ideal-theory terms.

**Temporal and Causal Distance in Aggressive Cyberoperations**

W. Jim Jordan, University of Waterloo

News of international cyberattacks captures the public’s attention, but little is said about how to respond to them. If their effects are widespread and physically damaging, then they are candidates for an armed military response--provided certain conditions hold. I look primarily at scenarios where there is a short, but multi-stage, causal chain of events between starting an aggressive cyberaction against another state and the resulting effects that occur weeks or months later. I argue that in certain cases, this extended period of time mitigates or negates a target state’s right to respond with force, and so offer a resolution to conflicting guidance provided in a manual on cyberwarfare and international laws of armed conflict.

**Session IV**

**Imaginative Necessity: Kant and Arendt on Cognition and Judgment**

Nicholas Dunn, McGill

Kant repeatedly claims throughout the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that aesthetic judgments are not cognitive judgments. My aim in this paper is to spell out what Kant means by this. I motivate my discussion of this claim by looking at a criticism raised by Jürgen Habermas against Hannah Arendt’s theory of political judgment, which she explicitly models on Kant’s account of aesthetic judgment. Habermas objects to Arendt’s relegation of political judgment to the realm of opinion, for it cannot guarantee that we will achieve consensus in matters of politics. I begin by briefly presenting Kant’s claim that aesthetic judgments are non-cognitive (§1). Then, I discuss Arendt’s theory of judgment, along with Habermas’ critique of it (§2). After this, I return to Kant’s claim that aesthetic judgments are not cognitive, highlighting the salient features brought out by Arendt’s reading of Kant (§3). This involves an explanation of the subjective but universal character of judgment, as well as the kind of validity that it possesses. I argue that Kant does not mean to suggest that aesthetic judgments lack a cognitive basis altogether, as Habermas’ critique would imply, but rather that what makes them distinct from cognition is that their determining ground is not a concept but a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. I conclude by showing that this reading of Kant reveals Habermas’ critique of Arendt to be misguided (§4). More specifically, it is not a consequence of either Kant or Arendt’s accounts that argument and the potential for agreement are excluded from the practice of judgment. Instead, both conceive of aesthetic and political discourse, respectively, as having a unique form of disputation. One cannot compel another to agreement, as in the case of cognition, but must rather persuade by giving an account of one’s position, making use of examples, which in their particularity reveal the universal that could not otherwise be understood.

**Content That Matters: In Defence of a Representational Theory of Emotions**

Dylan Ludwig, York University

Emotional processing seems to involve a nebulous assortment of psychological and physiological mechanisms. The most compelling case for the theoretical unification of emotions research is the idea that a kind of valenced representational content is common to all these mechanisms. Louis Charland makes an important effort in this direction with his Representational Theory of Emotions. However, his postulation of distinct, informationally encapsulated, modular systems operating on system-specific representational items fails to capture some essential features of information processing in the brain and central nervous system. Specifically, understanding the nature of representational capacities in general suggests a hierarchical continuity, and more importantly complex communication and interaction, among diverse neuropsychological and more broadly physiological systems, such as those that function in emotional processing. I will suggest some important modifications to the RTE, and show that the resulting model provides the clearest target of inquiry for the philosophy and psychology of emotion.

**Bayesianism is inconsistent with reliablism**

Conor Mayo-Wilson, University of Washington, Seattle Campus

I argue that Bayesianism is inconsistent with several plausible versions of reliabilism, including (1) process reliabilism and (2) modal theories employing the safety or sensitivity principle.  This conclusion is important because both Bayesianism and reliabilism are popular positions in epistemology, and some philosophers seem to endorse both positions.

**Utopianism and Political Irrationality**

Aaron Ancell, UofT

People tend to be biased and irrational about politics, yet many normative political theories presuppose or require that people’s political views are responsive to reasons and evidence in rational and unbiased ways. Are such theories utopian in the pejorative sense? David Estlund argues that the answer is “no” because the fact that the normative presuppositions or requirements of a theory are unlikely to be met does not entail that the theory is utopian. I argue that Estlund’s argument is effective only if being rational and unbiased about politics is something people could easily do but are nonetheless unlikely to do. His argument falters insofar as the reason that people are unlikely to be rational and unbiased about politics is that being rational and unbiased about politics is very difficult. Moreoever, I argue that Estlund’s own defense of democracy commits him to eschewing normative requirements that are very difficult to meet.

**The Unjust War: Punishing Bad Brute Luck to Wage the War Against Drugs**

Darren Corpe, UCalgary

The enforcement of the war on drugs continues to claim innocent lives and jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of people with bad brute luck. This paper offers an analysis of both the logic and the consequences of the war on drugs to determine if it is, as many claim, an unjust war. Five conceptions of justice from political philosophy are utilized to prove this point, including: libertarian justice, capabilitarian justice, deontic justice, egalitarian justice, and Rawlsian justice as fairness. The analysis demonstrates that the war on drugs is unjust according to each of the five theories of justice. Additionally, ample data is provided to demonstrate that viable alternatives to the war on drugs do exist and ought to be considered by governments that are currently following strict drug prohibition policies.

**Inconsequentialism, complicity and individual fossil fuel consumption**

Corey Katz, Ohio State

**Session V**

**Failed Traditions: A Ricoeurean Approach**

Robert Piercey, Campion College, UofR

Like many other philosophers, Paul Ricoeur argues that all inquiry is necessarily tradition-based. Unlike most such philosophers, Ricoeur seems to lack the resources needed to make sense of *failed traditions*: traditions that break down in ways that bring genuinely rational inquiry to a halt. I explain why failed traditions might seem to pose a problem for Ricoeur, and argue that, appearances to the contrary, he actually does have the resources to give an account of them. I find these resources in his account of dead metaphors.

**Reconciling Appraisal Love and Bestowal Love**

Dwayne Moore, USask

Despite the amicable subject matter, the contemporary philosophy of love is divided into warring factions. On the one side, there is the appraisal model, which is *object-centred* and *reasons-based*: Romeo loves Juliet because of her valuable loyalty and confidence. On the other side, the bestowal model, which is *subject-centred* and *non reasons-based*: it is in Romeo’s nature to love Juliet, so he finds Juliet’s loyalty and confidence valuable. While both of these models enjoy intuitive and conceptual support, they simultaneously suffer from trenchant objections. In this paper, I blend these disparate models, with the aim of preserving the virtues of each model, while simultaneously overcoming their associated defects. I do this by proposing a *subject-centred* *reasons-based* account: love arises within the lover, but, within the lover, love is based on the lover’s motivating reasons. ​

**Intergenerational Justice and Reciprocity**

Monte Forster, UCalgary

Certain theorists argue that while understandable and laudable in an intragenerational context, and although theoretically laudable in an intergenerational context, justice cannot exist intergenerationally. One argument raised against the idea that justice can exist intergenerationally is that reciprocity is essential between parties making justice-based claims, and, while both essential and present between members of the same generation, reciprocity is non-existent between members of different generations. I reject the argument that reciprocity is essential to found justice-based duties between generations. Indeed, contrary to those theorists who argue that the lack of reciprocity forecloses any justice-based duties intergenerationally, I argue that the lack of reciprocity between generations increases the justice-based duties of present generations to future and further future generations.

**How Should I Live?**

Sherry Ya-Yun Kao, Rice University

Standing at a crossroad in life wondering how you should live is familiar to many. In this paper, I outline the basic idea of a compass that represents who you are and what you want to be, and then discuss its nature. First, I examine some candidates for such a compass: Christine Korsgaard’s idea of practical identity and David Velleman’s account of narrative. I argue that their proposals are dissatisfactory. Then, I develop my own proposal: values and commitments serve as a better compass that guides you in leading your life. I end by examining an objection.

**The Meaning of Life and the Veridicality Requirement**

Karl Laderoute, ULethbridge

Some theories concerning the meaning of life endorse the VeridicalityRequirement (VR). The VR maintains that a necessary condition of a meaningful life is that the individual hold true beliefs. Although several thinkers (including Joel Feinberg, John Kekes, and Susan Wolf) endorse the VR, it has not been explicitly articulated. This paper first articulates two conditions that a desirable theory ought to meet. Next, the VR is explicitly articulated in its most charitable form. Finally, three interrelated points are raised to show that the VR, even in its most charitable form, should not be accepted in a desirable theory of the meaning of life.

**Novel Ecosystems as Transition Events: Understanding the Controversy**

Eric Desjardins, UWO

**Session VI**

**Resilience in the face of counter-evidence in Religion and Science**

Ravit Dotan, UC Berkeley

It has been argued that resilience in the face of counter-evidence is constitutive of, or at least compatible with, religious and mundane faith (Buchak (2017), Howard-Snyder (2013), Pace (MS), and Wolterstorff (1990)). I expand on the view by arguing that resilience is also key to scientific epistemic processes. On the other hand, counter-evidence is supposed to indicate that we are making a mistake, possibly contributing to a rejection of the relevant view. This gives rise to a puzzle: how can counter-evidence lead to a rejection of the view if it is resisted when encountered? I explore a solution to this puzzle based on Buchak’s risky commitment account of faith.

**On Salience and Signaling in Sender-Receiver Games**

Travis LaCroix, University of California, Irvine

I introduce an extension of the Lewis-Skyrms signaling game, analysed from a dynamical perspective via simple reinforcement learning. In Lewis' (1969) conception of a signaling game, salience is offered as an explanation for how individuals may come to agree upon a linguistic convention. Skyrms (2010) offers a dynamic explanation of how signaling conventions might arise presupposing no salience whatsoever. The extension of the atomic signaling game examined here—which I will refer to as a *salience game*—introduces a variable parameter into the atomic signaling game which allows for degrees of salience, thus filling in the continuum between Skyrms' and Lewis' models. The model does not presuppose any salience at the outset, but illustrates a process by which accidentally evolved salience is amplified, to the benefit of the players. It is shown that increasing degrees of salience allow populations to avoid suboptimal pooling equilibria and to coordinate upon conventions more quickly.

**Indigenous Oral Histories and Deep Disagreement**

Paul Simard Smith, University of Windsor

According to Michael Lynch (2016) the participants to a *deep disagreement* are unable to rationally persuade one another of their distinct points of view. In this paper, I characterize certain disagreements over the evidentiary role of Indigenous oral histories as deep disagreements in Lynch’s sense. I consider two different strategies for resolving these disagreements. In doing so, I draw on the notion of *responsible truth* that Indigenous philosopher Lee Hester (2001) has claimed can be found in some Indigenous languages. I argue that the following epistemic principle is responsibly true in Hester’s sense; Indigenous oral histories can be sufficient for acquiring knowledge of the traditional territories, history, legal and political conventions of Indigenous nations. On that basis I contend that such a principle should be broadly applied within Canada.

**In Defense of a Harm-Based Account of the Default Wrongness of Killing**

Howard Nye, UAlberta

According to the Harm-Based Account of the wrongness of killing, the moral reasons against killing an individual are determined by the extent to which death harms her. While this view has many advantages, Jeff McMahan defends the sense of many Kant-inspired authors that, while the Harm-Based Account may be correct for moral patients like infants and animals, the reasons against killing typical human adults are determined by “respect” for their “intrinsic worth.” In this paper, I argue against this “Two-Tiered” Account of the wrongness of killing, and in defense of the Harm-Based Account together with one addition: that agents’ autonomous choices may undermine and shift our default moral concerns for their well-being. An important consequence of this argument is that all moral patients have the same “moral status,” in the sense that, all else held equal there are equally strong moral reasons against inflicting equally great lethal harms upon them.

**Schopenhauer’s Pessimism, Intelligibility, and the External World**

Mark Migotti, UCalgary

**Can Environmental Economics Coexist with Environmental and Social Justice Even in Theory**

Aaron Crowe, College of the North

**Session VII**

**A French Source for Hume’s *Treatise***

James Young, UVic & Margaret Cameron, UVic

This paper argues that Jean-Baptist Dubos had a significant impact on Hume’s thought in the *Treatise*. This impact is significantly greater than hitherto appreciated.

**Semi-incompatibilism**

Jonah Nagashima, University of California, Riverside

This paper articulates and defends semi-incompatibilism, according to which free will is incompatible with determinism whether or not moral responsibility is. Semi-incompatibilism requires denying a thesis I label ‘**Linkage**’, which says that an agent is morally responsible for some action only if they freely performed that action. I argue that semi-incompatibilism---and the denial of **Linkage** more broadly---allows us to reconcile a wide range of intuitions in the free will debate, which a reason to think that semi-incompatibilism is true. Specifically, I examine intuitions concerning Frankfurt-style cases, manipulation arguments, Strawsonian theories of moral responsibility, and asymmetrical theories concerning praise and blame. I then give reason to think that there are important aspects of free will that operate independent of considerations concerning moral responsibility; thinking of free will primarily in terms of its connection to moral responsibility has the unfortunate side effect of obscuring those notions.

**The Attraction of the Ideal has no Traction on the Real: On Adversariality and Roles in Argument**

Katharina Stevens, ULethbridge & Dan Cohen, Colby College

If arguers were exclusively concerned with cognitive improvement, arguments would be cooperative. Apparently, however, the default is adversarial argumentation because we have other goals and to reach them, we need to win. We settle comfortably into the roles of proponents and opponents, but those are chosen, not given, and they inhibit cooperation. The resources of virtue argumentation theory are used to explain when adversarial argumentation is permissible, advisable, or even mandatory – and also when it is not.

**Constitutive Reasons and the Suspension of Judgment**

Whitney Lilly, Northwestern

In this paper I identify a puzzle that emerges when recent work on the suspension of judgment is integrated with evidentialist solutions to the wrong kind of reasons problem: it looks like there is no such thing as a reason to suspend judgment. I then consider four possible responses to this puzzle and argue that the most promising solution is one according to which only overall verdicts and not contributory reasons support the commitment to neutrality that is constitutive of the suspension of judgment.

**Geoengineering and the Auto-Poietic**

Byron Williston​, Wilfrid L​aurier

**Session VIII**

**Eschatological Erotic Enfleshment: Incarnation as Nuptial Nexus of Human and Divine**

Mark Novak, McMaster

In the traditional theological framework, the incarnation of God ignores an affirmation of embodiment, reducing it to a means to an end: atoning for sin so that human souls have a way to get to an immaterial heaven. What would it look like, however, to set this view aside, and to look at the incarnation as an end in itself, i.e. as the Eschaton? The proposed paper will explore this idea by examining the ways in which we can understand the incarnation of God in Christ as an affirmation of embodied existence. Drawing from the incarnational and Christological thinking of Bonhoeffer and Kearney, and the phenomenological understandings of flesh and the erotic of Merleau-Ponty and Marion, I will argue that God’s desire is to continually become enfleshed. Such an understanding entails that we understand incarnation as Eschaton—the chiastic weaving of human and divine in the flesh.

**An Intellectualist Conception of Human Freedom**

Michael Szlachta, University of Toronto

Godfrey of Fontaines, a master at the University of Paris in a period when free will was a topic of much debate, argues that a human being is free in virtue of the ability to have “perfect cognition,” that is, the ability to apprehend the nature of the end, the means, and the relationship between the two. I argue that this conception of freedom is compatible with Godfrey’s “intellectualist” moral psychology, according to which the will is moved by the intellect as an efficient cause, and second, that it is plausible as a conception of human freedom. I also present and address two challenges to conceiving of human freedom as Godfrey does. First, it does not seem that having perfect cognition is sufficient for exercising human freedom, and second, perfect cognition does not even seem to be necessary for exercising human freedom.

**Inconsistency Measures and Paraconsistent Consequence**

Bryson Brown, ULethbridge

**Drinking Dutifully: Consumption of Alcohol and Duties to Self in Kant’s Ethics**

Samantha Wesch, UAlberta

Throughout both his moral and anthropological literature, Kant appears to make contradictory remarks on the permissibility of the consumption of alcohol.  On one hand, Kant is explicit that “drunkenness” violates agent’s duty to preserve and promote their rationality.  On the other, Kant writes on the role of the inclination towards drunkenness as hat which brings naturally suspicious rational agents into a state where honest interpersonal conversation and trust between agents is fostered.   This paper argues,Kant understands the consumption of alcohol as both necessary for the cultivation and development of human society through its role in oppressing natural human “social unsociability,” as well as a potential threat, as all the inclinations are, to rational dignity if overindulged.   To drink dutifully, one must drink in a social setting where their inhibited state allows for more honest conversation and intellectual connection, as opposed to alone for the mere bodily pleasure of intoxication.

**Contextualism and Continua**

Ron Wilburn, University of Nevada

An early objection to epistemic contextualism is that it concerns, not knowledge, but merely the meaning or use of "know" or our practices of knowledge attribution. Call this objection “MLO.” As a result, contextualist proclamations lack bearing upon both epistemology and perennial epistemological skeptical questions. Keith DeRose disputes this objection. To strengthen his case, he considers free-will attribution, maintaining that its potential amenability to contextualist analysis provides a sanguine parallel for contextualism and a parallel case study in how MLO-type arguments go wrong. Herein, I examine MLO largely through the lens provided by this suggested parallel. Contrary to DeRose, I argue, the free-will parallel supports, rather than thwarts, MLO. For, even though the criteria invoked by both epistemological and free will skeptics issue from highly distinctive and idiosyncratic reflections, they still exercise broad critical authority over questions we should ask about two these relations in other, more prosaic, contexts.

**Session IX**

**Why Care about Constraint: Theoretical Constraint as an Epistemic Good**

Amanda Bryant, Trent University

I spell out a notion of robust theoretical constraint and argue that as a rule, our theories should be robustly constrained. To say that a theory is robustly constrained means that we limit its content so that relatively little gets in and relatively much gets excluded. I argue that if you take relatively greater statistical likeliness and methodological expediency to be epistemic goods, then to the extent that robustly constraining our theories promotes those goods, robust constraint is itself something that we should care to promote.

**Contrastive Explanations of Choice as Appeals to Structuring Causes: A Defence of Kane’s Libertarianism**

Neil Campbell, Wilfrid Laurier

Robert Kane’s libertarian theory is often attacked on the grounds that undetermined self-forming actions are not amenable to contrastive explanation. I propose that we should understand contrastive explanations of choice and action as ones that appeal to structuring causes. Doing so shows that Kane’s claim that there can be no contrastive explanation for self-forming actions is not an unwanted implication his appeal to indeterminism, but is more appropriately regarded as an implication of the fact that the agent’s will is not yet appropriately structured.

**"Understanding" in the Philosophy of Science**

Don Oxtoby, Rice University

This paper argues for a view of understanding according to which understanding is essentially one kind of thing rather than many, and is best construed as a kind of relation rather than a subjective state like knowledge, belief, or cognitive achievement. In section 1, I discuss Lipton, 2009's argument in favor of pluralism about understanding, discussing differences between causal explanation (Lewis, Searle), modal explanation (Glymour, Lipton), and explanations which unify otherwise disparate ideas (Lipton). In section 2, I identify a common core among cases which Lipton takes to support pluralism, and argue from the common core to a form of monism about understanding. Section 3 discusses the prospects for subjective views of understanding and the alternative I put forward in this paper, the view that understanding is essentially a relation between a subject with a cognitive demand and the body of information which satisfies that specific demand.

**From Context to Mental States**

Megan Henricks Stotts, McMaster University

The semantics/pragmatics distinction was once considered central to the philosophy of language, but recently the distinction’s viability and importance have been challenged.  In opposition to the growing movement away from the distinction, I argue that we really do need it, and that we can draw the distinction sharply if we draw it in terms of the distinction between non-mental and mental phenomena.  On my view, semantic facts arise from context-independent meaning, compositional rules, and non-mental elements of context, whereas pragmatic facts are a matter of speakers’ mental states and hearers’ inferences about them.

**Session X**

**A New Way Out of the Preface Paradox**

Wooram Lee, University of Southern California

The preface paradox has been taken to threaten some familiar deductive constraints on rational belief, such as consistency and conjunctive closure. The standard solution the paradox, which consists in rejecting the rational constraints, comes at the cost of undermining our ordinary argumentative practices. This paper argues that such theoretical costs need not be incurred, because the solution to the paradox lies in recognizing that the rational constraints as governing occurrent beliefs, rather than dispositional beliefs. While the author in the paradox could be said to dispositionally believe all of the body claims, they cannot occurrently believe all of them. Since the author can occurrently believe only a small number of the body claims, which are consistent with the preface claim, no inconsistency is found at the level of occurrent beliefs. Likewise, there is no pressure to abandon conjunctive closure, since conjoining a small number of body claims with the preface claim doesn’t yield a contradiction.

**Between Not Pretending and Pretending Not:** **Speech Acts, Shared Pretense, and Existence**

Peter Alward, USask

Existence and non-existence statements can be made about entities described in fictional stories, and in such contexts are both substantive and truth-evaluable. To be told that London exists but that Sherlock Holmes does not is to be told something true and informative about the Holmes stories. The main theories of fictional discourse, however, run into insuperable difficulties. In this paper, I want to develop and defend an account of negative and positive existentials in fictional contexts that avoids these difficulties, which draws on Searle’s idea that speakers can make genuine assertions about fiction while “sharing in a pretense.”