Philosophy seminars 2010-2011

These seminars are open to all: staff, students and members of the public. However, please note that the meetings at 2pm are research seminars and assume a professional competence. The Philosophy Society meetings, at 5pm, are aimed at everyone, including beginners in philosophy and curious passers-by. All meetings are in N212 unless otherwise stated. For further information please contact Luciano Floridi (l.floridi@herts.ac.uk).

SEMESTER A

7 October

4-6pm, room to be announced

Cheese and Wine Welcome Party

14 October

Tom Sorrell (John Ferguson Professor of Global Ethics, Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Ethics, member of Executive Committee of British Philosophical Association, currently researching the moral and political theory of emergencies).

2pm

Threats to Integrity and Anti-theory

A number of philosophers – Bernard Williams, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Annette Baier, to name three — have criticized normative moral theory for failing to answer, and sometimes for failing to address, the question of how people are to live. Consequentialism focuses on the production of good states of affairs, and sometimes saddles agents with obligations to perform actions that are intuitively too costly to agents or to others. Deontology excludes some of those costs while sometimes appearing to suffer from excessive rigidity, and from condescension toward the non-rational in human life. A focal point of both kinds of criticism is the way in which theory sometimes makes use of the wrong kinds of reasons for actions. As a result it calls for the suppression of projects, attachments and impulses that are personally important to an agent but are not impersonally valuable. When impulses, attachments and projects are so important to people that they live for them, the reality of the obligation to suppress them may itself come to be doubted. In short, a supposed tension between impersonal morality and a certain sort of personal integrity animates a strand of anti-theory. I argue that the value of this sort of integrity may be more questionable than the impersonal values it is in tension with.

5pm

Privacy, Surveillance and Counter-Terrorism
The paper examines the value of privacy from the perspective of liberal theory. Privacy derives its value from the desirability of intimacy, solitude, autonomy and a sphere in which one need not behave guardedly. Such a sphere is also desirable as a space in which to determine the self one chooses to present publicly, and to have some things which need not be shared. Because citizens are all in some sense co-authors of the law, according to liberal theory, violators of the law can in some sense endorse their punishment. The justifiability of the punishment depends on proportionality of severity of crime to severity of punishment subject to liberal norms governing the different kinds of severity. Criminality of the most life threatening sort —this includes terrorism— can justify not only reactive punishment, but also preventive intrusion if it is necessary for enforcing the law. Profiling may be a very unintrusive method of preventive policing, but is highly discriminatory (and frequently ineffective), whereas surveillance based on evidence is less discriminatory, but more intrusive. Surveillance must be proportional, but what counts as proportional varies according to privacy’s value. The value of privacy is not fixed for all time, but may shift with features of the social context, such as, for example, the prevalence of kinds of exhibitionism and voyeurism associated with reality television and social networking websites. Nevertheless, some intrusions may violate dignity too gravely to ever be permissible.

28 October

John Worrall (Professor of Philosophy of Science, LSE, President of British Society for the Philosophy of Science, currently researching methodological and philosophical issues in medicine).

2pm

In Defence of Structural Realism – or – the “Newman objection”, what objection?

A Scientific Realist holds that our best scientific theories don’t merely save the phenomena, they capture (in an approximate way) the ‘deep structure’ of the universe (or, more accurately, she holds it that it is reasonable to believe that this is what those theories do). Following Poincaré, I presented Structural Realism in my [1989] as representing ‘the best of both worlds’: as capturing the main pro-realist argument (the ‘no miracles argument’) while responding adequately to the main anti-realist argument (the argument from scientific revolutions – aka the ‘pessimistic induction’). Although it has won a good deal of attention, Structural Realism has also been subject to a number of criticisms. The most direct, and apparently deadly of these is the ‘Newman objection’. I here try to clarify exactly what this ‘objection’ does and does not amount to. I argue that, when properly understood, rather than blowing the position out of the water as many seem to believe, the ‘objection’ in fact just underlines what a sensible and modest version of Structural Realism really is.

5pm

The Incompatibility of Science and Religion

Galileo was put under house arrest by the Inquisition for defending the Copernican theory which was taken to contradict the Bible. If religious fundamentalists had their way, Darwinian theory would (at best) be taught as one theory among many with no greater claim to rational assent than the theory that God created the universe essentially as it now is in roughly 4004BC. More sophisticated thinkers hold that such direct clashes between science and religion are quite unnecessary: that one can be a religious believer without coming into the slightest conflict with science. I examine various ways in which this compatibility view has been defended. This examination shows that while religion and science can indeed avoid direct conflict, there is
ineliminable conflict between religion and the general scientific approach – an approach based on the axiom that it is reasonable to believe only what evidence gives you reason to believe.

11 November

Mary Tiles (Professor Emerita at University of Hawaii, research interests include applied uses of mathematics, measurement and modelling in Chinese and European contexts).

2pm

*Epistemological and practical challenges of Science for Policy*

The paper will first enumerate some of the distinctive challenges confronted when seeking to conduct scientific research in support of policy decisions bearing on complex societal issues. It will look at these in more detail in the specific context of climate change science (IPCC), its reliance on computer models, and the use of integrated assessment models as in the Stern Review.

5pm

*Infrastructure, environments and resilience*

The idea is to provoke thinking about aspects of our life-support systems that we tend not to think about and in so doing to raise questions about how to assess their sustainability. What does it take to keep our everyday routines going? What are all those background services to which we give no thought until they go wrong? What are their costs? Is there any boundary to be drawn here between natural and manmade environments? What might turn on the answer? Are there better and worse ways of providing infrastructure? What are the standards being used here?

25 November

David Oderberg (Professor of Philosophy at University of Reading, current interests include contemporary metaphysics and philosophical logic. Recently published Real Essentialism (2007)).

2pm

*Morality, Religion & Cosmic Justice*

I argue for a connection between morality and religion on the basis of a need for cosmic justice - a comprehensive system of rewards and punishments for good and bad behaviour respectively. I set out the argument for Cosmic Justice, discussing the nature of reward and punishment and how they differ from mere benefit and loss. A world without cosmic justice would be absurd and unacceptable to anyone who takes morality seriously in the way identified by George Mavrodes. I also consider a number of objections to the argument.

5pm

*Why I am not a Consequentialist*

This talk sets out some of the main reasons why consequentialism in all its forms is a false theory of morality. I focus in particular on the question of justice and whether the consequentialist can
accommodate it. I also consider whether the maximization of outcomes could possibly be a coherent and acceptable way of seeing the objective of morality.

9 December

MM McCabe (Professor of Ancient Philosophy, King’s College, London, President of British Philosophical Association, General Editor of CUP series ‘Studies in the Dialogues of Plato’).

2pm

“Look, see!” Plato on moral vision

This is a reconsideration of Plato’s theory of perception in the Republic; I argue that his account of perception is complex, and such that it can explain the education and development of perception. This allows for a parallel account of how we can both use and develop moral vision in the progress towards virtue.

5pm

Health and virtue.

How do we explain the concept of disease? I argue that we should try to explain the concept of health, first; and that health is best understood in connection with various accounts of goodness — virtue is a good analogue.

CHRISTMAS BREAK

SEMESTER B

3 February

Matthews Suite, McClaurin Building

Brad Hooker (Professor of Philosophy at Reading University, member of the editorial Board of the journal Ethics, currently researching moral philosophy and a history of 20th century moral philosophy, and a book on fairness).

2pm

Theory vs. Anti-theory in normative moral philosophy

This paper assesses a range of ideas associated with anti-theory in ethics. To most of these ideas, there are compelling objections. To some, however, there are not, but then moral theorists can accommodate these ideas.

5pm

How to understand harm
My paper on how to understand harm discusses two main views. One claims that an event harms someone when the event makes the person worse off than he or she was before the event. The other claims that an event harms someone when the event makes the person worse off than he or she would have been had the event not occurred.

17 February

Central Committee Room, McClaurin Building

Bob Hale (Philosophy Professor at Sheffield University, awarded Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship, published work includes The Blackwell Companion to the Philosophy of Language, currently researching mathematics and modality).

2pm

Absolute Necessities

By absolute necessities, I mean necessities which are in some sense unconditional—necessities which hold without qualification, or unrestrictedly. A central task for the philosophy of modality is to determine which kinds of necessity, if any, are absolute—are the laws of logic absolutely necessary? are there absolute metaphysical necessities, which can perhaps only be known a posteriori? (e.g. that gold is an element, that water is H2O, that Hesperus = Phosphorus, etc.). A prior task is to get clearer about the notion of absoluteness. I consider three plausible conceptions of absolute necessity—a generalized counterfactual conception (as what would be true, no matter what else were the case), a limit conception of absolute necessity as the limiting case of relative necessity, and a maximal conception of absolute necessity as the absence of any competing possibility. I show that under natural assumptions, limit-absolute and maximal-absolute necessity both collapse into logical necessity. I explain why the counterfactual conception does not do so, and suggest additional reasons for preferring it. I argue that if we adopt this conception, we should take the logic of absolute necessity to include the S4 and S5 principles that whatever is necessary is necessarily necessary and that whatever is possibly necessary is necessary, and so be the strongest normal modal logic. If time permits, I shall conclude with some remarks about the relations between two strong candidates to be kinds of absolute necessity, viz. logical and metaphysical necessity.

5pm

Necessities and Possibilities: a very brief introduction to the basic idea of modal logic

Modal logic is an extension of standard logic which studies the general principles governing the notions of necessity and possibility. This talk aims to provide a very brief introduction to the basic ideas of the subject, assuming no background. After reviewing some seemingly obvious and simple principles concerning necessity and possibility (e.g. what is necessary is true), I introduce some less obvious and more controversial principles (e.g. what is necessary is necessarily necessary). I sketch the leading ideas of possible worlds semantics. In the second part of the talk, I turn to some of the philosophical issues concerning modality. Some of these arise directly out of the study of modal logic, some are issues on which one might hope that the study of modal logic would shed light. Of the first kind are questions about the nature and status of possible worlds: Is there really a vast plurality of merely possible worlds, in addition to the actual world, as David Lewis famously maintained? Or should we interpret talk of other possible worlds in some other less extravagant way? Questions of the second kind include: What is the basis of necessity? Are there irreducibly
different kinds of necessity and possibility? How are different kinds—e.g. logical necessity, metaphysical necessity, and natural necessity—related? How, if we can, do we know things about what is necessary and what is possible?

3 March

Central Committee Room, McClaurin Building

Tim Williamson (Wykeham Professor of Logic at University of Oxford, awarded Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship, interests include philosophical logic, epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of language).

2pm

The distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge

A priori knowledge is normally defined as knowledge independent of experience, while a posteriori knowledge is knowledge dependent on experience. However, knowledge can depend on experience in different ways. The standard view is that experience can play a purely enabling role in a priori knowledge, for example in providing the subject with the concepts needed to formulate the knowledge; what a priori knowledge excludes is a strictly evidential role for experience. However, it is unclear how to classify a wide range of cases in which experience plays a role that is more than purely enabling but less than strictly evidential. Such cases do not merely show that the distinction needs refinement. It will be argued that they reveal ways in which the distinction is too superficial to be of more than preliminary use in epistemology.

5pm

Imagination and Knowledge

Imagining is often contrasted with knowing. However, imagining can also be a means to knowing, by suggesting new possibilities. I will suggest that the connection between imagination and knowledge is even closer than that, because we can use the imagination to find out which possibilities actually obtain.

17 March

Boardroom, First Floor, McClaurin Building

Jonathan Wolff (Professor of Philosophy, UCL, researching distributive justice, principal applicant on AHRC project ‘The Ethics of Risk’, member of Nuffield Council on Bioethics.)

2pm

Is There A Human Right to Health?

Health activists have recently turned to the idea of the human right to health in order to support their claims, especially in relation to global health. But can the idea of a human right to health be defended? In this talk I consider a number of challenges to the idea of a human right to health and try to defuse both the philosophical and the practical worries that have been voiced.
5pm

**Philosophy and Public Policy**

It is often assumed that moral and political philosophy should be able to provide guidance to policy makers in important areas of social and public policy. However, it is not always clear how philosophical arguments can be brought into contact with matters of practical policy, and in this talk I will look at various ways of attempting to do so. I will propose that philosophers will have to make a number of uncomfortable compromises in order to be of direct relevance to policy debates.

31 March

**Boardroom, First Floor, McClaurin Building**

**Jennifer Hornsby** (Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck, Founder Member of Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature, University of Oslo, main interests are in philosophy of action, mind and language, and areas of feminist philosophy).

2pm

**Agency: processes and changes**

It has been argued (and I accept that) insofar as actions are temporally extended, agency cannot be accounted for in event causal terms. We must recognize agents as participants in processes. But we may still want to think of changes as among the things that agents want. I consider how processes and changes are best conceived if we are to have a realistic account of human agency.

5pm

**Knowledge of Meaning and Epistemic Interdependence**

I shall raise epistemological questions about meaning which are different from the ones that are usually asked in the philosophy of language -- questions about what it is for ordinary speakers to know the meanings of individual words. In addressing these questions, I hope to it plausible that there is a certain constitutive connection between the facts about meaning (in a language) and facts about the knowledge of speakers (of that language). Recognizing the connection helps, I think, in understanding how it is that languages should be governed by norms which are not imposed by any authority, and in seeing the proper significance of the slogan “Meaning is use”.

**EASTER BREAK**

28 April

**Boardroom, First Floor, McClaurin Building**

**David Papineau** (Professor of Philosophy of Science, King’s College, London, main areas of research include metaphysics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of mind and psychology, President of Mind Association, 2009/10) and **Philip Goff** (Post-Doc Research Fellow on AHRC ‘Phenomenal Qualities’ project at UH, and Visiting Research Fellow at King’s College, London)
2pm

*What is Wrong with Strong Necessities?*

David Chalmers' anti-materialist argument hinges on his reject of 'strong necessities'--a posteriori necessities framed entirely in directly referring terms. I shall show that his objections to such strong necessities hinge on a misunderstanding of the nature of metaphysical modality.

5pm

*What is Experimental Philosophy Good For?*

Experimental philosophers are surprisingly vague about the way in which their findings matter to philosophy. I shall show that these findings do make a contribution, but a limited one. X-phi is not a replacement for orthodox philosophical argument, but at best a useful preliminary.

5 May

**Boardroom, First Floor, McClaurin Building. ADDITIONAL SEMINAR**

**Cynthia Macdonald** (Professor and Director of Research, Philosophy, School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy, Queen's University Belfast. Currently researching 2 projects; one on authoritative self-knowledge, the other, with Graham Macdonald, on mental causation and explanation)

2pm

*Constitutivism, Detectivism, and the Phenomenology of self-knowledge*

Contemporary discussions of the presumed asymmetry between self-knowledge and knowledge of others have focused on the trichotomy 'by inference, by observation, or by nothing' in attempting to explain it. Since it is generally agreed that self-knowledge is not arrived at by inference, recent accounts of the epistemic specialness awarded to certain self-knowledge have turned to one or the other of the remaining two sources. Constitutivist accounts maintain that the relation between a subject's first-order mental states and her knowledge of them is non-contingent and conceptual, whereas Detectivist accounts argue that that relation is contingent and causal and that self-ascriptions merely describe one's first-order states. I sketch that takes self-ascriptions to be not merely descriptive, based on considerations concerning the phenomenology of deliberative thought, which can serve as a basis for explaining the epistemic asymmetry between self-knowledge and knowledge of others.

5pm

*Mental Causation*

Non-reductive physicalism has been dogged by the problem of how mental properties can make a causal difference to the physical world. One very influential argument against the position, due to Jaegwon Kim, is known as the 'downward causation' argument. In this talk I first set out the position, then the downward causation argument, and conclude by suggesting a solution to the problem.
12 May

CANCELLED
Philosophy seminars 2009-2010

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Semester A

8 October

4-6pm, room to be announced

Wine and Cheese Welcome Party

15 October

John Cottingham (Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Reading; Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford; Editor of Ratio; President of the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion)

2pm

What is Humane Philosophy and Why is it At Risk?

This paper discusses the increasing prevalence of a science-inspired model of philosophy as a series of highly technical research specialities, and asks how it came about. A brief survey of the successive phases of twentieth-century philosophy leads on to a detailed critique of two especially influential conceptions of the philosophical enterprise: ‘analysis’ on the one hand, and ‘theory tested against intuitions’ on the other. Both these, it is argued, represent philosophical dead ends. Philosophy needs to become less fragmented, and to recover some of its ancient aspirations to achieve a broad synoptic conception of the world and our place within it. We need to develop a more humane philosophy, synthetic in its methods, synoptic in its scope, culturally and historically aware in its outlook, and open to multiple resonances of meaning that come from the affective as well as the cognitive domains.

5pm

Happiness and the Meaning of Life

Abstract: The paper begins by discussing some basic preconditions for happiness that can be objectively determined, and scientifically confirmed. But beyond that, in order to be happy a human life needs, in the first place, to be one of genuine achievement, allowing for the successful
development of our human talents and capacities. Second, it needs to be oriented towards the good; for a life cut off from moral sensibility cannot reach integrity and fulfilment. And thirdly, happiness requires a sense of meaning, the courage to endure, as inherently weak and dependent creatures, in the face of human fragility and apparent futility. The final section of the paper discusses the ‘radical contingency’ of which Bernard Williams spoke (the fact that our ethical outlook has a history, and could have evolved differently). It is argued that if there is no foundation for our morality except an ultimately contingent one, then our sense of meaning is undermined, since human beings have transcendent aspirations which cannot be quieted or ignored. Only by recognizing the need for a spiritual dimension in our lives can we recover a sense of meaning, without which happiness will elude us.

29 October

Paul Noordhof (Professor of Philosophy, University of York; Associate Editor of Mind)

2pm

Perception and Imagination

Abstract

5pm

Undergraduate talk: What is a counterfactual theory of causation?

Abstract

12 November

Barry C. Smith (Professor of Philosophy, Birkbeck; Director of the Institute of Philosophy University of London's School of Advanced Study).

2pm

Re-Thinking the Senses

Traditionally, the senses have been seen as separate systems that put us directly in touch with the world. Higher cognition is seen as making sense of this information by constructing a model of reality. However, recent advances in neuroscience cast doubt on this modular picture of the senses. There is much cross-modal interaction in the early stages of perceptual processing, and many of things in the environment we are interested in are known to us in a multi-sensory way. We may need to see the senses and other early mechanisms as providing our initial access to people, places and things, without supposing multisensory integration combines individual senses as we commonly think of them. I shall offer an alternative way of modelling the sensory interactions that result in unified perceptual experiences.
5pm

Self and Other in Philosophy of Mind and Neuroscience

Philosophers have long been puzzled about the relations between self and other: how can a mind know the content of other minds, and does knowledge of other minds play a role in knowledge of our own minds? At the same time recent neuroscience appears to assume that these philosophical problems have been solved by the discovery of a mirror neuron system used to comprehend actions, intentions and emotions. Can philosophers make use of these findings to explain how the gap between self and other is bridged? And can neuroscientists show how this basic system for mirroring one and others movements provide the basis for intersubjectivity and social cognition? The two approaches to the mind will be assessed with the aim of making progress with these questions and shaping new research topics.

26 November, Maclaurin Building, Cambridge Room (Second Floor)

Donald Gillies (Professor of Philosophy of Science and Mathematics, UCL)

2pm

Causality and Medicine: the Case of Smoking and Heart Disease Abstract: One of the main problems in establishing causality in medicine is going from a correlation to a causal claim. For example, heavy smoking is strongly correlated with lung cancer, but so is heavy drinking. There is normally held to be a causal link in the former case, but not the latter. It has been suggested that to establish that A causes B, one needs, in addition to statistical evidence, evidence for the existence of a mechanism connecting A and B. This thesis is examined in the case of the claim that smoking causes heart disease. It is shown that the correlation between smoking and heart disease was established before any plausible linking mechanism was known. Details of the history of research in atherosclerosis from 1979 to 2000 are then given, and it is shown that there is now a plausible mechanism connecting smoking and heart disease, but that, perhaps surprisingly, such a mechanism is not definitely established.

5pm

Are numbers human constructions? Abstract: The talk begins by considering the view of Brouwer that numbers are the mental constructions of individual mathematicians. Various arguments are put forward to show that, if numbers are human constructions, they must be social constructions and not individual mental constructions. However, the question is raised as to whether numbers are purely human constructions, like money, or whether they correspond to something in the non-human world of nature.

10 December

John Worrall (Professor of Philosophy of Science, LSE; President of the British Society for the Philosophy of Science)
In Defence of Structural Realism - or - the “Newman objection”, what objection? Abstract: A Scientific Realist holds that our best scientific theories don’t merely save the phenomena, they capture (in an approximate way) the ‘deep structure’ of the universe (or, more accurately, she holds that it is reasonable to believe that this is what those theories do). Following Poincaré, I presented Structural Realism in my [1989] as representing ‘the best of both worlds’: as capturing the main pro-realist argument (the ‘no miracles argument’) while responding adequately to the main anti-realist argument (the argument from scientific revolutions – aka the ‘pessimistic induction’). Although it has won a good deal of attention, Structural Realism has also been subject to a number of criticisms. The most direct, and apparently deadly of these is the ‘Newman objection’. I here try to clarify exactly what this ‘objection’ does and does not amount to. I argue that, when properly understood, rather than blowing the position out of the water as many seem to believe, the ‘objection’ in fact just underlines what a sensible and modest version of Structural Realism really is.

The Incompatibility of Science and Religion Abstract: Galileo was put under house arrest by the Inquisition for defending the Copernican theory which was taken to contradict the Bible. If religious fundamentalists had their way, Darwinian theory would (at best) be taught as one theory among many with no greater claim to rational assent than the theory that God created the universe essentially as it now is in roughly 4004BC. More sophisticated thinkers hold that such direct clashes between science and religion are quite unnecessary: that one can be a religious believer without coming into the slightest conflict with science. I examine various ways in which this compatibility view has been defended. This examination shows that while religion and science can indeed avoid direct conflict, there is ineliminable conflict between religion and the general scientific approach – an approach based on the axiom that it is reasonable to believe only what evidence gives you reason to believe.

Christmas break

Semester B

4 February

Steven French (Professor of Philosophy of Science and Head of the Philosophy Department, University of Leeds; Editor-in-Chief of Metascience)

2pm

Getting Away from Governance A Structuralist Approach to Laws and Symmetries

Recent discussions between nomological realists and anti-realists have focussed on the ‘governing’ role of laws, with Mumford, in particular, raising a dilemma for the realists based on such a role (see the symposium review of Mumford (2004), by Brian Ellis, Alexander Bird, Stathis Psillos with a reply by Stephen Mumford, in Metascience 15 (2006) pp. 437-469.). In this paper I shall try to
motivate and develop a structuralist account of laws that replaces governance with a form of ontological dependence. I shall also indicate how such an account can accommodate the role of symmetries in modern science and offers a new perspective on the above debate.

5pm

*Between Braque and Beethoven: Theories as Representations*

What kinds of things are scientific theories? Some philosophers of science have compared them to musical works: just as Beethoven’s Fifth should not be identified with the musical score on the page, so Einstein’s Theory of Relativity is not the same as the words and equations Einstein wrote down in his papers. Some have even suggested that like musical works and numbers, theories exist in some kind of ‘Platonic’ realm. Others have compared them to paintings, such as Constable’s Haywain or Braque’s Woman with Guitar. Like the Haywain, or, more contentiously, Braque’s work, theories are said to represent and a recent debate has developed around the manner in which they represent, what they represent and so on. In this talk we’ll look at these comparisons between art-works and theories to see where the similarities and differences lie and in an effort to gain a better understanding of what kinds of things theories are, or even whether they should be considered as ‘things’ at all.

18 February

Helen Beebee (Professor of Philosophy, University of Birmingham; Director of the British Philosophical Association)

2pm

*Alternative Possibilities, Freedome and Blame*

Discussion of the 'Principle of Alternate Possibilities' or PAP -- the principle that moral responsibility for an act requires that the agent could have done otherwise -- was originally intended, and is still generally assumed, to be highly relevant to the question of whether the agent acted freely. Recent discussion of PAP and related principles, however, has come to focus exclusively on cases of putative blameworthiness, as opposed to moral responsibility more generally. This, I argue, is bad news for incompatibilists. Recent attempts to establish that alternative possibilities are required for blameworthiness do not generalise to moral responsibility more generally, and so cannot be deployed in any argument for the claim -- upheld in some form by all incompatibilists -- that free action requires alternative possibilities.

5pm

*Free Will and Neuroscience*

Some neuroscientists and psychologists have recently alleged that there is good scientific evidence that we lack free will. In this session, I'll describe some of this evidence, focussing on Benjamin
Libet's work in neuroscience, and we'll discuss why Libet and others think that his results undermine free will.

4 March

Roger Crisp (Professor of Philosophy, University of Oxford, Uehiro Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy, St Anne's College, Oxford)

2pm

A Third Method in Ethics?

This paper enquires into whether virtue ethics should be seen as a 'third alternative' to traditional consequentialism and Kantian deontological ethics. An account of how best to categorize moral theories is offered.

5pm

In Defence of Pleasure

This presentation will consist in an elucidation and defence of one of the oldest views in philosophy -- that pleasure is the only good, and pain the only bad.

18 March

Richard Bradley (Professor of Philosophy, LSE)

2pm

Conditionals as Random Variables

This talk will explore the view that conditionals are proposition-valued random variables, building on earlier papers of Jeffrey and Stalnaker and McGee in which views of this kind are floated. This view, I argue, implies that there are two distinct kinds of uncertainty associated with a conditional: firstly, uncertainty about the world in which it is being evaluated and secondly uncertainty about its semantic value at that world. The dual uncertainties and the manner in which they articulate provide an explanation of both why and when Adams' Thesis holds.

5pm

Reaching a Consensus

There are broadly speaking 3 ways in which consensus can be achieved: inquiry, aggregation and deliberation. This talk will explore the connection between the second and third and in particular the view of Lehrer and Wagner that rational agents should (almost) always reach a consensus.
1 April

Jane Heal (Professor of Philosophy, University of Cambridge; Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge; FBA)

2pm

Judgement and Reality

The paper tries to make sense of the views advanced by Charles Travis in 'Reason's Reach' (EJP August 2007). I hope to argue that the ideas Travis pursues about the nature of conceptual judgement and of reality may show us something interesting about the logical shapes of the capacities which judgers must possess. But I shall also suggest that it is far from easy to tell whether the conclusions he proposes about reason and about the content of experience are justified.

5pm

Thinking about Other Minds

If and when do we gain knowledge of what other people think, feel or intend, and how do we do it? Some say that we do it by applying a theory about the workings of the mind. Others suggest that an important element is use of the imagination to try to see things from the other's point of view. This talk will outline and compare these two approaches.

Easter break

29 April, N101 de Havilland Campus

Thomas Baldwin (Professor of Philosophy, University of York; Editor of Mind)

2pm

Practices, complaints and contracts

Constructivism in moral theory is supposed to provide a procedure for identifying fundamental moral principles in such a way that the procedure itself confers validity on the principle thus identified. On this approach, the procedure in question is usually conceived, for example by Rawls, as a hypothetical social contract, and I express some scepticism about this approach. Looking back at Rawls’s early presentation of this approach, however, I identify a different way of thinking about it, as a way of theorising the role of complaints concerning the fairness of on-going social practices. I argue that we can take from this a rather different way of thinking about morality, as a network of requirements embedded in practices and relationships, but always open to critical reflections of the kind schematised in constructivist moral theory.

5pm
Virtues and duties

Where does the priority lie between virtues and duties? Is a virtuous person someone who knows what her duty is and does it? Or is one’s duty the course of action which a virtuous person would attempt? There are strong objections to both these approaches and it seems preferable to find a position which gives duty and virtue equal priority. I consider whether we can get what we want from considering the significance of the relationships inherent in social practices and institutions, but I conclude that we need to add in an appreciation of further values.

13 May, MacLaurin Building, Board Room (First Floor)

Jon Williamson (Professor of Reasoning, Inference and Scientific Method, University of Kent)

2pm

Mechanisms and Causality

After introducing a range of mechanistic theories of causality and some of the problems they face, I argue that while there is a decisive case against a purely mechanistic analysis, a viable theory of causality must incorporate mechanisms as an ingredient. I describe one way of providing an analysis of causality which reaps the rewards of the mechanistic approach without succumbing to its pitfalls.

5pm

Machines that Reason

In this talk I'll try to convey some of the importance of work on artificial intelligence for philosophy and vice versa. I'll distinguish two kinds of AI - psychological and logical - and focus on some interesting connections between the latter and research on reasoning in philosophy. I'll also discuss my own interest in this area: causal and probabilistic reasoning and its automation.
Philosophy seminars 2008-2009 Semester A

Philosophy seminars 2008-2009

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All meetings are in N212 apart from both meetings on 30 October and the 5pm meeting on 27 November (rooms TBA).

Welcome!

Semester A

9 Oct

4-6pm Wine and Cheese Welcome Party

16 Oct

Sam Coleman (University of Hertfordshire)

2pm ‘The Burden of Physicalism’

Physicalism holds that everything that exists is physical in nature. It seems to follow that a complete physical description of what exists is, in some sense, a complete description of what exists. Jackson and Chalmers have argued that with exhaustive microphysical information in hand concerning some situation, a thinker is in principle placed to deduce all macroscopic/folk truths about that situation. For example, a microphysical description would in principle allow deduction of the fact that a bipedal being was carrying a device that folded and unfolded, and which protected the being from drops of H2O falling from above; in other words, that a person was carrying an umbrella. But, interestingly, Jackson and Chalmers hold that such a feat is only possible if the thinker deriving the macro/folk-truth already possesses the relevant macroscopic/folk concepts (in this case UMBRELLA) involved in the derivation. I argue against this restriction, on the grounds that it makes little sense given Jackson and Chalmers' wider commitments. Moreover, I argue that anyone who is serious about endorsing the currently popular metaphysically reductive strain of physicalism must accept the following burden: That physical information contains all information, in the sense that someone armed with the complete microphysical truth about our world should (in principle) be able to deduce all that is true of our world, even if they lack the macroscopic or folk concepts with which we would naturally express many of these truths. This is a burden that physicalists are not at present prepared to accept. They should perhaps, therefore, reconsider the metaphysical adequacy of their view.

5pm 'Might You be a Zombie?'
In philosophy of mind the possibility is discussed of creatures who look and behave just like normal conscious people, except that they entirely lack conscious minds: they feel nothing, despite acting as if they did. These are zombies: the lights are on, but no one is home. Given that a zombie would act like a normal person, we must each face the possibility that everyone around us is really a zombie! Or is there even a chance that WE might be zombies, who simply say that we are not? Can we prove otherwise? I offer some thoughts on the matter. Or, at least, I'll give every impression of doing so.

23 Oct

Stephen Mumford (Nottingham)

2pm ‘Powers as Causal Truthmakers’

Almost all existing accounts of causation make what we consider to be a mistake. Causes do not necessitate their effects. They dispose towards them in a way that is less than necessary but more than purely contingent. Caution has an essentially and irreducibly dispositional nature that, we argue here, is fundamental for its proper understanding and yet it has been largely ignored. Hume thought that causation involved at least a constant conjunction whereas we do not. He presumed that his opponents required necessary connections between causes and effects. While we are opponents of Hume, we do not.

5pm ‘Aesthetics in art and sport’

Since David Best’s work in the 1970s (cf. ‘The Aesthetic in Sport’ and ‘Sport is not Art’) a standard has been that sport is not, and can never be, art. I intend to re-examine this debate. In the first place it is agreed that aesthetic value can be found in sport, both in terms of physical movement but also higher-order beauty in strategy and tactics. I agree with Best, however, that aesthetic value is not a sufficient condition for art. Best has a definition of art that he argues does not apply to sport. I say that this definition is either overly restrictive or can indeed apply to sport. A key battleground that remains is the number of disanalogies that Best claims there to be between sport and art. Sport is likened by some observers to unscripted theatre. Best responds that defeat or injury only happens to the character on the stage, not to the actors, whereas in sport people do suffer real defeats and real injuries. I argue that there is a sense in which sport can involve adopting a role. Team-mates in national sides, for example, can become adversaries in club sides. These adversaries may be perfectly good friends off the sporting field but have to adopt a role for the sport, even to the point where they are prepared to risk injuring their friends in order for the game to be won. After the game the adversarial role can be dropped and the friendship unaltered. Analogously, a drama may require the actors to be adversaries, even to the point where a physical injury occurs: A may have to give B a real slap across the face for it to look convincing. The actors, like the sportspeople, accept that the injury is not administered to the adversary qua person but to the adversary qua opponent. In both cases, however, extreme acts of violence may be interpreted as acts against the person rather than acts against the role and therefore produce appropriate indignation. In sport, the aesthetic values are also said to be incidental while they are essential in standard cases of art. This is contentious because it ignores the evident fact that many sports are spectator sports and dependent for their rules and evolution on the responses of the spectators. A sport may undergo rule changes specifically to make it a more pleasing spectacle rather than, for example, to make it more physically demanding. Some of the reasons why a sport is regarded as entertaining can be understood as aesthetic reasons, and with a broad enough conception, all such reasons can. As there
is a link between such aesthetic values and the existence and nature of the sport, sometimes sport can correctly be described as art.

30 Oct

Alexander Bird (Bristol)

2pm ‘Holmesian inference in medical science’

Peter Lipton argues that inference to the best explanation involves the selection of a hypothesis on the basis of its loveliness. I argue that in optimal cases, a form of eliminative induction takes place. I call this ‘Holmesian inference’, through which inference to the best explanation is an approximation. I illustrate Holmesian inference by reference to examples from the history of medicine.

5pm ‘Taking science seriously’

I argue that we can ill afford post-modern attacks on science if we are to respond effectively to contemporary threats to health and the environment.

6 Nov

Daniel Hutto (University of Hertfordshire)

2pm ‘Mental Causation Revisited’

It is widely agreed that folk psychology is - in some sense or other - a kind of theory. There are several different versions of this claim, each differently motivated. I supply arguments against any such identification tout court, examining each variant along the way. Against the ‘theory theory’ I promote the idea that folk psychology is a kind of narrative practice; one made possible by encounters with narratives of the relevant kind, with the appropriate support of others. However, the plausibility of this proposal ultimately rests on demonstrating how it is possible to make sense of our everyday talk about mental causation without falling back on the idea that beliefs and desires are inner, causally efficacious mental states. I attempt to show that this is possible by defending Davidson’s event-based account of mental causation against its critics, showing that it gives us all that we should legitimately want for any such account.

5pm ‘Motivating Radical Enactivism’

Internalists maintain that important mental phenomena – such as content and consciousness - are essentially body-bound or, more often, brain-bound. For many the idea that perceptual consciousness is ‘in the head’ not just a philosophical proposal - it is an expression of an obvious truth supported by a basic intuition. Thus it is generally regarded as the natural starting point for any attempt to understand the place of mental phenomena in the world. Focusing on basic forms of conscious experience, this talk sets out to the challenge central internalist ideas from a naturalist perspective. Arguments are marshalled to upset standard motivations for wanting to believe in internalism about consciousness based on metaphysical reasons. Enactivism (of a radical variety) will be (briefly) explicated as a better way of making sense of basic perceptual consciousness in a way that is in tune with our everyday intuitions about experience (once these are suitably adjusted).

13 Nov
Tim Thornton (Central Lancashire)

2pm ‘McDowell and the endogenous given’

Reading the later Wittgenstein can promote two characteristic reactions. Firstly, the stress on the normativity of linguistic and mental content together with the critique of rampant Platonism suggests that its source must lie in a shared form of mindedness. Further, such mindedness must have a necessary structure reflected in the limits of sense. Secondly, however, no sense can be given of the idea of approaching the limits of our mindedness from outside. The connection of meaning with mundane practices blocks the possibility of even gesturing towards transcendent truths and thus the limits of mindedness can only be approached from within. In this paper I consider the consequences of John McDowell’s Wittgenstein-inspired critique of a dualism of exogenous and endogenous given. I examine what remains of the idea of limits to mindedness in a philosophical context which rejects the endogenous given.

5pm ‘Thomas Szasz and the philosophy of psychiatry’

In The Myth of Mental Illness, psychiatrist Thomas Szasz argued that medical treatment of mental illness is ‘logically absurd’ because there is no such thing as mental illness. Responding to Szasz either by taking issue with his argument or his premiss has framed a central aspect in recent philosophy of psychiatry. In this paper, I explore the consequences of Szasz’ view for an issue affecting contemporary debate about psychiatric taxonomy: the nature of the judgement that supposedly psychopathological symptoms, such as hearing voices, are genuinely pathological.

20 Nov

2pm John Lippitt (University of Hertfordshire)

‘Self-love and self-sacrifice’

According to Harry Frankfurt, proper self-love is ‘the deepest and most essential – and by no means the most readily attainable – achievement of a serious and successful life’. Recent naturalist accounts of self-love like Frankfurt’s have been criticised for lacking a concept of self-sacrifice or self-denial. Yet within theological ethics, self-love and self-sacrifice are notorious problems, and the tradition is littered with prima facie incompatible claims about them. For Kierkegaard, ‘self-denial ... is Christianity’s essential form’, whereas for Alasdair MacIntyre, ‘self-sacrifice ... is as much of vice, as much of a sign of inadequate moral development, as selfishness’. What are the proper limits of self-sacrifice and self-denial? In this paper, I draw upon a number of sources, chief amongst them Charles Taylor, Robert Adams and Ruth Groenhout, to re-examine the related problems of proper self-love and proper self-sacrifice. I argue that in order to unpack these notions, we need to take seriously the ‘sources of the (modern) self’ traced by Taylor in his best-known book and elsewhere. I aim to sketch how. I also argue, against thinkers such as Simone Weil, that we need to rethink notions like self-centredness and pride in order to understand how virtuous forms of these modes of being may be important to avoiding the dangerous slide from proper self-sacrifice to outright self-annihilation.

5pm

Paul Coates (University of Hertfordshire)

‘H. G. Wells and the Limits of Possibility’
The short stories of H. G. Wells describe many scenarios in which fantastic possibilities are
developed in some detail. As fictions these are interesting enough in their own right; they also raise
philosophical questions about the nature of our imaginative capacities. To what extent are we
genuinely able to project and make sense of possibilities that not only oppose scientific theories of
the world, but are also in conflict with the more deeply entrenched common-sense framework of
persons constrained by space and time? Employing Kripke's distinction between epistemic and
metaphysical possibilities, I explore some of Wells's ideas.

27 Nov

Stephen Mulhall (Oxford)

2pm ‘The Wounded Animal: J.M. Coetzee and the Difficulty of Reality’

In J.M. Coetzee's Tanner Lectures, his central character, Elizabeth Costello compares modern
industrial forms of human treatment of nonhuman animals to the genocidal policies of the Nazis. By
critically evaluating the responses of a variety of philosophers (including Peter Singer, Amy
Gutmann, Cora Diamond, Stanley Cavell and John McDowell) to Costello's comparison, I hope to
illuminate a variety of issues surrounding the moral status of nonhuman animals, the nature of
moral philosophy, and the relation between philosophy and literature.

5pm Philosophy and Film Studies Double Bill:
Andrew Klevan (Oxford) ‘What is Philosophical Film Criticism?’
and Stephen Mulhall (Oxford) ‘Blade Runner: Notes on an Esper Analysis of Leon's
Photograph’

de Havilland Campus, N002

Andrew Klevan’s abstract:
The paper will highlight the characteristics and purposes of philosophical film criticism. Stanley
Cavell is the most noted practitioner of philosophical criticism, and he is the person who has sought
to conceptualise it most explicitly and thoroughly. It will start with the following quotation by
Cavell:

‘The question is why is one stopped. It is a question that marks something I think of as
philosophical criticism, given the extent to which I think of philosophy as inherently a matter of
stopping and turning and going back over (call this conversation rather than linear, monological
argument). It is a portrait of philosophy I find stretching from the events in Plato’s Myth of the Cave
in The Republic to the practices recorded in Wittgenstein’s Investigations, with their depictions of
being lost, stopped, and the recurrent demand to turn and return. It goes with a view I have
advanced on a number of occasions, of philosophy as responsiveness, as not speaking first.’ (Read/
Goodenough: 2005, 182)

The paper will draw attention to a series of aspects partly generated by this quotation which I
consider to be important to philosophical film criticism: responding, revealing, describing, writing,
returning, investigating and appreciating. In general, it will seek to illuminate the benefits of an
unrestrained approach to film study, one that doesn’t presume in advance where our interpretations
should start, or how they should proceed.

Stephen Mulhall’s abstract:
In a short but critical scene of Blade Runner, the character hunting the replicants (Deckard, played
by Harrison Ford) furthers his pursuit by analysing a photograph left behind in an apartment his
quarry had been using. I want to look at this analysis in some detail, in order to show that it amounts to a complex acknowledgement of certain conditions of possibility for this film and for film in general, and thereby demonstrates the possibility that films may attain the condition of philosophy.

Suggested related reading:

- Andrew Klevan, ‘Guessing the Unseen from the Seen: Stanley Cavell and Film Interpretation’ in Contending With Stanley Cavell, ed. Russell Goodman, Oxford University Press, 2005
- Andrew Klevan, ‘What Becomes of Thinking on Film?: Stanley Cavell in conversation with Andrew Klevan’ in Film As Philosophy , eds. Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough, Palgrave, 2005

4 Dec

Paul Coates (University of Hertfordshire)

2pm ‘The Contents of Experience: Avoiding the Temptations of Eden’

This paper examines the contents of perceptual experience, and the extent to which they are, and are not, representational. Extending a critical realist analysis of perceptual experience that I have defended elsewhere, I argue that there are good reasons for claiming that there are several different kinds of contents attaching to experience: phenomenal, informational and intentional. One issue that arises for any theory is to explain how the contents are grounded. I argue that an understanding of the essential navigational role of perception provides a principled way of explaining the nature of the different kinds of representational contents that experiences have. I also consider some implications of the critical realist conception of content for the notion of “Edenic” content as a regulative ideal, a view recently defended by David Chalmers in his interesting paper, ‘Perception and the Fall From Eden’ (2006).

5pm

Brendan Larvor (University of Hertfordshire)

‘Animals on trial: what sense could it make to prosecute a pig?’

In Medieval Europe, animals were sometimes brought to criminal trial. This was not an isolated phenomenon, nor was it done hysterically. Such a settled and sober practice must have made sense to the people who did it. Can we now hope to understand what they were doing? Can we understand it in the same terms as people did at the time? What does this strange practice suggest about our notions of law, responsibility and history?

11 Dec

Antony Duff (Stirling)

2pm ‘To Whom Must We Answer?’. Criminal Responsibility and Human Community’ The growing importance of international criminal law, evidenced most clearly in the creation of the International Criminal Court, raises a number of questions—
• What gives the ICC its moral authority (if it has any): by what right does it act?
• What is the point of international criminal trials?
• What is the defendants’ status at such trials?

Analogous questions must also, of course, be asked about domestic criminal law. Answers to these questions can be found in an account of criminal law that makes the idea of criminal responsibility, understood as a matter of answerability, central; but those answers will also highlight some deep problems about the authority of the criminal law, whether domestic or international.

5pm ‘Perverting Criminal Law’

A plausible normative theory of criminal law portrays it as concerned with public wrongs: its proper purpose is to define kinds of wrongdoing that concern all members of the polity, and to provide for an appropriate public response to such wrongs through the criminal process of trial and punishment. Various recent developments in the criminal law are seriously at odds with this normative conception: I will discuss two in particular—

• The creation of very broad offences, which criminalize conduct that cannot plausibly be portrayed as wrongful (see e.g. s. 57 of the Terrorism Act 2000).
• The use of hybrid civil-criminal measures to deal with perceived social problems (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are a prime example).

Some would argue that the need for such provisions shows that we should abandon this theory of criminal law as being outdated and over-idealised; I will argue that they rather highlight the importance of retaining such a theory, as a basis on which to criticise such provisions.
Research Archive 2008-2009

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**Semester B**

**5 Feb**

Michael Morris (Sussex)
2pm 'The Myth of the Sign'
My concern will be to elaborate, and to begin to question, the assumption that language is a medium, whether for communication or representation. This assumption, I claim, lies behind almost all approaches to language. It seems to me that it contains two principal faults: it is only sustainable on the basis of a form of idealism, and it makes a proper understanding of literature impossible.

5pm 'In defence of Cognitivism about Music'
This paper will aim to defend the claim that the point of music is to engender a certain kind of knowledge or understanding (this is the position I call 'cognitivism' about music). This view will be contrasted with arousal and expression theories (to the disadvantage of these latter). I will be concerned chiefly to explain the kind of knowledge or understanding which must be involved if music is to have the kind of importance it is generally taken to have.

**12 Feb**

2pm Ethics Reading Group

**19 Feb**

2pm Jane Singleton (University of Hertfordshire) - 'One thought too few - a Kantian response''
Bernard Williams in his article, “Persons, Character and Morality” famously claims that in situations of danger when you can only save one person then, “surely this is a justification on behalf of the rescuer, that the person he chose to rescue was his wife?” (18) Any further justification, “provides the agent with one thought too many: it might have been hoped by some (for instance, by his wife) that his motivating thought, fully spelled out, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one’s wife.” (18) I argue that Williams’ claim gives the agent one thought too few. Further thoughts are necessary to distinguish cases when partiality is permissible, as in Williams’ case, when it is prohibited and when it is required. Williams’ remark provides no guidance here.

At the same time, my explanation of these further thoughts will not involve the objectionable thoughts that Williams describes. I distinguish between external justifications of partiality and internal justifications of partiality and claim that it is only the former types that are objectionable. External justifications are often presented in the form where two levels of moral thought are distinguished. One level, the justificatory level, is appealed to as an explanation of the partiality that can be shown at, what is sometimes described as, the intuitive level. I argue that the internal justification of partiality that is required is that given by Kant’s overtly impartial moral theory. Because it is an internal justification it avoids any problems of “moral
“schizophrenia” as characterised by Michael Stocker. The justification that I argue for involves no such split since I claim that one is valuing what motivates one.

5pm ‘Philosophy: What are you going to do with that?’

26 Feb

2pm

This semester, a group of staff from across the three faculties of SSAHRI will be reading and meeting to discuss Charles Taylor’s A Secular Age (2007). For further details please contact Professor John Lippitt.

5 Mar

Marc Slors (Nijmegen)

2pm Correlation, Interpretation and the Scientific Rejection of Conscious Will

With the advance of neuroscience and cognitive psychology, certain problems that traditionally belonged to the philosophy of mind only, appear to come within reach of science. Thus, Benjamin Libet has claimed (from 1983 onwards) that his neuroscientific experiments reject the idea of a free will and Daniel Wegner has been making a case for the illusory character of conscious will (from 1989 onwards). Philosophical responses to these claims focus on the poor conceptual or phenomenological analyses of the notions of free- and conscious will in these scientific studies. Thus, they usually highlight what the results of the experiments cited by Libet and Wegner do not show, leaving untouched the question what these experiments do show. This is due, I shall claim, to the lack of a bigger background picture of the interrelation of philosophy mind on the one hand and the behavioural and brain sciences on the other.

In this talk I will sketch two idealized models of the philosophy-science interaction, each of which is rooted in an ontological picture of how the mind is related to the embodied brain. The first model, which I shall call the ‘frontloading model’ takes as its point of departure the view that there is a correlation relation between mental states and states of the embodied brain. This is the model that is implicitly presupposed by Libet and Wegner (as well as by many of their critics). The second model, which I shall call the ‘hermeneutical model’, is rooted in the view that mental state attributions are in some sense interpretations of what goes on in the embodied brain.

The main aim of this talk is to show that the hermeneutical model allows us to go beyond the philosophical claims about what Libet and Wegner do not show. It allows us to reinterpret the results cited by Libet and Wegner, not in terms of the illusion of free or conscious will, but in terms of the predominantly interpretive function of consciousness and the predominantly unconscious nature of the ‘self’. Thus, the research of these scientists can fruitfully be interpreted as tallying with views that have surfaced in e.g. ancient Greek culture and Romantic literature.

5pm Interpretationism and the connection between rational and unreflective agency

Interpretationist theories of the mental, such as Daniel Dennett’s intentional stance theory, resist the idea that there is a fact of the matter about which set of beliefs, desires, hopes and fears a person at any given moment really has. Thus, interpretationists have a more plausible story to tell when rationality breaks down, when two or more intentional interpretations are equally good or when none is good enough than strong mental realism. Interpretationism is rather widely considered to imply a form of mental antirealism. But what does the charge of antirealism amount to in these cases?

I will argue that interpretationists such as Dennett (unlike e.g. Wittgenstein) neglect the intuition that at times there are motivational states—intentions, ‘drives’, ‘urges’, emotions—that resist being cast into a regular folk-psychological mould but that are nevertheless real. Applied to cases where we do know how to interpret behaviour in regular folk-psychological terms this intuition implies the idea that the prototypical
application of the intentional stance is the interpretation of patterns of basic embodied intentions, drives, and emotions behind our behaviour. If that idea is anywhere near correct, non-embodied systems such as computers can only be said to have beliefs and desires in a derivative sense.

12 Mar
2pm Ethics Reading Group
10.30–18.00 Visiting Researchers One-day Workshop: Perceiving Actions and Understanding Reason. For Programme Details, [click here](#).
This workshop is free and open to all interested comers. It will be held in the UH Boardroom of The MacLaurin Building. Those planning to attend are requested to register by e-mailing the organizer Professor Daniel D. Hutto, inserting the subject line ‘Registration for PAUR Workshop, 12 March 2009’.
Attendees will need to make their own arrangement for lunch/refreshments.

19 Mar
Stella Sandford (Middlesex)
2pm ‘Of Gods and Men: The Timaeus and the Universal Ontology of Sex’
In Plato’s Timaeus, a late dialogue concerning the nature of the universe as a whole and all the things in it, there is what seems to be a brief account of the origin of sex in the modern, double sense of the word: the origin of the distinction between male and female human beings and of heterosexual sexual intercourse and sexual reproduction. The three relevant passages are, however, contradictory and confusing, to say the least. The most general claim, common to all three passages, is that the first generation of human beings was exclusively male and that women and all other beasts derive from men, in the sense that unjust or inferior men are reborn as women, or worse. At the same time, in the most important passage, Timaeus speaks of the simultaneous creation of males as males and females as females in the second generation of human being, and the concomitant creation of the form of sexual reproduction.
Are we meant to take these passages seriously? What determines whether we take them seriously or not? If we are inclined to take them seriously, in some sense, and pursue an interpretation, is there a coherent position to be extracted? How do these passages relate to the overall aim and structure of the Timaeus dialogue? And, most importantly, what can they mean for us, today? This paper will address these questions via a consideration of some of the ways in which these passages have been viewed and interpreted by some of the canonical commentators on the Timaeus (notably Proclus, Taylor and Cornford), arguing that it is precisely the contradictions and difficulties in Timaeus’ account of the origin of sex that prove to be its most interesting feature, along with the contradictions and difficulties in the literature that comments on it.

5pm ‘The Philosophical Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir’
What is Beauvoir’s place in the history of philosophy? What is Beauvoir’s contribution to the discipline of philosophy? What is Beauvoir’s philosophical legacy? In this paper I hope to show that these questions are different from, and do not require an answer to, another, only superficially similar question: namely, what is Beauvoir’s philosophy? To this end I will begin by speaking about the disciplinary context in which the question of Beauvoir’s philosophical legacy arises, including some remarks on the idea of philosophy itself. I will then briefly discuss some of the existing accounts of or claims about Beauvoir’s philosophy and her place in the history of philosophy and end by attempting to justify the claim that the question of her philosophical legacy is not dependent on the identification of a distinctive Beauvoirian philosophy.

26 Mar
2pm Ethics Reading Group

2 Apr
Simon Kirchin (Kent)
2pm ‘Separationism about the Thick’
In this talk I will (a) summarize the key ideas held by those that believe that thick evaluative concepts can be separated into component parts, and do so by guiding our way through a number of ideas and labels; (b) from this, offer a brief characterization of the ways in which those component parts can be conceived; and (c) set out a number of arguments against ‘separationism’, and assess them.

5pm ‘An Error of Moral Error Theory’
In this talk I will (a) outline what a moral error theory is and locate it in metaethics; (b) argue that because of a crucial aspect of everyday moral thought and language, moral error theory looks distinctly implausible; and (c) consider one counter-argument.

Easter break

30 Apr
Clare Carlisle (Liverpool)
2pm ‘Habit and Freedom’
This paper will consider the relationship between habit and freedom. First it will offer a definition and an analysis of habit, consider the role of habit in human life, and introduce the traditional opposition between habit and freedom. There will follow a discussion of Ravaissone’s essay ‘De l’habitude’ (1838), which challenges the view that habit is opposed to freedom. The concluding section will respond to the issues raised in the preceding parts of the paper by emphasising the distinction between habit and practice.

5pm ‘Habit and Philosophy’
The lecture will examine the way in which habit presents a challenge to philosophy. Several philosophers have commented on the concealment inherent in habit: we tend not to notice things that are familiar to us, and often we are not even aware of our own habits of thought or of action. But philosophers often try to reflect on, and make sense of, what is most familiar to us: phenomena such as the passage of time, the facts of existence and change, our perceptions, our ideas of causation, and so on. How do philosophical methods attempt to counter the force of habit? Is it possible to abandon all our habits in the process of philosophising?

7 May
de Havilland Refectory Meeting Room

Ken Gemes (Birkbeck & Southampton)
2pm ‘Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Paradox of Affirmation’
This paper argues that Nietzsche’s central concern is the diagnosing and overcoming of nihilism. It examines the vexing question of what exactly Nietzsche takes to be the core of nihilism: sometimes Nietzsche treats nihilism as a belief; at other times he seems to treat it as an affective disorder. Similarly, regarding Nietzsche’s notion of life affirmation, his antidote to nihilism, it remains unclear whether this is a matter of adopting some cognitive attitude, for instance affirming the eternal recurrence of life, or of adopting a form of life that does not demand the repression of our fundamental drives.

5pm ‘Nietzsche on the Death of God’
For Nietzsche understanding the death of God means not simply giving up certain ontological beliefs, for instance, that there is a supreme creator. It involves the realization that our morality, our way of life, is without any external grounding. Once we truly face the death of God we are left with two possibilities: (1) we give up all possibility of any grounding and fall into nihilism—what Nietzsche projected as the future of Europe for the next two hundred years; or (2) we provide our own individual groundings for our own individual values.
Research Archive 2007-2008

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Semester A

4 Oct
4pm Wine and cheese welcome party in M342

11 Oct
Brendan Larvor
2pm Authority and Sensibility: Lakatos and Pólya on teaching
The mathematician George Pólya published several works on learning and teaching mathematics (most famously, How to Solve It). In these books, he introduced and developed problem-solving heuristics for mathematics, and he reflected on the affective and motivational conditions for learning. Imre Lakatos reinterpreted Pólya’s mathematical heuristics as a study of the logic of mathematical research. However, his experience as a politically active student in post-war Hungary sustained his interest in the politics of teaching. This paper juxtaposes their work and concludes with some reflections on the place of proofs, and especially invalid proofs, in mathematics education.

5pm Second-hand Worlds
René Descartes and Immanuel Kant, two founding figures of modern philosophy, proposed individualist epistemologies. That is, they asked how can I know anything. But as individuals, most of our knowledge and almost all of our conceptual resources come to us from other people. So perhaps they were asking the wrong question. Perhaps the problem of knowledge is essentially social.

18 Oct
Havi Carel (UWE)
2pm Can I be Ill and Happy?
When we think about the good life, whether within a hedonistic, Aristotelian, liberal or another framework, we often try to spell out the conditions for such a life. These are freedom, health, access to social goods, self-fulfilment and so on. Although health is, of course, taken to be an essential element of the good life and a necessary condition for happiness, a particular issue seems to be insufficiently discussed in such accounts. This is the question: what happens to the good life or to happiness when health is permanently absent? This, I claim, is fundamental because ultimately the vast majority of people die of some kind of illness. So surely, any account of the good life or of happiness must consider the inevitable decline of the body and its consequences. When seriously constrained by ill health, be that of chronic illness, terminal illness or disability, can one still be happy? In the first part of the paper, I provide a definition of illness that encompasses the aspects relevant to a discussion of happiness and the good life. I apply a phenomenological framework rooted in Merleau-Ponty and Young to illness, claiming that such an approach can provide a framework for incorporating the experience of illness into an account of the good life by providing a rich description of the altered relationship of the ill person to her world. The second part of the paper takes the notion of ‘health within illness’ and demonstrates how it is possible. I argue that a phenomenological methodology can enable the expression of these experiences, in order to give a more complete
description of the altered relationship of the ill person to her world and develop a better understanding of her lived experience.

Finally, I answer positively the question posed at the beginning. I develop the idea of illness as a limit case of lived experience, one in which the usual ‘rules of engagement’ are rewritten and require significant adjustment and creativity. These two central ideas - that illness induces adaptation and that adversity is the source of creative responses to it - serve as the basis for this positive reply.

5pm **Moral and Epistemic Ambiguity in Oedipus Rex**
This paper challenges the accepted interpretation of Oedipus Rex, which takes Oedipus’ ignorance of the relevant facts to be an established matter. I argue that Oedipus’ epistemic state is ambiguous, and that this in turn generates a moral ambiguity with respect to his actions. Because ignorance serves as a moral excuse, my demonstration that Oedipus was not ignorant bears significantly on the moral meaning of the play. I next propose to anchor this ambiguity in the Freudian notion of the unconscious, by presenting an interpretation that treats Oedipus’ knowledge as unconscious. I discuss the moral status of an agent acting from unconscious knowledge and find it to be genuinely indeterminate, thus supporting my claim that the play is epistemically and morally ambiguous.

Anthony Rudd
25 Oct

2pm **Self-creation and Moral Space**
This paper defends Charles Taylor's claim that there is a necessary ethical or at least evaluative dimension to selfhood, and considers the connection between this idea and the claim (also defended by Taylor) that the self is partly its own creation.

5pm **Narrative, Identity and Ethic**
Many philosophers and psychologists have argued that personal identity - our sense of who we are - necessarily takes a narrative form; that it has to do with our ability to tell a more or less coherent story about ourselves. This claim has recently been vigorously challenged. This talk will explain some of the issues in this debate, and look at the ethical implications of the different views about narrative.

Tim Chappell  (Open)
1 Nov

2pm **Infinity goes up on trial: must immortality be meaningless?**
*Pace* Williams, Moore, and others, an eternal life would not necessarily be meaningless. Under the right circumstances, an eternal life will be more meaningful than any finite life could be, because free from a threat to meaningfulness that cannot be removed from any finite life. Our lives are meaningful insofar as they contain worthwhile projects and commitments; insofar as we value these projects, and the possibility of taking on further equally valuable projects, we have reason to value the prospect of immortality as a way of continuing to pursue them indefinitely. We therefore have reason to want eternal life lived under these right circumstances.

5pm **On moral perception**
The paper argues that properties are patterns in reality; that perception is pattern-recognition; and that moral perception is recognition of a particular sort of patterns—those formed by moral properties. Since these patterns are as real as any other sort, moral properties are as real as any other properties; since moral properties are as real as any other properties, moral realism is true. Moreover, this way of stating moral realism shows how it can see off familiar objections.

Craig Bourne
8 Nov

2pm **Temporal Intervals and Numerical Quantification: a Span-er in the Works for Presentism?**
Arthur Prior states that 'It will be/was/is that p' is true iff 'p' will be/was/is true, and that is all that needs to be said about the matter. This appears to avoid any need to invoke the existence of non-present entities and accounts for tensed truths with very
little ontological cost. However, as David Lewis notes, this version of presentism gives the wrong results when applied to numerically quantified tensed propositions. I show how presentism can accommodate numerical quantification by introducing a more appropriate tense operator. Further, I argue that it is implausible to think that we can have a primitive understanding of it; the correct semantics involves quantification over past and future times. I go on to show what kind of ontology can complement this semantic story, whilst remaining presentist in nature.

5pm The Truth about the Truth of Statements about the Future
Many people think that statements about the future are as yet neither true nor false because how the future will be is not yet fixed. This popular view about the truth-value of our claims about the future, however, creates some serious difficulties that have puzzled philosophers since Aristotle's famous discussion of the position. I'll discuss what these problems are and offer a solution to this ancient problem.

15 Nov
Daniele Moyal-Sharrock
2pm Wittgenstein's Contribution to the Memory Debate
In this paper, I survey the impact on neuropsychology of Wittgenstein's elucidations of memory. Wittgenstein discredited the storage and imprint models of memory, dissolved the conceptual link between memory and mental images or representations and, upholding the context-sensitivity of memory, he made room for a family resemblance conception where remembering can also amount to doing or saying something. While neuropsychology is still generally under the spell of archival and physiological notions of memory, Wittgenstein's reconceptions can be seen at work in its leading-edge practitioners. However, neuroscientists are all finding memory difficult to demarcate from other cognitive and noncognitive processes, and I suggest this is largely due to their considering automatic responses as memory (so-called nondeclarative or implicit memory). Taking my lead from Wittgenstein's On Certainty, I argue that there is only remembering where there is also some kind of mnemonic effort or attention, and therefore that so-called implicit memory is not memory at all, but a basic, noncognitive certainty.

5pm The Fiction of Paradox: Really Feeling for Anna Karenina
The so-called 'paradox of fiction' states that our emotional responses to fictional characters or situations are irrational or inconsistent. Philosophers have suggested various solutions to this paradox: perhaps we are not really moved; or perhaps what moves us are not fictional characters, but their real-life counterparts; or perhaps the paradox is not one at all, for we can be moved by what we know does not exist. In this paper, the last solution is adopted. I briefly survey the main solutions that have been proposed - focusing on Kendall Walton's pretend theory and Peter Lamarque's thought theory - and show that these are solutions to a non-problem, for the paradox arises only when emotions are thought to be necessarily cognitive. Acknowledging the concept-formative role of genuine emotion in literature, I then argue, contra Jenefer Robinson, that the impact of literature is not achieved through a coping mechanism, but through the unique and inseparable conjunction of form and content that generates cognitive pleasure. I suggest it is through cognitive pleasure that literature has the formative repercussions it has in our lives.

22 Nov
Mark Wynn (Exeter)
2pm Contemporary philosophies of place and some questions in philosophical theology
Contemporary philosophies of place are concerned in various ways with the construction of an embodied epistemology. I shall consider some of these efforts both for their intrinsic interest and for the light they shed on some questions in the epistemology of religious belief in particular.

4.30pm Knowledge of God and knowledge of place
Contemporary philosophy of religion has examined various secular analogies for knowledge of God, especially analogies drawn from scientific theory construction and ordinary perceptual experience. I shall consider the fruitfulness of knowledge of place as an alternative analogy -- one which promises to give more weight to the connections between religious knowledge and our practical, embodied relationship to the world.

29 Nov
Luc Bovens (LSE)
2pm A Plea for Apologies
P.G. Wodehouse writes, "It is a good rule in life never to apologise. The right sort of people do not want apologies, and the wrong sort take a mean advantage of them." One might respond that there are indeed too many apologies, both in private and public life, but too few genuine apologies. There are various reasons why an apology may not qualify as a genuine apology. I will argue that there is a cognitive, an affective, a conative and an attitudinal component to a genuine apology. As to the cognitive component, the offending party may seem to be unaware of its wrongdoing. As to the affective component, an apology may express little remorse or sympathy for the suffering caused and may be motivated more by opportunism. As to the conative component, the offending party may not display a willingness to change her ways. As to the attitudinal component, we expect an apology to be accompanied by an attitude of humility. In discussing these components, I will also touch on the following questions. When are apologies due? What is the link between apologising and making amends? Does apologising come with some kind of commitment to moral renewal? What is the nature of this strange ritual of offering and accepting apologies? And is there some truth to the claim that the right kind of people do not need apologies?

5pm Love's Constancy
Constancy is a mark of love-"love is not love which alters when it alteration finds," as the Bard writes. There are three aspects to love's constancy. Love is not subject to trading up when someone more desirable crosses one's path. Love persists even though a beloved may change in various ways. And love does not vanish when one learns something about a beloved that is not to one's liking. Philosophers and philosophical authors have sketched various models of love. These models can be assessed for their capacity to account for love's constancy. I will introduce such models here and place them into a simple matrix. We fill in the various entries in this matrix by the theories of love of Socrates, St. Paul, Augustine, Descartes, Stendhal and Nozick.

6 Dec
Sam Coleman
2pm 'Marshmallows, Metaphysics and Mind'
A popular and commonsensical physicalist view about the place of consciousness in nature is that it emerges: when physical systems of appropriate complexity are put together (roughly: brains) then consciousness arrives on the scene. But it is to be conceived of as a macroscopic physical property in its own right, whose genesis is not to be traced in any way - perspicuous or mysterious - to the micro-matter that, for physicalists, ultimately composes minds.

Another view is widely held to be daft: panpsychism, the view that all matter is conscious. I argue that the difference between supposedly reasonable emergentism and supposedly daft panpsychism lies in disagreement over a single premise that is empirical, open to dispute, and whose truth or falsity is not yet established. Thus, panpsychists, in differing over that premise's truth with their emergentist opponents, cannot be held less reasonable than them.

Finally, I address a connected worry, that panpsychism is wild and unphysicalistic. This worry turns out to be baseless. Panpsychism is a respectable physicalist alternative in philosophy of mind.

5pm Are atoms conscious?
Semester B

31 Jan
Reading Groups

7 Feb
Marcus Giaquinto (UCL)
2pm "Synthetic a priori knowledge in geometry: recovery of a Kantian insight."
I will try to defend Kant’s big idea in epistemology without commitment to any weird metaphysics. In particular I will attempt to show that visual experience can have an essential but non-evidential role in geometrical knowledge acquisition, and to defend this view against two central objections, namely that spatial facts are not knowable a priori and that we cannot reliably reach general conclusions from specific cases

5pm "What is enlightenment?"
An academic philosopher wades out of his depth in search of something that just may be important

14 Feb
Reading Groups

21 Feb
John Skorupski (St Andrews)
2pm What is normativity?
The thesis that the concept of a reason is the fundamental normative concept is in the air. In this paper I examine what it amounts to, how to formulate it, and how ambitious it should be. I distinguish a semantic version, according to which any normative predicate is definitionally reducible to a reason predicate, and a conceptual version, according to which the sole normative ingredient in any normative concept is the concept of a reason. Although I reject the semantic version I examine its potential in some detail. And I claim that the conceptual version is plausible.

5pm Consequentialist arrogance
My friend Galahad thinks it is OK not to pay for his travel on public transport so long as he can do it without anyone knowing, and he gives the money to good causes, thus producing more good than bad. Is he arrogant? If so, does that make his action wrong?

28 Feb
Reading Groups

6 Mar
Clare Carlisle (Liverpool)
2pm Habit and freedom
This paper will consider the relationship between habit and freedom. First it will offer a definition and an analysis of habit, consider the role of habit in human life, and introduce the traditional opposition between habit and freedom. There will follow a discussion of Ravaisson’s essay 'De l'habitude' (1838), which challenges the view that habit is opposed to freedom. The concluding section will respond to the issues raised in the preceding parts of the paper by emphasising the distinction between habit and practice.

5pm Good habits, bad habits

13 Mar

5pm Philosophy: What are you going to do with that?
Graduates from the UH philosophy programme return to describe their experiences in the world of work with a philosophy degree, and to pass on their advice.
Easter break

10 Apr
Luciano Floridi
2pm Understanding Relevant Information
Agents require a constant flow, and a high level of processing, of relevant semantic information, in order to interact successfully among themselves and with the environment in which they are embedded. Standard theories of information, however, are silent on the nature of epistemic relevance. In this paper, a subjectivist interpretation of epistemic relevance is developed and defended. It is based on a counterfactual and metatheoretical analysis of the degree of relevance of some semantic information i to an informee/agent a, as a function of the accuracy of i understood as an answer to a query q, given the probability that q might be asked by a. This interpretation of epistemic relevance vindicates a strongly semantic theory of information, according to which semantic information encapsulates truth. It accounts satisfactorily for several important applications and interpretations of the concept of relevant information in a variety of philosophical areas. And it interfaces successfully with current philosophical interpretations of causal and logical relevance.

5pm Avatars - What they are and what they mean philosophically
You may not have an avatar in Second Life, but you have probably heard of them. Superficially, they are agents inside virtual realities. In this presentation, I shall explore some of their properties, discuss their main interpretations (from Narcissistic egos to Doppelgänger) and argue that (a) avatars are the most recent stage in the construction of the self, the result of our ego-poietic drive, and (b) they are part of a wider phenomenon, represented by the emergence of the infosphere, the new informational environment constituted by all informational entities (thus including informational agents as well), their properties, interactions, processes and mutual relations. I shall conclude by providing some empirical evidence in support of both theses.

17 Apr
Anna Abram, Heythrop College
2pm 'Success through failure'
Contemporary moral philosophy seems to devote much attention to ideas of growth, progress, perfection and maturation. In the last twenty years ethicists have recovered ancient concepts of character and virtue and got involved in studies of moral development. Although ethical schools such as virtue ethics together with developmental psychology can provide us with many important insights on moral growth they don’t seem to deal with an aspect of our human life that, regrettable at first, can benefit us in a moral sense. On the basis of a presumption that moral growth is never straightforward and that in this growth there is just as much a possibility of ‘moral breakdown’ as of ‘moral success’, this presentation will consider the issue of moral failure. Using interdisciplinary tools of moral psychology and virtue ethics, it will argue that moral failure, although disruptive to the linear developmental pattern as considered in the psychological theories, can be conducive to moral growth in the context of a person’s moral life history. Although moral failure doesn’t always lead moral growth - moral failure can lead to further moral failure and deterioration of the moral self, moral failure does not necessarily cancel out an overall moral orientation. It will be argues, that indeed a sense of moral failure can shape moral orientation just as much as a sense of moral heroism.

5pm 'Brave Acts or Courageous Dispositions'
Are all brave acts expressions of courageous dispositions? This presentation will suggest that not every action that is brave is, in the end, courageous. By referring to Aristotelian and Thomistic accounts of courage, it will explore what makes courage a
virtue. It will propose that courage is about dealing constructively with fear and about being ready to risk, sometimes heroically, but most of the times, reasonably. For further information, contact Dr. John Lippitt
PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester A 2006-2007

All early afternoon talks to be held on Mondays in De Havilland N212. Evening talks are in N212 unless otherwise indicated.

Please Note: the 2.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 5.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

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9 Oct  Charles Pigden

2pm  Coercive Theories of Meaning

From Hobbes and Hume through to Wittgenstein and Dummett it has been a common tactic in the empiricist and analytic traditions to erect a theory or criterion of meaningfulness with a view to proving that the people you don't like talk nonsense. I contend that this is a disreputable practice which smacks of totalitarianism and suggest an argument which, I venture to hope, will subvert such vulgar systems of philosophy. The hero of my story is Hume's opponent and Burke's victim, Dr Richard Price. When we run over our libraries persuaded of these principles what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of philosophy, for instance; let us ask, Does it purport to prove that we have no idea corresponding to some word that we commonly employ? Perhaps yes. Does it argue, for instance that the correct method in philosophy is to demonstrate to someone who wanted to say something metaphysical that he had given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions? Perhaps yes. Does it suggest, for instance that the idea of an unverifiable truth is UNINTELLIGIBLE? Commit it the flames: For in so far as relies on such arguments, it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

5pm  Complots of Mischief

It is part of the conventional wisdom that conspiracy theories as such are intellectually suspect. To suggest, for example, that New Zealand's lurch to the right in the 1980s was due to a conspiracy between leading politicians, the Treasury and big business is to invite the shaking of heads and pitying looks from sophisticated colleagues. I argue that the idea that there is something suspect about conspiracy theories is one of the most dangerous and idiotic superstitions to disgrace our political culture. This idea is all the more objectionable because many of those who employ it (perhaps to disguise both from themselves and others, their conspiratorial activities) are themselves conspiracy theorists.

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16 Oct  Stephen Butterfill

2pm  What Is a Theory of Mind?
In recent work, philosophers and psychologists have investigated how we become aware of others' minds and when children are first aware of others' minds. This talk asks what it is to have such awareness. Focussing on belief, I first argue that we do not adequately understand what it is to be aware of beliefs, and then present two conflicting accounts of awareness of belief. Since there is a systematic discrepancy in empirical work on when children are first able to think about beliefs, I conclude with the suggestion that the conflicting accounts may each be useful in identifying a kind of awareness of belief characteristic of a particular stage of cognitive development.

5pm  Lexical Innovation in Linguistic Communication

Does communication by language necessarily involve sometimes adhering to established conventions governing the meanings or uses of words? Many philosophers claim that it does, but few explain how conventions are involved. Understanding the role of conventions in linguistic communication is made difficult by the fact that lexical innovation is ubiquitous, hard to discern and results in meanings which can persist. I suggest that adherence to convention may not be an essential feature of linguistic communication, whereas innovation is.

23 Oct

2pm  Daniel Hutto Embodied Cognition and the Entanglement Problem

As the name implies, embodied approaches to consciousness stand opposed to accounts of mentality that regard it as essentially disembodied - most famously, Dualism. So it might be thought that proponents of embodied and enactive approaches to the mind ought to incline naturally toward Physicalism. But this is not so, for while embodied approaches emphasize the importance of the ‘lived body’, Physicalism promotes an entirely impersonal metaphysics. And there are good reasons to be wary of any kind of Physicalism worthy of the name.

This paper rehearses some of these. But it also lays a more serious charge at the Physicalists’ door. It claims that many of the Physicalists’ thought-experiments - e.g. those in which they attempt to probe our intuitions about psychophysical relations or to argue with Dualists about possible existence of zombies - make an illicit commitment to a disembodied vision of the mental. That this is a commitment - and not a mere polemical pose - is revealed by the worries that some Physicalist have about the causal efficacy of mental properties. I conclude by showing that if one accepts an embodied account of consciousness, these worries have no grip. If consciousness is essentially embodied then we cannot distinguish the mental cleanly form the physical, even in thought. I dub this the entanglement problem. If this analysis is correct then the many of the imaginative exercises in which philosophers of mind suppose themselves to be engaging are simply not possible.

2pm  Richard Menary Is it irrational to be moved by the fates of fictional characters?

Colin Radford drew our attention to a seeming paradox about our emotional reactions to fictional characters. We are moved by the fate of Anna Karenina, we know that she does not exist and we cannot be moved by something we know not to exist.

30 Oct  Brendan Larvor

2pm  British Empiricism's crisis with modern mathematics
John Locke built his semantic empiricism on the principles that a) the meaning of a word is an idea, and b) no ideas are innate, therefore all our ideas originate in sensory experience or in reflections on the mind’s own activity. The new mathematics seemed to fall foul of these principles, because we have no sensory experience or reflexive intuition of infinite series, infinite processes, infinitely small magnitudes or complex numbers. Algebra poses a problem for Lockean empiricism, first because it is not obvious what idea might correspond to the symbol standing for the unknown \((x)\), and still less how, in an expression with several unknowns, the idea corresponding to \(x\) should differ from the idea corresponding to \(y\). Moreover, with algebraic notation we can draw inferences simply by manipulating the symbols correctly, without having any idea in mind that would give those symbols meaning. The notation itself suggests speculations that go beyond the available stock of ideas. This tendency of mathematical notation to run beyond the bounds set by our stock of ideas is precisely what Lockean empiricism was supposed to prevent. This, after all, was the Lockean diagnosis of scholastic and Cartesian philosophy and the broom with which Locke hoped to sweep away the accumulated debris of failed philosophical systems. In mathematics, it is a virtuous notation that, guided by its own grammar, advances ahead of our understanding.

I will argue that British empiricism has never solved this problem, and has prospered only by ignoring it.

5pm  Freedom of Discussion  (Note: in R035)

In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill presented his famous and brief argument for 'Liberty of thought and discussion'. He was opposed to censorship because if the banned opinion is true, we lose the opportunity to learn of its truth; if it is false, we lose the opportunity to learn why it is false. Is this a good argument? Is it good enough to show that there should never be restrictions on what can be said and written in public?

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Cancelled due to Illness

6 Nov  Chris Sinha

2pm—Language as a biocultural niche

How can culture be conceptualized from an evolutionary and ecological point of view, what are the relations between biology and culture, and how do theories of biology and culture bear upon theories of language? Some biologists have argued for the reduction of culture to the mere expression of biology. Other biologists, however, increasingly acknowledge the role of culture in shaping the evolutionary process at the genetic level, by the construction of new selective environments. This perspective situates the role of culture in human evolution within a wider class of processes involving adaptation to behaviourally induced changes in selective environments (niches or "artifacts" such as nests, dams, mounds and burrows). Cultural acquisition and transmission is mediated in humans by the human language capacity. The nativist modular account of this capacity proposes its inscription in the human genotype. An alternative account views the human language capacity as adaptation to an artifact/niche. Such an account does not require the organism to possess an internal model of the grammar of a language to account for language acquisition and use, any more than the building of a nest requires an internal model of the nest. This account is compatible with usage-based, cognitive functional theories of language.

5pm—Do Objects have Meaning?
Cancelled due to Illness

13 Nov  Richard Menary

2pm — Art and Emotion —

Colin Radford drew our attention to a seeming paradox about our emotional reactions to fictional characters. We are moved by the fate of Anna Karenina, we know that she does not exist and we cannot be moved by something we know not to exist. The likes of Kendall Walton deny that we really pity Anna Karenina, instead we make believe that we do. This kind of response is wrong. To understand how we can be moved by the fate of Anna Karenina we must return to Aristotle who gives us the basis on which to understand the relation between art and emotion.

In the *Rhetoric* Aristotle defines pity as: “a feeling of pain caused by the sight of something evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours... In order to feel pity, we must obviously be capable of supposing that some evil may happen to us or some friend of ours... What we fear for ourselves excites our pity when it happens to others.” (*Rhetoric*, II, viii, 1385b) This gives us the basis for imaginatively identifying with Anna Karenina, such a thing could happen to me or someone like me. We are able to pity Anna Karenina, even though she is fictional, because we are drawn in to a set of actions, events and consequences that result from a set of all too human frailties that we share with fictional characters—If I am like Anna Karenina I too could share her fate. This is why I pity her.

It is in this sense that the role of catharsis is paramount. Aristotle also points out in the *Rhetoric* that understanding an imitation is a species of learning (*Rhetoric*, I, xi, 1371b). The success of Anna Karenina is that it presents a pitiable thing as genuinely pitiable, we learn what the appropriate emotional responses are to individuals and the situations they are in. Hence, the relation between art and emotion is one of direct imaginative identification, but also a rational understanding of the common human frailties that give rise to the emotion.

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20 Nov  John O'Regan

2pm  The Extended Mind and Vehicle/Content Confusions

Since the publication of Andy Clark and David Chalmers’ seminal paper ‘The Extended Mind’ the focus of critics and sympathisers alike has tended to be directed towards their arguments in favour of the extension of cognitive processes into the environment. Here I will examine their arguments, offered in the same paper, in favour of the extension of mental states into the world; concluding that these arguments do not work. They don’t work because Clark and Chalmers cling onto elements of the traditional view of the nature of mind, the very view that they attempt to refute. The Extended Mind hypothesis, then, goes too far in arguing for the extension of mental states into the world because it does not go far enough in rejecting the traditional view of the nature of mind.

5pm  Bruce Lee and The Problem of Personal Identity

The most popular approaches to the problem of personal identity focus on the question of diachronic identity, the question of what it takes for a person to persist through time. This
approach, however, has tended to lead towards problems. Our best efforts at an answer to the persistence question, the psychological continuity theory, is said to be circular, and attempts to escape this circularity leads to the postulation of quasi-memory, which has its own problems. What I want to suggest is that, contrary to popular belief, the persistence question is not the most important question in the personal identity debate. The more basic metaphysical question and the question of personhood are both more crucial questions to address. I will examine both of these questions by way of considering what Bruce Lee has to say on the issue!

27 Nov  Peter Hobson
Tavistock Professor of Developmental Psychopathology in the University of London

2pm  Self-Other relations and understanding

Many philosophers as well as psychologists have written about 'the self', and many others have considered the sources of children's understanding of oneself and others as beings with minds. Yet often, theories of the development of 'theory of mind' appear strangely disembodied and abstracted from the blood-and-guts emotional exchanges that occur between a child and other people from very early in life. More basic than knowledge of minds is experience and then growing knowledge of persons, who as Strawson emphasized, are those kinds of 'thing' with a body and mind. Moreover, it is part of having concepts of mind, that one has concepts of self and other to whom those minds are ascribed. This means that the nature of people's awareness of minds has much to do with their awareness of self and other. Correspondingly, the foundations of our knowledge of minds may encompass structures of self-other relatedness that have been overlooked or neglected in much contemporary theorizing. In part through studies in autism, I shall explore how growth in self-other awareness may be founded upon a very young child's ability to 'identify with' the attitudes of other people. I shall also consider some implications for the philosophy of mind.

5pm  The grounding of symbolic thought

In this brief presentation, I shall consider how a theory of the development of symbolic thinking bears upon some philosophical issues concerning the nature of thought itself. In particular, there are contemporary accounts that model thinking upon the workings of a computer, but face difficulty in characterizing how mental representations 'refer to' or 'mean' anything. Perhaps the answer lies in what symbolic representations develop out of - in my view, interpersonally co-ordinated attitudes.

4 Dec  Maria Alvarez

2pm  Anscombe's Intentions

Anscombe’s 1957 book *Intention* was one of the first sustained attempts to provide an account of intentions and intentional actions, and of their relation.

Although Anscombe has always been regarded as a signal contributor to our understanding of the concepts of action and intention, and although *Intention* itself is seen as a seminal work in the field, the orthodoxy about intentional action that developed fairly soon after its publication, which still prevails today, runs along lines that are parallel, when not diametrically opposed, to many of the remarks and insights that she offered in her book.
The account of intention she offers in that book was much influenced by Wittgenstein in approach as much as content. It has the character of what Peter Strawson called a ‘connective analysis’, which makes it difficult to summarise it in the form of theses or of structured arguments. My paper is intended as a contribution towards an elucidation of Anscombe’s concept of intention.

5pm   Is the Truth of Religious Belief a Matter of Opinion?

Reason dictates, or seems to dictate, that if I say that God exists and you say that God does not exist, we cannot both be right. On the other hand, many people think that the truth of religious beliefs is ‘a matter of opinion’. Which position is right? Or is it, as some followers of Wittgenstein argue, that religious beliefs are neither true nor false? In this talk I shall try to navigate my way through this complex territory.

11 Dec   Graham Priest

2pm   Contradictions in Buddhism

When opening Buddhist texts, especially in the Zen tradition, it is common to find various contradictory utterances. What is one supposed to make of them. Are Buddhist traditions committed to dialetheism (the view that some contradictions are true)? This is the topic I will discuss.

5pm   Non-existent Objects

I will talk about some of the reasons that are often given for finding non-existent objects philosophically rebarbative, and explain why I do not find them particularly persuasive.

The programme of talks will resume in Semester B.

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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester B 2006-2007

All talks take place on Mondays in De Havilland N212.

Please Note: the 2.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 5.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates and anyone else with an interest in philosophy.

22 Jan  Ian Apperly

2pm  What can we learn from studying "theory of mind" in adults?

What are the cognitive processes responsible for "theory of mind" (ToM) - our ability to think about mental states such as beliefs, desires and intentions? Although we know much about how these abilities develop in children we know remarkably little about the cognitive basis of these abilities in the mature system. A functional account of the mature system is essential for understanding children’s development, for interpreting the rapidly growing literature on the neural correlates of ToM, and for understanding the role of ToM in other cognitive processes, such as communication. I will draw a working distinction between processes involved in ToM inferences, processes involved in storing ToM information, and processes involved in using this information, and present data from three paradigms designed to target each of these processes in adult participants. I will then discuss how these findings might shape our interpretation of neuroimaging research on ToM, and the role of ToM in other cognitive processes such as communication.

5pm  Neuroimaging research cannot tell us whether theory of mind involves simulation or theoretical reasoning

The debate between Simulation-Theory (ST) and Theory-Theory (TT) provides the dominant theoretical framework for research on "theory of mind" (ToM) (see e.g., Saxe 2005). Behavioural research has failed to provide clear methods for discriminating between these theories, but a number of recent studies have claimed that neuroimaging methods do allow key predictions of ST and TT to be tested (e.g., Grezes, Frith and Passingham 2004; Mitchell, Banaji & Macrae 2005). I will argue that neuroimaging studies have not in fact provided any data that discriminates between ST and TT accounts of propositional attitude ascription, and moreover that it is unlikely that they will in the future. However, I also suggest that this may be more damaging for the philosophical debate than for the experimental neuroscience.


29 Jan   Marek McGann

**2pm   Enactive theorists do it on purpose: Exploring an implicit demand for a theory of goals**

The enactive approach to understanding the mind is saved from being either behaviouristic or eliminative by dealing in norm-governed activity rather than simply "brute" mechanistic dynamics. The activity of a cognitive system from an enactive view is not simply behaviour, it is action. Though this view has been applied in a range of domains, the emphasis to date has been on low-level cognitive phenomena examined using the tools of artificial life, biology and the psychology of perception. If the approach is to be raised to examine more "human", personal level interactions with the world, then some work will need to be done in order to identify what kinds of activity counts as action (and enaction) and what kinds of norms might be applied.

Within the approach, we continually discuss actions, teleology, goal-directed behaviour, the motivated nature of cognition and skillful engagement with the world. Discussion of such concepts makes goals a fundamental pillar of the enactive approach, but there has been surprisingly little explicit discussion of the concept. Just what kinds of goals are we talking about? What theory of action (action simply and pre-theoretically understood as goal-directed behaviour?) underlies the enactive approach?

**5pm   Just how many senses have we?**

Whatever way you look at it, we don't seem to have the good old-fashioned five senses. Recent work in both Philosophy and Cognitive Science suggests that the more traditional ways of counting sensory modalities (that is, counting kinds of sense organs) may be inadequate. I will look briefly at some research that suggests that perceptual modalities might best be understood in terms of the kinds of actions and activities that they support for something with both a mind and a body. Taking some of the lessons from that work on board, I will outline the possibility that there may be some perceptual modalities out there (already in widespread use, in fact), which have not been recognised as such until now.

5 Feb    Kathleen Lennon

**2pm   Reason constituting Perception**

Humeans argue that Reason without an input from the passions cannot move us to act. This has been taken to imply that the deliverances of perception cannot provide us with reasons to act without input from inner desires or subjective projects. This has been challenged by John McDowell in his writings on moral value. For McDowell the content of our perceptual experience provides us with reasons for actions without the need to assume any prior desire. McDowell's position relies on the notion of 'reason constituting' perception, a notion which he develops further in his later work *Mind and World*. This paper gives an account of what reason constituting perception consists in and discusses its link to judgements, actions and other kinds of bodily response, in a way that makes clear how such perceptions can be necessarily motivating. For McDowell such reason constituting perception requires, what he terms, a 'partial re-enchantment' of nature. Here the notions of reason constituting perception and re-enchantment are developed to provide an account of rationality anchored in our bodily presence in the world. The
rationalism which thereby emerges is one in which an immanent rationality is manifested in the contours of our affective states.

5pm  Making Sense of the Desire for Body Modification without 'real genders'

The aim of this paper is to try and make sense of transsexual desire for body modification, given the apparent inadequacy of a certain model of understanding this desire. The model which is problematic is something like this. Transsexual people from an early age take themselves to have a gender which is at variance with the biological sex of the body. They experience their body as 'the wrong body'. The desire for bodily change is to give them 'the right body'; the one which matches their real gender. I identify a number of problems with this model and suggest an alternative way of making sense of the desire for bodily change.

12 Feb  Mark Cain

2pm  Nativism and Language

Chomsky's nativist account of language acquisition has come under heavy attack in recent years. But if we learn language the question arises of how we so learn. I will examine a particular answer to this question. This is the extension of the theory theory recently developed by Alison Gopnik. According to Gopnik children learn their first language by engaging in scientific investigation. Drawing upon familiar features of science I will argue that the theory theory cannot make sense of linguistic convergence. I will then draw some morals from the failure of the theory theory that put pressure on any version of the claim that children learn their first language.

5pm  What reasons are there for thinking that much of our knowledge of language is innate?

How do we acquire knowledge of the grammatical rules of our first language? Chomsky's answer--that we have a massive innate endowment of language-specific knowledge such that we do not need to learn grammatical rules--has dominated cognitive science. However, Chomskyan nativism has waned in popularity in recent years. I aim to revisit Chomsky's 'poverty of the stimulus argument' for linguistic nativism and show that, in spite of recent attacks, there is still much to recommend it.

19 Feb  Stephen Mithen

2pm  Seven Steps in the Evolution of the Human Imagination

The archaeological and fossil record suggests that our hominid ancestors and relatives possessed imaginative abilities that were used in day-to-day living, such as when thinking about hunting and gathering or making stone tools. But there is no evidence that they possessed a creative imagination, the type we usually associate with activities such as art and science. This was most likely restricted to Homo sapiens that appear in the fossil record at c. 200,000 years ago. I argue that the creative imagination of H.sapiens was the product of a long evolutionary history within which seven key developments in biological and cultural evolution can be identified: the evolution of theory of mind capacities, a distinctively human life history and domain-specific intelligences, the origin of music, language and cognitive fluidity, the extension of mind by material culture and the appearance of sedentary farming communities.
5pm Sonic Screwdriver or Albatross?

Philosophy graduates return to discuss life beyond the university with a philosophy degree. Does it open doors? Is it a dead weight?

26 Feb  Maria Alvarez

2pm  Anscombe's Intentions

Anscombe’s 1957 book *Intention* was one of the first sustained attempts to provide an account of intentions and intentional actions, and of their relation.

Although Anscombe has always been regarded as a signal contributor to our understanding of the concepts of action and intention, and although *Intention* itself is seen as a seminal work in the field, the orthodoxy about intentional action that developed fairly soon after its publication, which still prevails today, runs along lines that are parallel, when not diametrically opposed, to many of the remarks and insights that she offered in her book.

The account of intention she offers in that book was much influenced by Wittgenstein in approach as much as content. It has the character of what Peter Strawson called a ‘connective analysis’, which makes it difficult to summarise it in the form of theses or of structured arguments. My paper is intended as a contribution towards an elucidation of Anscombe’s concept of intention.

12 Mar  Christina Chimisso

2pm  Léon Brunschvicg: Philosophy as history of the mind

Léon Brunschvicg (1869-1944), although often overlooked nowadays, played a crucial role in the elaboration of the tradition of philosophy of science and knowledge which was subsequently developed by Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault. I shall discuss in particular the method that Brunschvicg employed to study the limits and capabilities of the mind. The study of history of science and philosophy in his view showed that the mind changed in time. As a consequence, for him it was only through a study of history that the philosopher could understand how the mind works. Although he regarded himself as a neo-Kantian, he historicised Kantian categories. I shall examine the interrelation between his conception of philosophy and truth and his ethical and political ideas and show how the latter were consistent with the republicanism and secularism of the Third Republic’s ruling class. However, I shall conclude that Brunschvicg’s defence of progress does not have solid theoretical foundations.

19 Mar  John Lippitt

2pm  How good a lover is Harry Frankfurt?

Harry Frankfurt's *The Reasons of Love* (Princeton, 2004) addresses some of the most significant questions of human life: how we should live; love and its reasons; and the nature and desirability of self-love. This talk will give an overview of Frankfurt's position, while raising some problems with his account of love and of the desirability
of volitional unity.

5pm   The illusion of education: why students aren't consumers

It is often claimed (or - worse - just taken for granted) that because students now typically make a financial contribution towards the cost of their education, they should be viewed as consumers. In this talk, I'll be drawing on some insights from R G Collingwood's philosophy of art to argue why this view is confused and pernicious.

26 Mar   Robert Kowalenko

2pm   Powers, Capacities, and Competences

The talk will be about the "new realism about dispositions" in contemporary philosophy of science, and the evidential and epistemological problems inherent in the ascription of powers, capacities, and competences.

5pm   TBA

23 Apr   Adrian Wilson

2pm   Lessons of Metahistory: Hayden White's narratology and its implications

Although Hayden White's Metahistory of 1973 has been much discussed - indeed, it is arguably the most influential historiographic work of the past generation - its rhetoric has scarcely come into focus. This of course is ironic, given that Metahistory's central focus is precisely the sphere of the rhetorical; that is, the book draws upon the intuition that the form in which arguments are expressed is consequential for their content. The present paper will confirm that intuition, while arguing that the main lessons of Metahistory reside in its limitations. I hope to show that due attention to the rhetoric of Metahistory clarifies such central matters as the relationship between its two aims (for it offered both a theory of historical knowledge and a history of its nineteenth-century development) and the connection between its two theories (the "theory of the historical work" and the "theory of tropes"). I shall go on to depict the book as a heroic failure, but also to suggest that its fatal flaw - the structural separation between documentary research and historical writing - by no means originated with White but is endemic to "meta-historical" discourse.

5pm   Collingwood's Logic of Question and Answer

In his Autobiography of 1939, R.G. Collingwood put forward what he called the "logic of question-and-answer", which proposed (a) that philosophical doctrines should be seen as answers to questions, and (b) that proper understanding - both philosophical and historical - consists of recovering the questions. Historians tend to find this approach congenial; but is it fruitful for philosophers? And is it consistent with what Collingwood proposed in the following year, in his Essay on Metaphysics - namely that metaphysics should be historicised through the identification of "absolute presuppositions"?
30 Apr  David Charles

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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY
Semester A 2005-2006

All talks to be held at 4.30 pm on Thursdays in De Havilland N212 except 10th Nov which is in N105.

13 Oct  Dan Hutto (Hertfordshire)  Room: N212

The Narrative Practice Hypothesis

This paper challenges the reigning orthodoxy’s claims that our understanding of one another is either grounded in sub-personal mechanisms inherited from our ancient ancestors or is a kind of ‘theory’ forged during ontogeny. In one form or another these ‘theory of mind’ approaches have been central not only to debates within philosophy but have also dominated thinking and experimental work in cognitive and developmental psychology; primatology and cognitive science/archaeology for the past two decades. I raise both logical and abductive considerations which demonstrate that, despite their popularity, such views are in fact bankrupt.

In their place I advance the Narrative Practice Hypothesis. Its core claim is that stories act as exemplars, and children’s acquaintance with them provides an understanding of the context in which reasons operate. The proposal passes three important tests of empirical adequacy relating to: (1) poverty of the stimulus arguments (2) convergence requirements and (3) disorders and dissociations. I demonstrate that the Narrative Practice Hypothesis offers a superior explanation of the recent evidence about affects of exposure to conversations on children’s development of a mentalistic understanding. This makes it explanatorily stronger than its competitors. And, if true, this hypothesis has the potential to shake up and re-direct current thinking across a range of disciplines.

20 Oct  Scott Sturgeon (Birkbeck)  Room: N212

The Grain of Belief & Reason

A puzzle grows from three natural points concerning epistemically rational thought. Each of the points looks true as an idealisation, yet together they generate conflict. The Puzzle is to reckon why. I shall defend a Lockean solution to the Puzzle on which the epistemology of 'coarse grained belief' (also known as 'binary belief') grows from the epistemology of 'fine grained belief' (also known as 'credence'). On the approach to be defended, coarse epistemology is fine epistemology in the rough. We shall see in due course, however, that there is a point to the epistemology of coarse-grained belief which does not derive from the epistemology of credence.
How Do We Know How?

In this talk I aim to raise some doubts about the plausibility of Stanley and Williamson’s view that all knowledge-how is just a species of propositional knowledge by tackling the question of what is involved in entertaining a proposition. I try to show that Stanley and Williamson’s position leads to an uncomfortable dilemma. Depending on how we understand the notion of contemplating a proposition, either intuitively plausible cases of knowing-how cannot be thus classified or the very idea of propositional knowledge loses all its force, i.e., propositional knowledge then fails to demarcate any clear class of cases. In a more positive mood, I conclude with a brief discussion of the nature and role of knowledge-how.

The Sensorimotor approach to perception - is it a covert form of Direct Realism?

The sensorimotor approach to perception has been claimed as a novel alternative to more "orthodox" views of perception that appeal to internal processes and representational states; it is claimed that a particular virtue of this approach is the way it shows how perception is essentially linked with action. In my paper I analyse the version of the sensorimotor view recently set out by Alva Noë in his book, Action in Perception (MIT, 2004). I argue that there are a number of problems with Noë's account. The appeal it makes to the subject's practical knowledge is ambiguous. On one interpretation, it collapses into a form of Direct Realism, and on those grounds may be criticised as relying upon a relational view of experience that is not coherent. On a reasonable alternative interpretation, the view is not so far from a Critical Realist view that posits the "inner states" that Noë claims are not needed to explain perception. Further criticisms are made of Noë's treatment of hallucinations, and of his 'enactive externalism', a version of the extended mind view that is shown to be untenable when applied to phenomenal states.

Students are Human Beings (discuss)

Higher education in England and Wales is subject to two ideological forces from above: economism (ask not what UK PLC can do for you...) and consumerism. Academics seem unable to articulate very much in the way of resistance to these evils, beyond some vague and weary grumbling about 'philistinism'. In this talk I attempt to connect some traditional thoughts about the nature and purpose of higher education with our present situation. At the centre of this effort is the banal yet profound fact that students are human beings.

Relation, Resemblance and Repetition: The Formal Ontology of Pattern

The importance of patterns is hard to exaggerate. They occur in all domains of investigation. Examples are given from the physical, biological, social and formal sciences, everyday life and the arts. Of particular theoretical interest are patterns in genetics, psychology, computer science,
linguistics and music. Mathematics is arguably nothing but the science of purely formal patterns, or structures. This ubiquity strongly suggests that pattern is a formal ontological concept, and as such should be, if not definable, at least amenable to formal analysis and explication. Surprisingly, there is almost no philosophical work on this topic, and what there is tends to be unacceptably logico-linguistic. In this talk I present a catalogue of formal ontological concepts employable in analysing the concept of pattern and show how they can unify and organise our inchoate thinking on the issue.

24 Nov  Vicky Roupa  Room: N212

**Naming as Techne**

Plato’s ambivalence towards techne is well known. As art and especially poetry, techne is politely but firmly driven out of the ideal polis for fear that it will set a bad example for the republic’s future guardians. As fabrication or technique, by contrast, techne not only helps provide sustenance for the city’s population, but, more importantly, it offers a tangible and convincing way of broaching the question of the forms. Surely, a blacksmith intent upon constructing a shuttle will have to look to the form of the shuttle (rather than singular instances of shuttles) in order to make one.

In this paper I propose to examine the case of naming which, according to the Platonic dialogue Cratylus, also falls under the jurisdiction of techne. Like a functioning shuttle, a well-given or aptly-chosen name is the product of good craftsmanship. Once in place, however, names do not remain unchanged, but can be “embellished” and “ornamented” with the result that they become more like artworks than implements of utility. I will discuss the problems this raises for Plato’s theory of naming and enquire as to the possibility of clearly distinguishing and setting apart the two meanings of techne present in naming, craftsmanship and artfulness.

1 Dec  Dawn Phillips (St Anne’s, Oxford)  Room: N212

**Clear and Unclear Thoughts**

Shortly after stating that “philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts” (Tractatus 4.112), Wittgenstein pauses to reflect: “does not my study of sign-language correspond to the study of thought processes, which philosophers used to consider so essential to the philosophy of logic? Only in most cases they got entangled in unessential psychological investigations, and with my method too there is an analogous risk” (4.1121). In this paper I critically examine Wittgenstein’s conception of the logical clarification of thoughts in the Tractatus. I set out to understand the nature of the ‘risk’ that Wittgenstein himself identified, and to highlight a range of other concerns: What is the difference between a clear and an unclear thought? Is it possible to make an unclear thought clear, or must it instead be ‘cleared away’ and replaced with a clear thought? How can we know whether a thought is really clear? Some of these concerns reveal weaknesses in Wittgenstein’s account, and this has philosophical significance that is more than merely exegetical. The account of thoughts in the Tractatus is influenced by Frege’s anti-psychologism, and it seems time to ask whether the failure of the Tractatus also indicates the failure of anti-psychologism.

8 Dec  John Lippitt (Hertfordshire)  Room: N212

‘Second selves and genuine others: Kierkegaard and Aristotle on friendship and
self-love’

‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31). Yet inside and outside the Christian tradition, philosophers have worried about self-love. Kierkegaard, for instance, is often presented as arguing that friendship and erotic love, because ‘preferential’, are really selfishness in disguise. In her recent interpretation of Kierkegaard’s Works of Love, Jamie Ferreira has argued that Kierkegaard’s cautions about self-love do not rule out erotic love, friendship or a healthy ‘care of the self’, but are rather intended to warn against the ways in which we often turn the other into ‘another me’. It is crucial, Ferreira argues, to understand Kierkegaard’s concerns in terms of a distinction between legitimate and selfish forms of self-love.

But what form could such a distinction take? In particular, what form should it take in the context of friendship? Several philosophers - most famously Aristotle, but also Cicero, Aquinas and Montaigne - describe the friend as a second or other self. Prima facie, this might sound as if it falls foul of the ‘reduction to me’ objection. In this context, I shall consider the charge (made recently by Sandra Lynch, for example) that Aristotle’s account of friendship (amongst others) places an excessive focus on similarities rather than differences between friends. Not enough has been said about what this focus on differences would bring to the table. I begin to fill this lacuna by arguing for the importance of supplementing the so-called ‘mirror’ view of friendship derived from Aristotle with a ‘drawing’ view suggested by Cocking and Kennett. Placing such a dimension of friendship centre stage, I argue, goes a long way towards addressing Kierkegaard’s worry that friendship might ultimately be a form of illegitimate self-love.

Art and Emotion

Colin Radford drew our attention to a seeming paradox about our emotional reactions to fictional characters. We are moved by the fate of Anna Karenina, we know that she does not exist and we cannot be moved by something we know not to exist. The likes of Kendall Walton deny that we really pity Anna Karenina, instead we make believe that we do. This kind of response is wrong. To understand how we can be moved by the fate of Anna Karenina we must return to Aristotle who gives us the basis on which to understand the relation between art and emotion.

In the Rhetoric Aristotle defines pity as: “a feeling of pain caused by the sight of something evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours... In order to feel pity, we must obviously be capable of supposing that some evil may happen to us or some friend of ours... What we fear for ourselves excites our pity when it happens to others.” (Rhetoric, II, viii, 1385b) This gives us the basis for imaginatively identifying with Anna Karenina, such a thing could happen to me or someone like me. We are able to pity Anna Karenina, even though she is fictional, because we are drawn into a set of actions, events and consequences that result from a set of all too human frailties that we share with fictional characters. If I am like Anna Karenina I too could share her fate. This is why I pity her.

It is in this sense that the role of catharsis is paramount. Aristotle also points out in the Rhetoric that understanding an imitation is a species of learning (Rhetoric I, xi, 1371b). The success of Anna Karenina is that it presents a pitiable thing as genuinely pitiable, we learn what the appropriate emotional responses are to individuals and the situations they are in. Hence, the relation between art and emotion is one of direct imaginative identification, but also a rational understanding of the
common human frailties that give rise to the emotion.

12 Jan Jane Singleton (Hertfordshire) Room: N212

**Kant's Account of Respect: A bridge between rationality and anthropology**

Kant considers that the ground of duty, the moral law has its source *a priori* in our rational natures and is not based on our empirical knowledge of human beings. I claim that he is also pointing to certain features that are necessary to presuppose about human beings for the moral law to be applicable. Respect is one of these features that both allows for the recognition of *any* duty and provides an explanation of how the moral law can motivate in the human case. 'Respect' is also used in a narrower sense to reflect presuppositions of certain *specific* duties.

**The programme of talks will resume in Semester B.**

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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester B 2005-2006

All talks to be held at 4.30 pm on Thursdays in De Havilland N212 (except where a different room is indicated)

9 Feb  Philip Stratton-Lake (Reading)  Room: N206

Eliminativism about derivative prima facie duties

In *The Right and the Good*, Ross offers a first-order normative theory based on his doctrine of prima facie duties. He claims that there are five fundamental prima facie duties, and that all other prima facie duties can be derived from these. It is, however, unclear how he thinks of the derivative prima facie duties. Two interpretations are possible. According to the first (non-eliminativist) interpretation, derivative prima facie duties are real and are explained by the basic ones. According to the second (eliminativist) interpretation, derivative duties are not real. They are not *explained* by the basic duties, but are *replaced* by these. I argue that, despite its initial plausibility, the non-eliminativist interpretation cannot be sustained, and that the eliminativist interpretation is more plausible.

16 Feb  Adrian Haddock (Stirling)  Room: N212

The World is Our World

How ought we to understand the idea of a mind-independent world? In this paper, I consider a way of understanding this idea that tries to combine the following points:

1. The world is the totality of facts;
2. Facts are true thoughts;
3. There is no distinction between what can be thought and what we can think;
4. We are human beings.

Certain philosophers (Read, Sullivan) have argued against the combination of (1) and (2); I consider and reject their arguments. Other philosophers (Davidson, McDowell) have argued for the combination of (3) and (4); I consider and reject their arguments. My suggestion is that it is possible to combine points (1) – (3) if point (4) is replaced with a less restrictive understanding of who we are. I defend this suggestion, and comment upon its philosophical significance.

23 Feb
A sensorimotor approach to pain

In recent years sensorimotor or 'enactive' views of perception and perceptual awareness have been developed and discussed. According to the sensorimotor view, to consciously perceive is primarily to be understood in terms of active exploration of the environment. Feeling, seeing and hearing are different ways to interact with what's touchable, visible and audible in one's environment.

One of the most recurrent objections to the sensorimotor view has been to declare that the phenomenon of pain is intractable for it. Insofar as pain is associated with, and leads to behaviours of avoidance or seeking relief, so it is argued, to define pain in terms of such behaviours is precisely to miss the quality of pain, which could be absent while the behaviours are be present. Additionally, so the objection can be further developed, pain quite often occurs in the absence of any activity at all. Think, for example, of an ordinary headache which one can have while lying immutable, or the exaggerated levels of pain reported by patients with locked-in syndrome.

I will argue that these problems can be dealt with in a sensorimotor view in which, somewhat along the lines set out by Merleau-Ponty in 1945, experience is conceived of in terms of a subject's implicit acknowledgment of potential for action. Then, a pain can be thought of as a self-imposed imperative restriction on how one can use a certain body part. Feeling pain is finding oneself being a body with an inescapable reduced potential for -often quite specific types of - somatic actions.

This conception of pain, so I will claim, firmly roots it in the sensorimotor view. Besides providing the means to reply to a standard family of objections to the sensorimotor theory, it also leads to some intriguing predictions in the realm of pain research. It predicts the possible emergence of a feeling of pain in cases of sensorimotor conflict. Precisely this phenomenon has only very recently been found and described. I will show how this view throws light on both phantom limb pain and its observed disappearance under certain experimental conditions. I will end by relating the sensorimotor take on pain to established philosophical positions of pain.

Responsibility and Liability in Criminal Law

We can cast light on the structure and content of the criminal law by distinguishing (more carefully than criminal law theorists usually distinguish) criminal responsibility from criminal liability, and by attending more carefully to the relational dimensions of responsibility.

- We are responsible for that for which we must answer; but we are liable only for that for which we cannot provide an adequately exculpatory answer.
- Responsibility is relational not only in that we are responsible for something, but also in that we are responsible to some person or body with the standing to call us to answer; and we are responsible as satisfying some relevant, normatively laden description.

In this paper I explore these aspects of responsibility, and their implications for some central issues in criminal law.
The Transparency of Metaphor

In this paper I describe and classify various views of metaphor, and then I set out and defend a consideration that can be used for deciding among them.

23 Mar  Dr Kristina Niedderer (Hertfordshire)  Room: N206

Debating a Working Definition of Knowledge for Art & Design Research

The Experiential Knowledge Project is concerned with the understanding, role and relationship of experiential and cognitive knowledge in the context of art and design research, and the area variously known as practice-based, practice-led, or studio-based research. Our motive for the inquiry into the role and relationship of experiential and cognitive knowledge has evolved from the numerous debates in the UK concerning the use of creative practice within research and (arguably) as research. These debates have raised questions about the form, nature and embodiment of knowledge relevant to art & design.

As part of this project, we are aiming to establish a working definition of knowledge for art & design, which takes account of the relationship of experiential and cognitive knowledge. This definition should be of relevance to both research and practice in the field of art and design so that it can be used as a basis for the subsequent inquiry into their respective requirements for the generation, communication, and utilisation of knowledge, and for a clearer understanding of the term ‘knowledge’ in the definition of research.

-In the Seminar, I will present a first attempt of such a working definition with the aim to discuss a.o.

- its routes in the philosophical understanding(s) of knowledge
- what (changes) make(s) it relevant to art & design research and practice
- its pragmatic value for art & design research and practice
- the validity of such a definition from the perspective of philosophy and from art & design

Further information on the Experiential Knowledge Project can be found on: http://www.herts.ac.uk/artdes1/research/ tvad/ekp.html

27 April  Adrian Brockless (Durham)  Room: N212

"Oh come on! Be Rational!" - Some Thoughts on the Role of Trust in Rational Argument'

In this paper I look at the role that trust plays in rational argument.

I argue that trust is a necessary aspect of rationality and examine the difference between what is rational and what is insane – the latter, I maintain, can manifest itself through excessive formalism. Obviously not all rationality requires trust – indeed some demands formalism and I consider whether it is possible to formulaically identify how much (or little, or any) trust is required in particular situations i.e. whether a requirement of trust can be externally justified and, if not, what can be said about it. I continue by looking at questions such as: why does rationality sometimes demand trust? What marks out rationality from insanity? How do we understand something to be rational – what are we appealing to in our understanding? Within this discussion I consider what it
means to exercise our cognitive capacities rationally, and I reflect on examples of rationality within ethics, small talk, love and probability.

In the final part of the paper, I examine how we are sometimes bewitched into applying formalism incorrectly – perhaps as a result of fear of error or, relating to this, a belief that external justification is necessary in order for something to be rational (possibly as a result of considering thought to be based on a cognitive / non-cognitive model that has cognitive as wholly impersonal (and thus allowing objectivity) and non-cognitive as personal and (thus) subjective). What happens if we do not trust enough and rely on formalism too much? How do we overcome error without formalism? - are there any guarantees that we can? Is rationality a kind of wisdom?

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4 May  Mike Wheeler (Stirling) Room: N206

**Being in the Natural World: Heidegger, Philosophy and Science**

In this talk I shall develop and defend a view of the relationship between philosophy and science that uses as its springboard work by Heidegger. Although my argument requires some exegesis of material from *Being and Time*, it will assume no previous knowledge of Heidegger's philosophy, and is designed to carve out a position that has merit beyond Heidegger scholarship. I shall begin by presenting an analysis of some key, but often overlooked, sections of *Being and Time*. In these sections Heidegger lays out an analysis of the relationship between philosophy and science, specifically the sciences of biology, psychology and anthropology. What emerges from these sections is a picture of science and philosophy as being in a kind of mutually constraining, essentially complementary relationship. Having unpacked this picture with some contemporary examples from cognitive science and evolutionary biology, I shall go on to argue that the general view on offer is both realist and naturalist in character. Thus my argument has the following, perhaps surprising consequences: on the most reasonable interpretation of realism about science, Heidegger is a realist about science; and on the most reasonable interpretation of naturalism about the mind, Heidegger is a naturalist about the mind.

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11 May  Sven Bernecker (Manchester) Room: N212

**Memory, Knowledge and Content Preservation**

In the last six decades, most epistemologists and philosophers of mind have come to advocate a view of propositional memory which has three characteristics. First, memory that p, we are told, entails knowledge that p, where this knowledge was previously acquired and preserved. Second, it is claimed that memory cannot make a proposition acquire an epistemic status different than the one it had at the time it was originally acquired. Third, it is (tacitly) assumed that the memory content must be of the same type as the content of the relevant past representation. In this paper, I shall argue that the standard contemporary account of propositional memory is false. Specifically, I argue for three theses. First, memory is not a form of knowledge since memory, unlike knowledge, does not imply justification. Second, memory not only preserves knowledge but also generates new justification and knowledge. Third, it is not necessary that the memory content be type-identical with the past content but it suffices that the memory content is an entailment of the past content.
PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester A 2004-2005

All evening talks to be held on Thursdays in De Havilland N212. Afternoon talks are in N212 except 2nd and 9th December which are in N108.

Please Note: the 4.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 8.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

7 Oct  Prof. Mark Rowlands (Hertfordshire)

4pm  Body Language: Representation in Action

The problem of representation (or meaning, content or intentionality) is typically glossed as a problem of understanding how one item - a representing one - can be about another item that is extrinsic to it - a represented item - in such a way that the former can have the latter as its content. This understanding of the problem has the unfortunate consequence of rendering it insoluble. The key to the problem lies in the idea that there can be no boundaries between representations and the world. Representation is not a process whereby an inner item somehow 'reaches out' and 'grasps' an object extrinsic to it. Representation does not stop short of the world. Representation extends out into the world in the form of certain sorts of action. That is, certain ways of acting in the world are themselves representations of that world, and are so independently of their connection to other representational states.

8pm  Truth: The Truth

14 Oct  Dr. Julian Baggini (The Philosophers' Magazine)

4pm  Two questions of personal identity

The problem of personal identity over time is usually understood as being the search for the set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a person X at one time and a person Y at another time being the same person, or a demonstration of the impossibility of formulating these conditions. However, in my view this approach blurs the distinction between two very different, though related, questions, which are motivated by very different concerns. One is the first person question of survival. This relates to our existential concerns about what gives out individual lives value and significance.

The second is what I call the factual question of identity. This concerns the facts concerning the diachronic identity of a single token entity. In this paper I want to argue that these two questions are quite distinct, and that answers to one may not provide answers to the other.
8pm    The Intellectual Virtues of The Philosopher

What makes a good philosopher? In this talk I will discuss some of the virtues of a good philosopher and what this tells us about the nature of philosophy.

21 Oct    Prof. Rom Harré (Georgetown and American)

Rom Harré taught mathematics and physics for some years, before turning to philosophy of science and ultimately psychology. After many years at Oxford he now teaches at Georgetown and American Universities in Washington DC. His most recent books are *Cognitive Science: A Philosophical Introduction; One Thousand Years of Philosophy*, and *Modeling: Gateway to Nature*.

4pm    Positioning Theory

**Positioning Theory** is the most recent development of linguistically-oriented social psychology, providing concepts for microanalysis of the development of social episodes. It is based on the inter-relation of `positions' (clusters of rights and duties for speaking and acting); story-lines (the conventions according to which an episode can unfold) and speech-acts (the social meanings of utterances). The sense of self is part constituted by a person's possible positions in the life world, so positioning is also self-constructing. Positions are ascribed, assigned and contested.

8pm    Can a Nation have an Emotion? The case of Princess Di

Psychologists have almost always treated emotions as properly ascribed to individuals, but in everyday life we often talk of the emotions of families (mourning), villages (outrage), nations (determined on revenge). The emotional outpourings over the death of Princess Di, and the subsequent events give us a handle on this difficult question.

28 Oct    Prof Donald Gillies (King's College London)

4pm    An Action-Related Theory of Causality

The paper begins with a discussion of Russell's view that the notion of cause is unnecessary for science, and can therefore be eliminated. It is argued that this is true for theoretical physics, but untrue for medicine where the notion of cause plays a central role. Medical theories are closely connected with practical action (attempts to cure and prevent disease), whereas theoretical physics is more remote from applications. This suggests the view that causal laws are appropriate in a context where there is a close connection to action. This leads to a development of an action-related theory of causality which is similar to the agency theory of Menzies and Price, but differs from it in a number of respects, one of which is the following. Menzies and Price connect 'A causes B' with an action to produce B by instantiating A, but, particularly in the case of medicine, the law can also be linked to the action of trying to avoid B by ensuring that A is not instantiated or preempted. The action-related theory has in common with agency theory of Menzies and Price, the ability to explain causal asymmetry in a simple fashion, but the introduction of avoidance actions together with some ideas taken from Russell enable some of the objections to agency accounts of causality to be met.

8pm How probable is it that the Sun will rise tomorrow?
As is well-known, Hume raised doubts about whether the Sun will rise tomorrow. The Bayesian school, which began with the paper by Bayes and Price in 1763, and continued with Laplace, tried to answer Hume's difficulty by arguing that, though it was not certain that the Sun would rise tomorrow, at least it was highly probable. Laplace actually calculated the probability of the Sun's rising tomorrow and found it was very high. This talk will not go into the technical details of Laplace's calculation, but rather raise the general question of whether such calculations are meaningful or just mathematical hocus pocus.

4 Nov  James Connelly (Southampton Institute)

I am currently head of School of Human Sciences and Communication at Southampton Institute where I teach research methods, ethics and political theory. I have published a number of articles on R.G. Collingwood together with a recent book – *Metaphysics, Method and Politics: The Political Philosophy of R.G. Collingwood*. With Josie D'Oro I have recently edited a new edition of Collingwood's *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, which will be published in 2005. I also write on environmental politics and ethics: publication include a co-authored book on *Politics and the Environment: from Theory to Practice*. I am currently working on a monograph on environmental virtues and citizenship and on some issues in the philosophy of history.

4pm   The Hesitant Hegelian: Collingwood, Hegel and Inter-war Oxford

In this paper I consider Collingwood’s position in the Oxford philosophical world after the First World War. There he was schooled in realism but rejected this position in favour of what he termed ‘dialectical idealism’ in 1917. However, he came to realise that, to gain a public hearing he needed to present his philosophy in a manner not susceptible to reductionist caricature by opponents unsympathetic to idealism. He was simultaneously wrestling with his debt to Hegel and the Italians (Croce, Gentile, De Ruggiero). This paper traces and examines his relation with Hegel in the light of his attempts to gain a decent philosophical hearing in an atmosphere in which adherence to Hegel was rapidly becoming a great liability.

8pm   What’s Bugging You? What’s Your Problem?

What makes people want to do philosophy? I suggest that people develop an interest when they have a question, an issue, a problem which nags away them without resolution and often without them even being able to properly identify and define it. I explore what it means to start thinking philosophically through autobiographical reflections prompted by R.G. Collingwood’s *Autobiography*.

11 Nov  Dr Edward Harcourt (Canterbury)

4pm   Love and Reason

Love and reason are traditionally thought of as belonging in opposing, or at any rate separate, compartments of the mind. Using a helpful hint from Aristotle and some recent work in psychoanalysis, I argue that some capacities conventionally assigned to reason, including prudence and the regulation of emotion, cannot be explicated without reference to love. The idea is not so much that reason and love cooperate as that rationality is (partly) constituted by (self-)love.

8pm   Psychoanalysis and the Great Tradition in Moral Psychology
Answers to the question 'what is psychoanalysis?' usually play variations on two themes, (i) it's science and (ii) it's hermeneutics, with varying consequences for the standing in which psychoanalysis is held. Both are at best only partly right: psychoanalysis is (or is also) philosophy. My own interests in psychoanalysis lie mainly in moral psychology, where I see psychoanalysis as continuing a tradition of thought that goes back to Plato and Aristotle. I shall sketch the outlines of this tradition, focussing especially on what it has to say about the relation between human nature and the human good, and try to locate psychoanalysis within it.

18 Nov  Dr. David Corfield

4pm  Revitalising the Special Relationship

In recent decades, trade between the great two nations, philosophy and mathematics, has become rather meagre, after a history stretching back over a couple of millennia of powerful interaction. Commerce between the two nations now occurs largely between mathematical logic and either philosophical logic or philosophy of mathematics, and even these trade routes are becoming less frequently used. In this talk I shall argue that a renewed philosophy of mathematics, one which actually cares about what mathematicians think, can profitably make alliances with many other regions of philosophy, even ethics.

8pm  Does ‘2 + 3 = 5’ still hold any surprises?

You might think that there could be nothing new to say about as simple a statement as ‘2+3=5’. Just a few months ago, however, I was in the company of some of the world’s leading mathematicians, hearing how a new framework for mathematics casts the statement in a different light. What philosophical lessons can we learn from the fact that basic concepts are continually reworked?

25 Nov  Prof. Paul Snowdon (UCL)

4pm  Sortals, Identity and Identification

The paper considers what Wiggins' Sortal Dependency of Individuation Thesis (= D) claims, and then discusses it in relation to three different interpretations, arguing that the psychological version is probably false, and that there are some problems with the more metaphysical versions.

8pm  A Conjecture about Gettier Cases

Plato offered a definition of knowledge, but the Gettier cases show that Plato’s definition cannot be right. I will explain what Gettier cases are, why they are important, and what sort of problems they raise. I will sketch and explain a certain explanation for their status as not knowledge.

2 Dec  Dr Simon Glendinning (LSE)

Dr Simon Glendinning is Fellow in European Philosophy at the European Institute at the LSE. He obtained his PhD at Oxford and has taught at Kent and Reading. His research has engaged with figures and ideas from so-called 'continental philosophy' but he has always sought to address his writing to an English-speaking (and reading) audience. He is the author of On Being With Others (1998) and is currently completing book on 20th Century philosophy in Europe. He has published widely on issues arising in the philosophy of animal life.
4pm N108  Le Plaisir de la Lecture

An engagement with Levinas on the question of the possibility of pleasures which are not solitary.

8pm   Human Beings and (Other) Animals

Traditional philosophy has outlined two basic responses to the question of the relation between human being and non-human animals. The first (and by far the most common) asserts the existence of an ontological gulf between 'Man' and 'the Animal'. The second (and increasingly popular) asserts that there is a continuum without any radical break. I don't think either view is right, and thus will struggle to make sense on this crucial topic.

9 Dec   Adele Tomlin (Hertfordshire)

4pm N108  Responsibility for Moral Ignorance

Racism and sexism are still prevalent despite a general consensus that these views are immoral. Although such opinions are often excused due to generational differences or factual ignorance, we generally want to hold people morally responsible for their immoral beliefs. We want to do this not only because we find such beliefs repulsive and indicative of a bad character but also because we worry that such beliefs will, as W. K. Clifford put it, "one day explode into overt action".

In this paper, I will explore the question as to whether or not we can in fact hold people morally responsible for their beliefs, attitudes or actions when they are based on moral ignorance and what, if any, test or standard should be applied to ascertain responsibility. I conclude that there is such a thing as blameless moral ignorance although the standard of epistemic responsibility for this is a high one. I end by arguing that such a high standard of epistemic responsibility should lead us to question some of our current social practices (e.g., the mass slaughter of animals for food) much more than we currently do.

16 Dec   Dr. Robert Kowalenko (Hertfordshire)

4pm   How to Hedge a Law

The raison d’être of so-called ceteris paribus-laws is to describe a nomic regularity while allowing for exceptions that do not infringe on the regularity’s law-like status. However, CP-laws cannot countenance just any kind of exception, on pain of vagueness and, worse, vacuity. The proper job of a theory of hedged laws is therefore to define a class of absolute exceptions that do falsify the law, and to clearly distinguish them from acceptable ones that don’t. To this end, I propose an account according to which a genuine (falsifying) exception to a CP-law is a counterinstance such that the regularity postulated by the law would, in that instance, obtain only under an unacceptable set of conditions, where acceptability is defined by the set’s occurrence in other laws. There are prima facie counterexamples to this analysis, however they merely illustrate the truism that what appears as a genuine exception and what does not is a function of which (hedged) regularity one starts out with; in other words, they concern a problem in the epistemology of CP-laws, not their semantics. By approaching the question of how we come to know CP-laws as a curve-fitting problem, we can deploy standard concepts from descriptive statistics that, under a number of fairly weak assumptions, help identify the relevant regularities in our data. The resulting semantic-epistemological account of CP-laws compares favourably with some alternative approaches, and
importantly complements others.

13 Jan  Dr. Michele Friend (George Washington)

4pm   The Next Step for the Mathematical Structuralist

8pm   So, Why are Contradictions so Bad?

The programme of talks will resume in Semester B.

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27 Jan  Luciano Floridi

4pm  The tripartite account of knowledge is demonstrably irreparable in principle

The tripartite account of propositional, fallibilist knowledge that p as justified true belief can become adequate only if it can solve the Gettier Problem. However, the latter can be solved only if the problem of a successful coordination of the resources (at least truth and justification) necessary and sufficient to deliver propositional, fallibilist knowledge that p can be solved. In this paper, the coordination problem is proved to be insolvable by showing that it is equivalent to the "coordinated attack" problem, which is demonstrably insolvable in epistemic logic. It follows that the tripartite account is not merely inadequate as it stands, as proved by Gettier-type counterexamples, but demonstrably irreparable in principle, so that efforts to improve it can never succeed.

8pm  "S is informed that p"

At least since the fifties, logicians and philosophers have been able to formalise "cognitive" relations - especially those of knowing and believing - by means of specific logics, known as modal logics. A wealth of results are now available for epistemic logic (i.e. the logic of "S knows that p") and doxastic logic (i.e. the logic of "S believes that p"). In this paper, a specific logic is proposed in order to formalise the concept of information. More specifically, it is argued that a normal modal logic known as B, well captures our intuitions concerning what we mean when we say that "S is informed that p". The paper provides a brief and intuitive introduction to modal logic. It is then shown how information logic may be formalised satisfactorily by means of B, and how it differs from a variety of epistemic/doxastic logics. It is hoped that the new modal logic in question, with the right semantics for the accessibility relation, will be helpful to explain several issues, including the possibility of a non-doxastic analysis of knowledge.

3 Feb  Prof. Dan Hutto

4pm  Empty Boxes
An appealing feature of first-order 'boxological' approaches designed to explain our capacity for mindreading (of the sort favoured by Nichols and Stich eclectic account and Goldman's version of simulation) is that they carry lighter commitments than do second order, 'theoretical' cousins. In particular, they do not require the consultation of (and by implication even the existence of) governing folk psychological principles and related concepts. Folk psychological predictions and explications are achieved by the subpersonal manipulation of propositional attitude contents themselves; by trading and sharing them between a series of special purpose mechanisms that interface cooperatively. Although the exact details of what is required for these processes to work satisfactorily and indeed which processes are involved remains an open question, yet proponents of such views are agreed that practical reasoning is the central engine of mindreading. Thus even if we put aside worries about the precise details of their operation, it is clear that at the very least any creature capable of engaging in mindreading by such means must have the essential ingredients entailed by the basic architectural assumption - that is structured mental representations of the sort that could be the object of the attitudes, or at least vehicles which could go proxy for them. These would have to have had associated propositional contents of the kind that make possible the appropriate formal and semantic relations required by means-end reasoning. These vehicles and their associated contents would then have acted as kind of *lingua franca* (or a *lingua franca mentis*) for the free trade between mechanisms.

This paper challenges the idea that our folk psychological capacity is an ancient cognitive endowment supported by first-order mindreading mechanisms on the grounds that our ancient ancestors will have lacked the appropriate vehicles and representational contents to enable them to engage in propositionally mediated kinds of practical reasoning.

10th Feb Dr. Paul Coates (Hertfordshire)

4pm Is Perception Transparent? Sensing and the Imagination: a Sellarsian account

Many philosophers follow Moore in construing perceptual experiences as transparent. According to this view, in perceiving a physical object, I am directly aware of its sensible properties, and not of any mediating qualities belonging to my own experience. The experience, Moore claimed, is ‘diaphanous’. On a Critical Realist dual component account of experience (as advocated by Wilfrid Sellars and others), there is something right about this view, but it is also in important ways misleading. A distinction should be made between the concepts employed (whether ‘high’ or “low”) in perceptual experience, and the sensory aspects present, in virtue of which phenomenal qualities are in consciousness. In our normal perceptual behaviour, we experience physical objects directly, in the sense that the concepts we employ relate immediately to the objects that we take to be in our environment. However, the normal perceptual stance is just one of three different ways in which concepts are exercised in relation to experience. An account is put forward of the way in which, at the reflective level, we are able to conceptualise the sensory component of experience in a direct way. This differs from the analysis of perceptual experience defended by Evans in chapter 7 of his *Varieties of Reference*. A careful examination of such phenomena as double vision and hallucination, and of the way that the imagination is involved in perception, lead to a complex analysis of the mediating role of inner sensory states in our perceptual experiences.

Selected brief references:


John Tasioulas

**4pm** Punishment and Repentance

Most standard theories of punishment tend to exhibit one of two general defects. Either they are excessively unified under a single consideration (or small set of considerations), thereby ignoring the relevance of certain other values to the justification of punishment (e.g. retributivism tends to squeeze out mercy and concerns with prevention, consequentialism has difficulty accommodating desert, rights and mercy). Or else they attempt to encompass a plurality of values but in a way that seems unacceptably ad hoc (e.g. 'mixed' theories with a consequentialist justifying aim and deontological constraints bolted on). I argue that a similar dilemma faces the leading formulations of the communicative theory of punishment (e.g. by Duff, Lucas, Nozick and von Hirsch). I offer a 'formal' re-interpretation of the latter theory that stands a chance of avoiding both horns of the dilemma. In particular, I argue that it best enables us to answer the question: 'How should we deal with the already repentant offender?' by countenancing grounds for mercy that are independent of retributive desert yet find a place alongside desert within an overarching communicative framework.

**8pm** The Moral Reality of Human Rights

I defend a version of the view that the existence of human rights falls to be decided by relatively pure moral reasoning rather than by a process that involves reference to institutional facts. More specifically, it is a question of whether certain interests are universal and have the significance needed to impose duties on others. On this picture, I claim, one can establish a human right to be free from severe poverty (HRP). I then defend this view against two broad objections: that it is an existence-condition of human rights that they be (a) enforceable and (b) claimable. I argue that both (a) and (b) should be rejected by an adherent of an interest-based account of rights. I then go on to raise doubts about the need to take sides in the debate between proponents of interactional and institutional accounts of human rights: both theories place unnecessary conceptual restrictions on the deontic implications of human rights.

Dr. Jane Singleton

**4pm** Henry James- Aristotle's ally, an exclusive pact?

This paper considers Martha Nussbaum’s claim that James is an ally of Aristotle. I isolate four possible attributes that Nussbaum might be pointing to in James’ novels when she makes this claim. I argue that James can only be regarded as an ally of Aristotle with respect to some of these attributes. Also, any sense in which James can be regarded as an ally of Aristotle, he could also be regarded as an ally of a generalist such as Kant. Henry James can be an ally of both Aristotle and Kant but both can adopt an isolationist policy.


Moore, G ‘The Refutation of Idealism’ *Mind*, 1903, in his *Philosophical Studies*.


Moore, G ‘The Refutation of Idealism’ *Mind*, 1903, in his *Philosophical Studies*.


3rd Mar  Dr. Giuseppina D’Oro

4pm  Why philosophical problems do not wither away with the progress of natural science.

There seem to be problems that occur again and again, for instance the problems of mind-body dualism; free will and determinism; personal identity. The very existence of such problems can be explained only if we accept that we are justified in making distinctions to which there correspond no empirical differences. Philosophical distinctions are distinctions of this kind. The distinction between rational and non-rational beings, for example, is a purely semantic distinction that is qualitatively different from the empirical classification of higher primates into humans and non-human. It is a distinction that enables one to argue, for example, that foetuses, although human, are not persons, or that bodily identity is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for personal identity. Opposing positions in philosophical disputes, such as the one concerning the criteria for personal identity (psychological vs bodily continuity), are conceptual disputes (what does it mean to be a person rather than a mere body?) that do not carve out reality along the lines of empirical science, but along the lines of distinctions of reason. Since opposing positions in philosophical disputes carve out reality along the lines of distinctions of reason, rather than empirical classifications, the fundamental problems of philosophy are not likely to wither away with the progress of natural science.

10th Mar  Sam Coleman

4pm  What Two-Dimensionalism about the Knowledge Argument Entails

There is a now standard response to Jackson's Knowledge Argument, which relies on Kripkean a posteriori necessity. Jackson rejects this response, and his rejection makes use of two-dimensional semantics. I note a problem for Jackson's account that is brought on by his use of two-dimensional semantics. The way Jackson sets the semantic framework up, it provides the physicalist standard responder with a convenient loophole through which to escape an anti-physicalist conclusion in the context of the Knowledge Argument. I argue that, in light of the loophole, retention of the Knowledge Argument's services requires the adoption by Jackson of an ambitious thesis concerning the epistemology of concepts. I then make the case for thinking that, on Jackson's lights, such a thesis is defensible. If Jackson adopts the thesis then the Knowledge Argument can still be run against the standard responder. Finally, I give reasons for thinking that Jackson ought to welcome the help offered, despite explicit statements to the contrary in his work.

17th Mar  Peter Dews Essex

4pm  The problem of evil in German Idealism

8pm  TBA

21 April  Dr. Roger Crisp

Dr Roger Crisp is Uehiro Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy at St Anne’s College, Oxford. From 2003-
5, he holds a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship to write a book on ethics, two chapters of which lie behind his presentations at Hertfordshire. He has written a book on J.S. Mill's Utilitarianism, translated Aristotle's Ethics for Cambridge, and written several articles, the most recent of which was about equality (Ethics 113.4 2003).

4pm  Intuitionism Defended

This paper outlines a modest form of ethical or normative intuitionism, in the tradition of Sidgwick and Ross. It defends the view against naturalistic objections, and develops the analogy between mathematical and ethical knowledge, providing among other things a response to a version of the 'Benacerraf objection' to the claim that we can have knowledge of abstract objects. I claim that we can have intuitive knowledge of general normative propositions, so I also criticize particularism. The paper ends with a discussion of the worrying implications for ethics of disagreement.

8pm  Hedonism Reconsidered

Hedonism -- the view that the only thing that makes anyone's life worth living, for them, is pleasure -- has a distinguished philosophical history. It was dominant in the ancient world and among the British empiricists. It fell into decline in the twentieth century, partly because of two objections: the objection that hedonists are committed to the 'philosophy of swine'; and an objection based on Robert Nozick's famous 'experience machine' objection. I'll say a little about what I take hedonism to be claiming, and what pleasure is, before defending the view against these two objections.

28 April  Richard Menary

4pm  The Art of Memory and Art as Memory

The programme of talks will resume in Semester A.

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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester A 2003-2004

All talks to be held on Thursdays in De Havilland N106

Please Note: the 4.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 8.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

2 Oct  Dr Anthony Rudd (St Olaf College, Minnesota and Hertfordshire)

4pm  Narrative, Substance and Personal Identity

The main debate in recent philosophy of personal identity has been between neo-Lockean psychological continuity theorists and proponents of a bodily or "animalist" account. These share a common and crucial failing; neither takes seriously the first-personal perspective that is essential if we are even to articulate what matters about personal identity. Taking this as central, I argue for a (distinctly non-Cartesian) version of the traditional idea that persons are essentially mental substances. This, however, requires a radical revision of Locke's account of substance, the inadequacy of which in large part motivated his rejection of a substantialist account of persons. An alternative account of substance (derived in part from Merleau-Ponty) will allow us to think of persons as mental substances though not as Cartesian souls (in this connection I both draw on and criticise work by P.F. Strawson and Lynne Baker); it will also have the consequence that persons can only be adequately understood via narrative - to think of a person as a substance does not mean thinking of an unchanging core underlying a flux of changing states, but rather it means thinking of the person as the subject of an unfolding narrative.

9 Oct  Professor Dan Hutto (Hertfordshire)

4pm  James and the Truth of Pragmatism: Resisting the Weltanschauung

This paper seeks to clarify James’ understanding of truth, bringing out its more subtle virtues while defending it against certain common misreadings and objections. For example, it seeks to explicate in what sense James ought to be classed as a realist and to what extent he can accommodate purely theoretical truths. However, it concludes on a critical note, arguing that it is an unfortunate feature of James’ way of describing his metaphilosophy that, at times, he regards it as being ‘hypothetical’ in character. I suggest that the tendency to think all philosophical ‘claims’ are such is precisely what Wittgenstein saw as thwarting a proper understanding of his own position. Wittgenstein sought to resist this tendency and was right to do so. I hold there is no reason why Jamesians cannot follow suit.
16 Oct  Professor Nancy Cartwright (London School of Economics)

4pm  Causation: One word, many things

Causation has become a hot topic in philosophy of science recently. There are now well over a half dozen ‘informative theories’ of causation on offer, but none is entirely satisfactory. This paper reviews the kinds of problems that various accounts face and proposes that their failings arise because they try to do too much. Each is offered as a universal theory of causality but probably no such thing is possible. Nature exhibits vast variety of kinds causal relations and causal laws; the trick in any case is to be able to regiment them so that they will behave in ways that yield to systematic theoretical description.

8pm  How far outside the laboratory can science stretch?

Time and again throughout the history of science people have dreamed of the one unified system that treats everything, with physics at its base. But hopes have been repeatedly dashed. This talk will suggest that the very features that make modern science successful, exact and precise may stand in the way of extending it everywhere: perhaps there is a trade-off between depth and breadth.

23 Oct  Dr Jeanine Grenberg (St Olaf College, Minnesota and Hertfordshire)

4pm  A Kantian account of virtue

In this paper, I argue that Kant is a virtue theorist in the strong sense of being concerned with the moral import of “thick” Aristotelian-style character traits. First, I consider some general requirements of any Kantian account of virtue. I then turn to a Kantian construction of character traits. I conclude with some reflections on the relative value of action and character in a Kantian account of morality.

30 Oct  Dr Kim Atkins (Tasmania)

Kim Atkins is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Tasmania in Australia. She wrote her PhD on narrative identity and embodiment at Macquarie University. Her research and teaching interests include issues of the self, philosophy of the body, and feminism. She has published in the Journal of Applied Philosophy, Philosophy Today, and the International Journal of Philosophical Studies. She is currently completing a book on Self and Subjectivity (Blackwell, US) which traces the development of conceptions of the self and subjectivity from Descartes through to contemporary feminist theory, in both analytical and European traditions. Her next research project explores the promise of narrative ethics.

4pm  Narrative continuity: an analytic and continental defence

I will present two arguments from across the great philosophical divide in support of the narrative view. The first is drawn from Marya Schechtman's book, The Constitution of Selves, and the other is drawn from Paul Ricoeur's expansive work on philosophical narrative in the three volumes of Time and Narrative. The work of both philosophers is oriented to the question of the structure of continuity within human experience, and both see narrative as the answer. Through a consideration of what she calls "the characterization question", Schechtman provides a sustained critique of
mainstream analytical approaches to personal identity, arguing that they cannot provide an account of the kind of continuity that they nevertheless rely upon. Ricoeur comes to the question of continuity through a reflective phenomenology which tackles head-on the question of the meaning of one's life and its relation to time. He is concerned with continuity in the context of a concern with the problem of self-understanding: how one can "represent" in consciousness one's life as a whole. Central to the views of both of these philosophers is a concern with human agency, and a perspective in which questions of self are not questions about a particular metaphysical entity but, rather, questions about our practical involvement in the world.

8pm The narrative view and embodiment

I will provide a defence of a narrative model of identity by appeal to its capacity to express the multiple perspectives which comprise the self, and which arise from human embodiment. I'll be relating Ricoeur's stuff on narrative to Merleau-Ponty's stuff on embodiment.

6 Nov Dr John Lippitt (Hertfordshire)

4pm After Kierkegaard After Macintyre: several questions for narrative ethics

The claim that we should understand various aspects of human life in narrative terms is becoming increasingly common. Given that both sponsor this idea in different but overlapping ways, several recent writers have argued that a dialogue between Kierkegaard and Alasdair Macintyre would be fruitful. While broadly sympathetic to this claim, I want in this paper to investigate notions such as ‘narrative coherence’ and ‘narrative unity’. Such notions play key, but under-investigated, roles in this debate. I shall argue, first, that it is far from clear what these notions are supposed to mean. Second, I shall argue that to the extent that we can understand them, they are not really as desirable as their supporters suppose. I shall draw on a debate between Martha Nussbaum, Aaron Ridley and Ariel Metrav on tragic heroes to argue that those who attach too great an import to notions such as narrative coherence and narrative unity risk being guilty of psychological oversimplification. Relatedly, I plan to develop Jeffrey Turner's idea that what Kierkegaard calls ‘the aesthetic’ constitutes a potential danger to narrative views of our selves and our lives. Our desires to tell ‘interesting’ and ‘beautiful’ tales about ourselves are great sources of potential self-deception, leading us, amongst other things, to overlook what has become a significant theme in Macintyre’s recent work, namely our vulnerability.

13 Nov No seminar

20 Nov Dr Paul Coates (Hertfordshire)

4pm Wilfrid Sellars, Sensory Experience and the Varieties of Perceptual Content

Perceptual experiences, according to Wilfrid Sellars, have two components: sensory nonconceptual states guide the exercise of (proto-)conceptual structures directed on to the external world. I argue that there are important parallels between Sellars’s view, as applied to the sense of sight, and information processing theories of visual attention. One such theory, developed recently by Ronald Rensink, offers a multi-stage model. Selected elements of an inner, low-level, map-like array are taken up through focussed attention, resulting in a higher-level representation of a unified physical object. The parallels suggest an overall account of experience that contrasts with the intentionalist
view defended by Anscombe, McDowell, Tye, Byrne and many others. I discuss the implication of the two-component account for theories of “nonconceptual” content, taking up some of the issues raised by Andy Clark in his stimulating recent paper on the subject. It is argued that we need to analyse perception from both an external, third-person perspective, and also from an internal, first-person perspective. Although perceptual experiences are inner states of the subject, perception can only be made proper sense of as integrated with action. The resulting account entails that experiences are fully characterised by reference to three different aspects: they have intrinsic features, and also two different kinds of representational content.

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27 Nov  Dr Thomas Uebel (Manchester)

Thomas Uebel (BA London, PhD MIT) came to Manchester having held teaching and research positions at the London School of Economics, University of Vienna, Technical University Berlin, University of Pittsburgh and Northwestern University. His main research interests lie in the areas of epistemology and philosophy of science, esp. social science, and in the history of analytic philosophy and the history of philosophy of science. His publications include Overcoming Logical Positivism From Within (1992), Otto Neurath: Philosophy between Science and Politics (1996, with Nancy Cartwright et al), Vernunftkritik und Wissenschaft (2000), an edited volume Rediscovering the Forgotten Vienna Circle (1991) as well as articles in journals and collections. He is currently writing a book with John O’Neill on Neurath’s debates with Hayek and Horkheimer and editing Neurath’s Economic Writings with Robert Cohen and the Cambridge Companion to Logical Empiricism with Alan Richardson.

4pm  The Left Vienna Circle: Myth or Reality?

Recent research established that the Vienna Circle was not a homogenous group of more or less naively foundationalist philosophers of science but rather a forum for the discussion of widely varying views on the nature of epistemology and of justification in science. My talk will consider whether it is nevertheless permissible to reconstitute from the individual members of the Circle a certain block or faction, the so-called left wing. Who is to be counted into it? What made them the left wing? Wherein did the claimed affinity of philosophy and politics consist? Was such engagement compatible with their scientific philosophy? By raising fairly detailed questions along these lines I hope to bring two broader issues into focus for discussion. What would the putative existence of this heterodox or non-standard version tell us about the orthodox or standard version of neopositivism or logical empiricism? And what are the constraints on the historian in creating or reinforcing groupings and separations amongst her philosophical subjects?

8pm  Do We Need a Political Philosophy of Science?

Recent developments in intellectual property law have raised important questions for the conduct of scientific research and its norms. Thus the privatisation of pharmaceutical research entails the violation of the norm of communalism, that scientific knowledge be public and accessible, amongst others. This raises the question whether philosophers of science should respond such developments and, if so, how.

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4 Dec  Professor Richard Norman (Kent)

4pm  Aesthetic Form and the Meaning of Life

I want to address the criticism that without religious belief, human life lacks meaning and purpose,
by defending the claim that the arts, and especially literature and the other narrative arts, can and do fill this role which religion claims exclusively to fill. In fact I want to make a stronger claim than that. The arts are not just a substitute for traditional religion, a second-rate or scaled-down version of religion pressed into service to fill the gap left by secularisation. On the contrary, religious belief is itself just a special case of the way in which narratives, stories, shape our lives and give them meaning.

8pm  The ethics of war: war and human rights

In this talk I'll be looking at some of the standard accounts of whether and when war can be morally justified, including utilitarian and rights-based accounts. I'll argue that war is harder to justify than is often supposed, and that there are in particular good reasons for not supporting wars of intervention in the affairs of other states. The talk will have an obvious application to recent world events, but will attempt to put these into a wider philosophical framework.

The programme of talks will resume in Semester B.

Dr. John Lippitt,
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RESEARCH SEMINAR and
PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester B 2003-2004

All talks to be held on Thursdays in De Havilland N212 except on 5th February and 18 March when we will be in N106.

Please Note: the 4.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 8.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

5 Feb   Professor Gregory Currie (Nottingham)

Greg Currie's first academic job was as a post doctoral fellow in Philosophy at the University of Otago. Apart from one year at the University of Sydney, he remained in that excellent Department for 15 years. Before joining the Nottingham department he was Professor of Philosophy and Head of the School of Arts at Flinders University of South Australia. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities and a Past President of the Australasian Association of Philosophy.

He has held visiting positions at St John's College, Oxford, Clare Hall, Cambridge, The London School of Economics, The Institute of Advanced Study, Australian National University, The University of Maryland and The University of St Andrews. Greg Currie's basic research interests are in: The Philosophy of Art, Literature and Film and The Philosophy of Mind and Language.

4pm    Narrative and coherence (in N106)

I look at evidence which suggests that there is a substantial bias in human cognition towards what I call coherence: explanations of events in terms of intentional mental states. Such a bias gives rise to religious belief and to delusional states. I suggest that our liking for narratives also has something to do with this, and that narratives can play a role in persuading us that coherence is to be found in places where there is really no evidence for it.

8pm    Narratives and Artefacts

12 Feb   Dr Jane Singleton (Hertfordshire)

4pm    Neither Generalism nor Particularism: Ethical Correctness is located in General Ethical Theories

In this article I shall be supporting two main claims. The first is that the essence of the difference
between particularism and generalism lies in where they locate ethical correctness. The second is that generalism, although to be preferred to particularism, is not the final resting place for ethical correctness. Ultimately, ethical correctness resides in ethical theories that provide the ultimate rationale for generalism. Particularism is presented as a theory that allows attention to be paid to specific cases and shows a sensitivity to the particular case. Generalism, with its appeal to moral principles, is supposed to lack this sensitivity to specific cases. I argue that although this might be true of subsumptive generalism, it is not true of what I call judgemental generalism. I indicate that this latter type of generalism retains an appeal to moral principles whilst requiring sensitivity to the particular case by considering Kantian Ethics as an example of this sort of generalism. Furthermore, I support the claim that this judgemental generalism not only allows us to show sensitivity to the particular case, but is to be preferred to particularism. I argue against a prominent form of particularism, put forward by Jonathan Dancy, based on an appeal to the holism of reasons. This doctrine involves the claim that the value of a complex whole is not necessarily identical with the value of its parts. I show that Dancy’s discussion of this involves inconsistencies and also appears to incorporate subsumptive generalism. This statement of particularism is ultimately incoherent.

19 Feb Shahrar Ali (Universities of London & Hertfordshire)

4 pm Armenian Genocide and Denial

I attempt to characterise the deceptive credentials of statements made by Turkish officials about the Armenian genocide of 1915. I begin by recognising the illicit ways in which the word “genocide” has been used.

I then contend that the officials’ remarks are classifiable as acts of denial on one or more of the following grounds. First, the deceptive utterance may fail a test of cognitive interest inherent in interpersonal communication. Second, the denier may get himself to continue without a true belief or prevent himself from acquiring a true belief through a process of negative deception secundum quid by commission or omission (see classification in Chisholm and Feehan, 1977). Third, when the self-deceived says contrary to what he should know better than to say, we are entitled to say of him that he is lying to himself.

Finally, drawing an analogy with Joseph Kupfer (1982), I identify a risk to the denier of self-opposition or distancing from his moral self necessarily generated by repudiating in speech what the denier should believe.

8 pm Blind Trust and Intentional Deception: A recent case of Government plagiarism

I shall characterize and examine the deceptive credentials of a UK Government dossier of February 2003, in which secret intelligence and unacknowledged academic material were used to present Iraq as an overt security threat.

The normative assumption that lying is worse than other forms of intentional linguistic deception, together with the admission that the dossier authors did not lie as such, are shown to be insufficient to account for the strength of moral disapprobation which the deceptive credentials of the dossier elicited in us.

I contend that our intelligence services function by conditioning our critical faculties through a nested, two-tiered institutional complex; in which language thought of as an institution of truth-telling is subordinated to institutionalised blind trust.
26 Feb  Dr Brendan Larvor (Hertfordshire)

4pm  Particularism in ethics and the exact sciences

Jonathan Dancy has articulated a particularist approach to ethics. But particularism is not really a view about ethics, it is a view about reason. So it had better be true of reasoning in general, and Dancy claims that it is. But his argument here is brief. However, particularist views have emerged in the philosophies of mathematics and natural science (though under different titles). Here I attempt to unite these tendencies into a comprehensive particularism about reasons.

4 Mar  No seminar or Philosophy Society

5-7 Mar  Philosophy Weekend (Cumberland Lodge)

11 Mar  Dr Phillip Cole (Middlesex)

Dr Phillip Cole is a Reader in Applied Philosophy at Middlesex University where he teaches courses in moral and political philosophy, media ethics, morality and law and the philosophy of international relations. He is president of the Association of Legal and Social Philosophers and is on the executive committee of the Society for Applied Philosophy, organising their London workshop programme. He is currently researching the concept of evil, aiming at a philosophical history of the idea, in order to discover whether it has any constructive role to play in our contemporary world. He also writes on freedom and social justice and is co-editing a special issue of the journal Res Publica on international justice. His most recent book, Philosophies of Exclusion: Liberal Political Theory and Immigration (Edinburgh University Press), was chosen by the North American Society for Social Philosophy’s award for the best book on social philosophy published in 2000. He is also author of The Free, the Unfree and the Excluded: A Treatise on the Conditions of Liberty (Avebury 1998), and has written articles on poverty, biotechnology, and the moral status of non-human animals.

4pm  The secular problem of evil.

In this paper I explore the idea of a secular conception of evil. There are three possibilities: the monstrous, which allows that there are human beings who are capable of pure evil, that is, freely and rationally choosing to impose suffering on others for its own sake; the philosophical, which discounts the possibility of pure evil, but allows that human beings are capable of choosing to impose suffering on others for the sake of some other goal -- a lesser, more human, evil; and the psychological, which discounts the concept of evil completely. All three positions face problems of coherence, but the main focus in this paper is the philosophical conception. While I do not, in the end, choose between them, I do conclude that the possibility of a secular conception of evil is a centrally important question for our understanding of what it is to be human.

8pm  Rousseau and the Vampires: Towards a Philosophical History of the Undead
This paper takes as its starting point the epidemic of vampire activity that plagued eastern Europe at the start of the 18th century. Most thinkers in the ‘enlightened’ west sought to explain them in terms of known scientific fact, but the exception was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who took them at face value. This did not mean he believed vampires existed. Rather the epidemics provided evidence about the state of humanity itself, namely the nature of political power. In this paper, I pursue Rousseau’s approach further, but shift attention to the witch crazes of western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, because here the historical research is much more detailed. I suggest we can draw general patterns about the nature of political power from these two great panics, specifically the importance of fear in constituting the identity of political communities. Rather than communities forming themselves around shared identities, they are formed by political authorities exploiting social fears and insecurities -- they are constituted by an irrational horror of imaginary monsters.

18 Mar  Dr Matthew Kieran (Leeds)

4pm   Appreciating Conceptual Art (in N106)

There are many who remain sceptical of the idea that conceptual art can, properly speaking, be valuable as art. This assumption tends to be fuelled by a picture according to which art appreciation depends on the senses and must essentially be concerned with the aesthetic. This kind of picture is heavily influenced by and often explicitly attributed to Kant. I will suggest that even on a Kantian influenced picture there is room for the value of conceptual art, considered in aesthetic terms, and go on to consider whether some conceptual art should be considered valuable as art in non-aesthetic terms.

8pm   Art and Morality

I'll consider different ways in which recent philosophers have claimed that the moral character of a work is related to its artistic value. In particular I'll be looking at claims to the effect that a bad moral character lessens the value of a work as art.

25 Mar  Dr Matthew Ratcliffe (Durham)

Matthew Ratcliffe has been a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Durham since September 2002, having previously taught at University College Cork. His research interests include philosophy of mind, psychopathology, phenomenology and philosophy of biological science. He has published articles on biological teleology, evolution and intentionality, Dennett, Searle, Heidegger, Husserl, religious experience, delusions, and folk psychology. He is currently working on the interaction between phenomenology and cognitive science with respect to intersubjectivity and feeling.

4pm   Mirror Neurons, Phenomenology and the Perception of Agency

Mirror neurons are cells in the premotor cortex of humans and monkeys, which discharge when one performs certain actions and are also active when one observes the same or similar actions being performed by others. These cells, discovered in 1996, have attracted considerable philosophical and scientific attention, due largely to their possible implications for theories of intersubjectivity. In this paper, I will explore some parallels between properties of the mirror system and claims made by the phenomenologists Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Scheler. In so doing, I will show how the interplay between phenomenology and cognitive science can serve to question interpretations of what science is and of how it is integrated into our more general experience and understanding of the world.
8pm Making Sense of Delusional Experience

This talk will address how we should go about interpreting the Capgras and Cotard delusions. The former is generally characterised as the belief that relatives or friends have been replaced by impostors, and the latter as the conviction that one is dead or has ceased to exist. I will suggest that orthodox philosophical assumptions concerning the nature of ‘belief’ don’t cast much light on these delusions and may even fail to accommodate their possibility. One response to this is to reinterpret the delusions so as to cohere with the philosophy. However, I will resist this move and argue instead that philosophical conceptions of belief are at fault.

1 Apr No seminar

Easter break

29 Apr Professor Chris Janaway (Birkbeck)

4pm You can't always want what you get: Nietzschian Affirmation

This paper takes its departure from the much discussed section 341 of The Gay Science, with its introduction of the thought of eternal return. I look at some objections to the coherence or possibility of the thought of eternal return as a psychological test, and argue that it can survive most of these objections.

6 May Dr Dan Fitzpatrick (Hertfordshire)

4pm Metalism, chartalism and the conceptual origins of money

My interest in the origins of money was initially motivated by my concern with providing an account of what money is. Because money is a self-referential phenomenon, which means that any attempt to explain what money is in synchronic terms is invariably circular, a diachronic explanation is called for. But there is no universal consensus concerning an historical or conceptual explanation of how money originated; two positions, metallism and chartalism, are in profound disagreement over how money initially evolved.

Metallism, which predominates in contemporary Economics, involves the claim that money emerged so as to alleviate the inefficiencies of barter (Menger 1892). While metallism has a number of virtues, there has been a growing concern amongst a number of theorists from the opposing chartalist alternative, concerning both the historical accuracy of the metalist approach and the ramifications of metallism for economic and monetary theory today. But as there is no clear knockdown archaeological or historical evidence available to support either metallism or chartalism with respect to the origins of money, much of the discussion inevitably concerns questions of interpretation of what evidence there is and what, conceptually, the origins of money must have been.

Although I have some sympathy with chartalist views, there are a number of historical and conceptual difficulties with the arguments they put forward concerning the origins of money. I show
that some of the arguments have much to do with later monetary developments but do not actually address what is now known about the earliest civilization in the ancient Near East. While the work of Schmandt-Besserat on the origins of accounting in that early civilization might appear to support the chartalist viewpoint, she vehemently denies that such accounting procedures were ever used in economic exchange or trade. In addition, there is subsequent evidence that with the rise of economic exchange, at least two versions of proto-money in the form of commodity money subsequently appeared in the ancient Near East, namely silver coins and grain. I argue that, instead of claiming that chartalism and metallism are competing versions of the origins of money, there is the possibility that it was the combination of strands of both versions that gave rise to the evolution of money. I also argue that, irrespective of one's views on whether contemporary money is exogenous or endogenous, there is no conceptual reason for money not to have originated along one of either metallist or chartalist lines or a combination of both.

13 May        David Levy

David Levy is on the point of completing his doctorate in philosophy at King's College, London. His research has been principally about understanding's different forms, with a special emphasis on moral understanding. He holds an M.A.(Hons) in philosophy from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland.

4pm The Phronimos and the Saint

I want to argue for two claims:

1. Reason does not exhaust our moral understanding.
2. Reason is not primary in our moral understanding.

The argument begins by considering the question: Do moral situations always have determinate correct answers? If they do, then the figure of an ideal decision-maker, the perfectly rational being seems a possibility. However, his responses would differ from a saint's. The ideal decision-maker has no greater claim to our moral loyalties than the saint. Consequently, our moral understanding must be part-constituted by whatever moves us to prefer the saint or the ideal decision-maker as and when we do.

Suppose instead that the answers to moral situations are not always determinate. The question I entertain then is: Do reasons exhaustively bound the space for decisions? The question asks whether anything else beyond reasons also bounds the space for decision. If the answer is yes, then no moral consequences attach to decisions within reason. I argue this is implausible. If the the answer is no, then moral understanding is not constituted solely by rationality. Rationality might remain primary. I argue that there we are not compelled to accept that without argument.

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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester A 2002-2003

All talks to be held on Thursdays in the staffroom, Wall Hall Mansion

Please Note: the 4.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 8.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

3 Oct Professor Daniel Hutto, University of Hertfordshire

4pm Two Wittgensteins too many; an assessment of his foundationalism

10 Oct Dr. Brendan Larvor, University of Hertfordshire

4pm The evolution of proof in 17th-Century algebra

At the end of the 16th century, algebra did not have the right to construct its own proofs, but relied rather on geometry. Cardano offered geometric proofs for his elaboration of the formula for solving cubics by radicals. Polynomials of degree greater than three could not be dealt with rigorously because, he said, "nature would not permit it" (there being no more than three dimensions in space). A century later, algebra was no longer bound to geometry in this manner and was free to offer its own proofs. It had developed from a bag of tricks to a science (early algebra texts tended to describe it as an 'art' rather than as a science).

So our question is: how did this emancipation come about? How did algebraic manipulations come to achieve the status of proof? What happened to the concept of proof--was it changed at the same time? I propose to discuss the emancipation of algebra from geometry, based on a reading of algebraists in the crucial period.

The philosophical interest is this: real proofs are never logically water-tight, yet mathematicians distinguish proof from merely persuasive argument. We can get some understanding of that distinction by reconstructing an episode in which a body of argument was promoted to proof-status.

8pm Picture this! What do painters paint?

Some painters are considered more 'realistic' than others. For example, painting that uses perspective techniques is sometimes so regarded. In his recent book The Conquest of Abundance Paul Feyerabend argues that the relation between 'realistic' painters and what they paint can reveal a
general insight about representations of reality. I will discuss Feyerabend's claim with illustrations taken from his work and also from French C19 painting (for which I am grateful to Mark Souness).

17 Oct **Professor Willem de Vries**, (New Hampshire)

Bill deVries has been interested in philosophy almost as long as he can remember, (but, given the general proficiency of his memory, this may not be saying much). He began arguing about the existence of God with his elementary school classmates, so his interest in metaphysics was there from the beginning. His love of argument was certainly cultivated by frequent exercise when, in the mid-'60's he moved to Lynchburg, VA, and tried to represent an enlightened liberalism to his high school classmates in a conservative, southern town. His subsequent escape to Haverford College, a Quaker institution with a dynamic, popular, and pluralistic philosophy department, sealed his fate as a dedicated philosophy wonk. He graduated with High Honors in Philosophy, writing his senior thesis on Sellars and Merleau-Ponty on Perception. A year's hiatus from school confirmed his determination to do graduate work in philosophy, and (luckily) he was accepted at the only place he applied: the University of Pittsburgh, where he wanted to study with Sellars. (In the first class of his first seminar with Sellars, Sellars presented the class with his work then in progress, "Givenness and Explanatory Coherence." Poor Bill didn't understand a word of it! And he still has doubts he's ever fully grasped that ____ essay.) Bill didn't know how good the Pitt department was when he applied, but he's grateful he got such a challenging education.

Bill has always been drawn to both M&E and to the history of philosophy. In graduate school he came to focus on German Idealism and wrote his dissertation on Hegel's theory of mental activity, work which, with significant rewriting, became his first book. After the Hegel book was done, Bill, not wanting to confine himself to the history of philosophy, moved into working in contemporary philosophy of mind and epistemology. Several articles about the implications of anti-individualism for philosophy of mind and epistemology and a book co-authored with Timm Triplett on Sellars’s classic (but difficult) essay "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind" are the evidence of this work.

Bill has taught at Amherst College, Harvard University, Tufts University, and, since 1988, has been ensconced at the University of New Hampshire, where he also chaired the department from 1994-2000. He has had several Fulbright Fellowships, a Mellon Fellowship, an NEH Fellowship, and was a Visiting Fellow in the Philosophy Programme in the School of Advanced Studies at the University of London.

**4pm Intentionality and Knowledge in Sellarsian Perspective**

A response on behalf of Sellars to two recent critiques of his position, one by Dale Jacquette on intentionality and the other by Evan Fales on the given. I show that Jacquette and Fales have either misunderstood Sellars's position (though in common ways) or mount ineffective arguments against him. Sellars's coherence theory of concepts and his attempt to construct a coherentist epistemology while recognising the essential insights of foundationalism still stand.

**8 pm Two Species of Trust**

I argue that, though philosophers have not yet taken note of it, there are, effectively, two different forms of trust, which I call "topic-focused trust" and "personal trust". One is essentially limited in scope and can be appropriately applied without incurring open-ended and indefinite commitments to others, and one is essentially open-ended and indefinite, though it can be limited or bounded in certain ways, often context-relative. These different forms are marked syntactically and perhaps even differ in their metaphysical presuppositions. I also consider whether one form of trust is more fundamental than the other.
24 Oct Dr. Daniele Moyal-Sharrock, University of Geneva

4pm Wittgenstein's Logical Pragmatism: On Certainty vs. Scepticism

8pm The third Wittgenstein: On Certainty and the grammaticalisation of experience.

October 31: Dr. Paul Coates (Herts)

4 pm Attention and the grand illusion.

7 Nov: Free

14 Nov Professor Brad Hooker (Reading)

Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Reading.

I was an undergrad at Princeton, a doctoral student at Oxford, and then worked for Virginia Commonwealth University from 1986-1993. I've been at Reading since 1993. My interests include theories of human good, theories of rationality, and theories of justice, but my main interest for the last 12 years has been rule-consequentialist moral theory. In the last 3 years, I've published Ideal Code, Real World: A Rule-consequentialist Theory of Morality (OUP). That book develops rule-consequentialism, and attempts to explain its superiority to act-consequentialism, contractualism, and Rossian Pluralism. In subsequent papers, I've attacked Particularism, Virtue Ethics, and Kant's Categorical Imperative. A full list of my publications can be found at http://www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts/ld/Philos/bwh.htm.

4pm Scanlon's Contractualism, Spare Wheels, and Aggregation

One of the most prominent objections to Tim Scanlon's contractualist ethics is that it functions as a spare wheel. This is the objection that really makes acts wrong is that they involve, for example, hurting innocent people or being dishonest, and then contractualism merely agrees that it would be unreasonable to reject principles forbidding such (independently) wrong acts. Scanlon can answer this objection only if his theory doesn't presuppose what he is trying to justify. But, with this in mind, can Scanlon explain why it is morally right to save more people rather than fewer people, other things being equal? Especially relevant are pp. 229-41 of Scanlon's What We Owe to Each Other.

8pm An Overview of Normative Moral Theories

I'll summarize the leading normative moral theories: Particularism, Rossian Pluralism, Virtue Ethics, Kant's Categorical Imperative, Contractualism, Act-consequentialism, Rule-consequentialism. I'll then discuss how we can decide which is best.

21 Nov Dr. Jane Singleton, University of Hertfordshire

4pm Kant, Duty and Feelings
28 Nov **Dr. Alan Thomas** (Kent)

Alan Thomas studied philosophy at Cambridge and was a Kennedy Scholar at Harvard and M.I.T. before returning to graduate study at Oxford under the supervision of Bernard Williams. After teaching as a college lecturer in Oxford for two years, he held a five year position at King's College, London before becoming a lecturer at the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1998. His main research interests are moral, social and political philosophy and the philosophy of Kant. He has just completed a book for O.U.P. that defends a form of moral cognitivism and political liberalism on the basis of a single underlying epistemological model, contextualism, developed out of the work of Peirce and the later Wittgenstein. His current research project is on Kant's theory of mind and contemporary theories of consciousness, based on the belief that much current interest in consciousness on the part of philosophers, psychologists and cognitive scientists is repeating mistakes that Kant diagnosed. This project has so far resulted in four papers: 'Kant, McDowell and the Theory of Consciousness', European Journal of Philosophy (December 1997); 'The Mind's Place in Nature: Neo-Kantian Theories and Kant's Theory' (conference paper) abstract published in Paavo Pyllkanen (ed.) *Consciousness Research Abstracts* (2001); 'An Adverbial Theory of Consciousness', forthcoming in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2003) and today's paper, 'Consciousness, Self-consciousness and Self-Ascription'.

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**4pm Consciousness, Self-consciousness and Self-Ascription**

If Kant is invoked in contemporary discussions of the nature of conscious experience, it is either as a precursor of higher order thought theory, or as a precursor of the "ubiquity thesis" that claims that all conscious experience is, in some sense, already self-conscious. This is bad news as neither thesis, on examination, seems very plausible. This paper continues a project of explaining Kant’s relevance to contemporary work on consciousness and argues that he holds neither of these theses traditionally attributed to him. Kant's actual views are outlined and a challenge to his position addressed: what, on his view, can constitute the basis of conscious self-ascription of our thoughts?

8pm Conscious thinking and loopy thoughts

One of the most original contributions to recent philosophy of mind is the claim that conscious thinking can be explained as a certain kind of reflexive looping in your thoughts: if a thought of yours is targeted on another thought of yours, it can make the latter conscious. We will look at some of the problems with this view, particularly its ambitions to be explanatory of what consciousness is. It will be argued that in so far as the view tries to be explanatory, it tries too hard, and offers an implausibly reductive view of what conscious thinking is. At its most plausible, the view presupposes a capacity for self-ascribing our thoughts that begs the questions that the theory was trying to solve. It will be argued that the many insights of this view should be incorporated into a fundamentally different approach that does not try to derive consciousness out of the relations in which thoughts stand to each other.

5 Dec Dr. Gary Banham, Research Fellow in Transcendental Philosophy, Manchester Metropolitan University.

I received my first degree from the University of Hertfordshire in 1988 after which I researched and completed my doctorate at Oxford University. I have held positions at the University of
Hertfordshire, Bolton Institute and Manchester Metropolitan in addition to presenting courses in philosophy to the public via Parrs Wood Adult Education Centre. My main research interests are Kant's Critical Philosophy, the nature of transcendental philosophy, Husserlian phenomenology, aesthetics, intentionality and teleology. My first book *Kant and the Ends of Aesthetics* presented an original unitary reading of Kant's third critique aimed at bringing together the enquiries into aesthetics and teleology. I have recently completed and have in press a second book, *Kant's Practical Philosophy: From Critique to Doctrine*, in which I argue that the concentration on the categorical imperative in the majority of discussions of Kant's ethics has obscured the nature of his practical philosophy. Rather than being simply concerned with a formal discussion of the notion of law Kant is rather aiming at outlining a perfectionist teleological ethics, a position I critically defend. I have also edited a volume *Evil Spirits: Nihilism and the Fate of Modernity* which is concerned to present reasons for connecting the themes of nihilism and evil. I have edited a special issue of *Teknehma: Journal of Philosophy and Technology* on teleology and a special issue of *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* on aesthetics and the ends of art. I am the general editor of *Renewing Philosophy*, a new philosophy series being prepared with Palgrave Press.

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**4pm Kant, Sellars and Intuition**

Wilfrid Sellars argues for an understanding of the nature of cognitive synthesis that suggests a rationale for treating 'intuition' in a manner that appears divergent with orthodox accounts of Kant. The motives of this account will be explicated and the response to this Sellarsian reading presented recently by John McDowell will be explored in order to suggest that there is a need to explore the possibility that the place of intuition in cognitive synthesis requires revisiting.

**8pm Empiricism and Political Philosophy**

Empiricism has been subjected to searching examination in both epistemology and philosophy of mind yet has rarely been investigated in any detail in terms of political philosophy. This is odd given that in Anglo-American political philosophy it has been the major source of such distinctly different positions as Hobbes’ commitment to absolute sovereignty and Mill’s notion of utilitarianism. In this paper I will set out some characteristics that are common to the distinctly different types of empiricist political philosophy and suggest some basic problems with them.

December 12: **Dr. Denis McManus** (Southampton)

**4 pm TBA**

The programme of talks will resume in Semester B.

**Dr. John Lippitt,**
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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester B 2002-2003

All talks to be held on Thursdays in the staffroom, Wall Hall Mansion

Please Note: the 4.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students, who will be given priority in the question and answer period. The 8.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

6 Feb    Phil Hutchinson (Manchester and Herts)

4pm     Natural Kind Semantics: The Next Generation

In his book What Emotions Really Are (1997) Paul E. Griffiths has offered a reconstructed natural kind semantics, claiming to build and improve upon Hilary Putnam’s 1975 account. Griffiths claims to have overcome the difficulties that Putnam’s account faced and dispensed with any recourse to metaphysics. In this paper I argue that Griffiths’ account is as reliant on metaphysics as was Putnam’s. I begin by examining Putnam’s original account advanced in “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’”. I identify a number of criticisms that were seen to tell against Putnam’s account, and note some of Putnam’s own recent modifications to his pre-1975 views. I then progress to Griffiths’ reconstructed natural kind semantics and show that despite his claims to the contrary his theory relies upon metaphysical assumptions, and that it is this reliance that ultimately tells against the theory’s viability. Furthermore, I show that Griffiths seeks, without argument, to justify his normative claims by deriving them from factual premises.

13 Feb    Sacha Stephens (Herts)

4pm     Can empirical experimentation help us to understand concepts?

In 1975 Eleanor Rosch claimed that her work involving categorisation experiments was an empirical confirmation of Wittgenstein’s family resemblance argument. These, and similar experiments have been extremely influential in cognitive science and have inspired semantic and even metaphysical theses. In this paper I argue that there are serious methodological problems with this approach to concept study both for psychology and philosophy.

20 Feb    Professor Hugh Mellor (Cambridge)

Hugh Mellor is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University, and a Fellow of Darwin
College and of the British Academy. He was originally trained as a chemical engineer, switching to philosophy after two years' postgraduate work in the US followed by a year working in the chemical industry. His work in philosophy has been mostly in metaphysics, on the nature of chance, causation and time.

4pm   Truthmakers

In this talk I develop the idea that 'truth supervenes on being' and discuss the utility of the idea. I also discuss which truths need truthmakers, and why, and how truthmakers may be related to what they make true.

8pm   Time Travel

In this talk I distinguish the different senses in which we may be said to travel in time, and argue that in the only interestingly problematic sense, of travel into the past, it is impossible, for a well-known reason which however most philosophers reject.

27 Feb   Richard Menary (Herts)

4pm   What is pragmatism?

In 1905 Peirce published a paper in The Monist entitled "What pragmatism is". In 1906 James delivered the second of his famous lectures to the Lowell Institute, now collected under the title "Pragmatism", entitled "What pragmatism means." There are important similarities and differences between what the two philosophers take "pragmatism" to be. This paper seeks to establish whether there is a coherent nucleus of ideas and arguments that could be called pragmatist, or whether work of such diverse thinkers as Peirce and Rorty could constitute a genuine tradition of thought. In the process of highlighting these continuities and discontinuities of thought I shall also address the issue of what pragmatism has achieved and what it has still to achieve.

6 Mar   Dr Filip Buekens (Tilburg)

Filip Buekens is Associate Professor (philosophy of language and mind and contemporary analytic philosophy) at Tilburg University (The Netherlands). His current work focusses on (a) consciousness, experiential concepts and the intentionality of experiences, (b) philosophy of action (the role of indexical intentions in practical reasoning) and (c) the cognitive role of indexical thoughts (based on work by Perry).


4pm   In defense of the irreducibility of experiential concepts

It is generally assumed that no defense of monism about experiences (the thesis that every particular experience one has is identical with a particular brain state) would be complete without an explanation of our dualist intuitions. Most of these explanations tend to show that these intuitions are based on certain cognitive limitations (McGinn), that the 'explanatory gap' is illusory (Tye) or
that there cannot be an explanatory gap because identities need no explanation (Papineau). All these positions suppose that an identity theory poses a problem (the explanatory gap) and that the gap, which ontologically speaking does not exist, must somehow be explained away. I will argue that there is an irreducible explanatory gap between physical concepts and experiential concepts, for instance, one's concept of what it is like to taste Château Pétrus, of what it is like to be weightless, of what it is like to taste cinnamoned rice. The argument rests on a case for the claim that an individual's notions of what such concepts refer to are essentially recognitional notions, and made recognitional on the basis of procedures that have no echo in physical theory. Non-reductive materialism about experiences is a coherent and defensible position. The real difficulty is to redefine physicalism in such a way that no entailment thesis (à la Frank Jackson) follows.

8pm Love de re

I propose a new solution for an old puzzle: do you love a person because you love certain properties she instantiates, or do you love her 'de re', i.e. independently of the properties that characterize her? After comparing love de re with other de re attitudes and distinguishing it from love de dicto, I reject reductions of love de re to love de dicto. But love is not wholly independent of properties of the person in whom the emotion originates. The lover must have a dynamic conception of the person his emotion originates in. How can this puzzle be solved? I suggest that the way the person loved appears to the lover cannot be reduced to and need not match an antecedently available set of properties he or she appreciates. The origin of the emotion must occupy an emotional agent-relative role in the lover's life.

13 Mar Dr Genia Schönbaumsfeld (Southampton)

-Genia Schönbaumsfeld studied philosophy at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge before gaining a PhD from the University of Vienna. Her doctoral thesis was on transcendental arguments and scepticism. At Southampton since 1999, she teaches courses on the philosophy of language and epistemology, and on Kierkegaard. She is currently working on a book the parallels between Kierkegaard’s and Wittgenstein’s conceptions of religious belief.

4pm No New Kierkgaard

Kierkegaard is a fascinating and still, I think, an under-appreciated religious thinker. He is also a philosopher in whose work parallels can be discerned with some of Wittgenstein’s writings, and it is possible that a certain sort of Wittgensteinian reading might shed light on a number of Kierkegaard’s central religious themes and preoccupations. Certainly this is James Conant’s view; and - at the current level of generality - I am inclined to agree with him. I disagree with him, however, about the sort of Wittgensteinian reading that might usefully be brought to bear on Kierkegaard. Specifically, I doubt that a reading shaped by Conant’s own idiosyncratic interpretation of the Tractatus - one that assumes that a philosophical elucidation can consist only of the attempt to dispel illusions, or else to assemble a set of truisms of which philosophers have lost sight - can deliver the goods. This is a substantial disagreement; and in the present paper I attempt to show that Conant’s interpretative preferences can do no justice to the complexities and subtleties of one of Kierkegaard’s most important texts, the pseudonymously written Concluding Unscientific Postscript. On the reading I will be suggesting, what Johannes Climacus (Kierkegaard’s pseudonym) writes does at least promise, or threaten, to make sense; while Conant’s reading, by contrast, offers - at best - to reduce the Postscript to a kind of burlesque.

6.30pm Scepticism (Note the unusual time!)

A talk on Moore's "argument" against scepticism and Wittgenstein's response in On Certainty.
20 Mar  Professor Peter Lamarque (York)

Peter Lamarque is Professor of Philosophy and Head of Department at the University of York. From 1995 to 2000 he was Ferens Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hull and before then Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Stirling. He is Editor of the British Journal of Aesthetics, author of Fictional Points of View (Cornell University Press, 1996), and co-author, with Stein Haugom Olsen, of Truth, Fiction, and Literature: A Philosophical Perspective (Clarendon Press, 1994). He also edited Philosophy and Fiction: Essays in Literary Aesthetics (1983), Concise Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Language (1997) and Aesthetics in Britain (2000), a special issue of the British Journal of Aesthetics. He was Philosophy Subject Editor of the 10-volume Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics (Pergamon Press, 1994).

4pm  Two kinds of interpretation

This paper looks in particular at the idea of 'creative' or 'constructive' interpretation whereby objects of interpretation are claimed to be at least partially created (or constructed) by the interpretations placed on them. I discuss what kinds of objects might be amenable to this process - mostly, but not exclusively, in the realm of art.

8pm  Nausea, art and existence

This talk is principally about the end of Sartre’s novel Nausea and the theory of art implied by the protagonist’s closing resolutions. The paper doesn't presuppose that people know the novel - I will quote the relevant passages and reflect on them in a reasonably self-contained manner.

27 Mar  No session

EASTER BREAK

1 May  Professor Jonathan Dancy (Reading)

Jonathan Dancy taught for 25 years at the University of Keele before moving to Reading in 1996. He has written on epistemology, Berkeley, moral theory and the philosophy of action. His main current interest could be broadly described as the theory of reasons. His most recent book is Practical Reality (OUP, 2000); he has just finished a manuscript entitled Ethics without Principles.

4pm  What do Reasons Do?

What is it that a (contributory practical) reason does? To answer this question we need to clear away a lot of accumulated error, and look at a few examples. It turns out that we cannot understand what happens at the contributory level in terms of what happens at the overall level (the overall 'ought'). We might, however, be able to do things the other way round. Once we have got hold of the difference between what reasons do and what other relevant considerations do, we can begin to see that various meta-ethical positions do not have the resources to capture the specific role played by reasons.

8pm  An Unprincipled Morality

In this talk I will suggest that there are no reasons for thinking that morality is impossible in the
absence of moral principles, and quite a lot of reasons for thinking the opposite.

8 May  Dr John Lippitt (Herts)

4pm   Fiction and the ethical imagination [Title and topic provisional]

This paper will offer a consideration, arising from the work of Martha Nussbaum and Gregory Currie, of the roles for fiction in the ethical dimension of the imagination.

15 May  Dr John Preston (Reading)

John Preston (B.Phil, D.Phil Oxon, MSc Essex) has taught at the University of Reading since 1990. His main interests are in philosophy of science, epistemology, and the philosophies of mind and cognitive science. His D.Phil thesis eventually turned into his first book, Feyerabend: Philosophy, Science and Society (Polity Press, 1997). He edited the third volume of Paul Feyerabend's Philosophical Papers, a collection of essays in memory of Feyerabend, a volume on Thought and Language arising from the 1996 Royal Institute of Philosophy Conference and, most recently a collection of new essays on John Searle's arguments against 'strong AI' (Views into the Chinese Room, (OUP, 2002)). Having spent four years editing the latter, he has become rather bored by the Chinese Room argument, and deeply disappointed about how certain cognitive scientists react to criticisms of their work. He is currently working on the concepts of belief and thought, and hopes, in the medium-term future, to write a book on Wittgenstein's influence (and lack of it) in the philosophy of science.

4pm   Active Externalism, Cognitive Systems, and Epistemic Credit

8pm   Thomas Kuhn and the Progress of Science

Recent commentators have made a poor job of explaining Thomas Kuhn's views on the possibility of genuine epistemic progress in science. Some, despite being sympathetic to his work, fail to credit him with a consistent and plausible attitude towards scientific progress, while others, more critical of Kuhn, fail to clinch their central charges against him. I argue that Kuhn has a plausible story to tell here. I proceed to outline the central features of Kuhn's account of scientific progress. Kuhn emerges as a figure beholden neither to any form of anti-scientific post-modernism, nor to any form of scientism.

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PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester A 2001-2002

All talks to be held on Thursdays in the staffroom, Wall Hall Mansion

Please Note: the 4.00 sessions are research seminars aimed at philosophy staff and research students. They assume a near-professional competence and may not be suitable for undergraduates. Anyone is welcome to sit in, but do not be surprised if it all goes over your head. The 8.00 sessions are intended for undergraduates.

4 Oct Dr Jane Singleton, University of Hertfordshire

4pm Generalism, Particularism and the role of moral principles

The dispute between Moral Particularism and Moral Generalism is one of the central topics of debate in contemporary moral theory. A recent collection of essays, Moral Particularism (eds. Brad Hooker & Margaret Little, OUP, 2000) is entirely devoted to this issue. One of the major difficulties in this debate is how to characterise Particularism. I argue that the essence of Particularism is expressed in Dancy’s view which bases Ethical Particularism on a theory of the holism of reasons. The essence of this is the claim that what is a reason in one situation may alter or lose its polarity in another. I will argue that Generalism, which involves an appeal to moral principles as general reasons, is to be preferred to a Particularist approach.

11 Oct Professor Simon Blackburn, University of Cambridge

Currently Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge, Simon Blackburn was prior to that Edna J. Koury Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the University of North Carolina. From 1969 to 1990 he was a Fellow and Tutor of Philosophy at Pembroke College, Oxford. His books include Spreading the Word (1984), Essays in Quasi-Realism (1993), The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (1994), Ruling Passions (1998), Truth (co-edited with Keith Simmons, 1999), Think (1999) and Being Good (2001). He edited Mind from 1984 to 1990.

4pm to be announced

8pm to be announced

18 Oct Dr Daniel Hutto, University of Hertfordshire
4pm 'Description Alone' and Philosophical Method

Many philosophers take exception to Wittgenstein's bold injunction that 'we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place' (PI §119). This is often regarded as nothing short of a betrayal of philosophy: a lowering of our sights. For many it is seen as the abandonment of a much more creditable and noble end: that of distinguishing appearance from reality, of getting at the true nature of things. In alarming contrast to the endeavours of most contemporary philosophers we are warned that 'In philosophy we do not draw conclusions. "But it must be like this!" is not a philosophical proposition. Philosophy only states what everyone admits (PI §599, cf. CV 6e). Or more precisely, philosophy only states what everyone would admit, if they were not held captive by a misleading theory or picture. In this paper, I shall attempt sympathetically to characterise the import of Wittgenstein's approach while at the same time investigating the extent to which his style of philosophy represents or requires departure from traditional philosophcial methods by considering the work of some contemporary thinkers such as Robert Brandom.

25 Oct Dr Brendan Larvor, University of Hertfordshire

4pm Koyré, Butterfield and Kuhn

Thomas Kuhn inherited a historicist methodology from his European mentors. Elements of this historiographic method reappear in his model of scientific practice. This explains much of the fuss that greeted the publication of The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.

8pm Managing the Knowledge Factory

There are two models of university management: the 'collegial' and the 'corporate'. A philosophical reflection on the purpose of the university can help us to understand the relative merits of these models.

1 Nov No session (Subject Review meetings)

8 Nov Dr Mark Rowlands, University College Cork

Mark Rowlands is Lecturer in Philosophy at University College Cork, and was formerly Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alabama. His books include Supervenience and Materialism (Avebury 1995), Animal Rights (Macmillan 1998), The Body in Mind (Cambridge University Press 1999), The Environmental Crisis (Macmillan 2000), The Nature of Consciousness (Cambridge University Press 2001). Forthcoming books include Ethics and Animals (Verso 2002), and Externalism (Acumen 2002 - if he ever gets around to finishing it). He is currently engaged in defending a very strange view about the nature of consciousness based on the idea that's it is real but doesn't exist anywhere at all (i.e. in space). He is also working on a book aiming to educate the general public about philosophy through the medium of really, really bad films.

4pm Consciousness and Supervenience

In his deservedly influential book, The Conscious Mind, David Chalmers develops a sophisticated
argument against the idea that consciousness can be reductively explained in physical terms:

1. Consciousness is reductively explainable in physical terms only if it is logically supervenient on the physical.

2. Consciousness is not logically supervenient on the physical.

3. Therefore, consciousness is not reductively explainable.

I'll argue that this argument fails. More importantly, however, the argument will be used as way of highlighting two extremely pervasive and tenacious misunderstandings about the nature of supervenience. The first is the idea that commitment to a supervenience claim commits one to the further claim that supervenience relations play a role in fixing the distribution of supervenient facts. The second is that a claim of supervenience commits one to the claim that a hypothetical superbeing, such as Laplace's Demon, who is acquainted with the totality of subvenient facts would thereby, in principle, be able to read off the distribution of supervenient facts. I shall argue that once these misunderstandings are uncovered, there emerges the possibility of a quite different case against materialism, one that is not restricted to phenomenal consciousness, and one that, if correct, entails that materialism - at least when formulated in terms of the concept of supervenience - is internally inconsistent.

8pm Death

In what sense, if any, is death a bad thing? Not in general, but for the person who dies? In general, for example, death might be quite a good thing - counteracts overcrowding, safeguards genetic variation. Or whatever. And the death of individual people - Hitler is the obvious example - might be of great benefit to other people. But, except in thankfully rare cases, death has no benefit for the person who undergoes it. Indeed, death, it is usually assumed, harms that person. But how can this be? There is a well-known argument, associated with Epicurus, an argument that death cannot be something that harms us. It goes like this. Death cannot harm us because while we are alive death has not yet happened (and so can't have harmed us yet), and after we are dead there is nothing left to harm. Death can't harm us until it actually happens, but when it happens we are no longer around for it to harm. So death does not harm us. What, if anything, is wrong with this argument? I'll argue that death is harmful because it deprives us of a future - conceived of as something we actually, and not merely possibly, have. But the future does not yet exist. So how can we (actually) have and/or lose something that does not yet exist? This paper tries to work out how, and looks at some of the implications of this for our understanding of why death is something that harms us.

15 Nov Professor David Cockburn, University of Wales, Lampeter

David Cockburn studied Philosophy at St Andrews and Oxford, and has taught at Swansea, the Open University, and, for the last twenty years, the University of Wales, Lampeter. He held a British Academy Readership in 1994-96, during which he wrote Other Times (CUP, 1997). He is also author of Other Human Beings (Macmillan, 1990) and An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind (Palgrave, 2001). He is currently working on a book provisionally entitled Meaning, Use and Human Life. (Address: Department of Philosophy, University of Wales, Lampeter, Ceredigion SA48 7ED. E-mail: Cockburn@lamp.ac.uk.

4pm Meaning, rules and conversation

Wittgenstein writes: 'To understand a sentence means to understand a language'. My question is:
what is a language, and what is its importance to the idea of understanding what someone has said? This question is often discussed within the framework of Wittgenstein's 'rule-following considerations'; but the idea that a notion of 'rules', 'justification', or 'correctness conditions', is central to language is not one we should accept. The importance of the idea of a 'language' is better approached through a consideration of the way in which to understand what someone has just said means to understand the conversation. Extending this: when I say something, the character of what I am doing cannot be separated from the fact that the words I use are used by others, and that what I say is connected, in very different ways in different cases, with things that others have said and will say.

8pm Plato on the soul: Nussbaum's reading

In The Fragility of Goodness Martha Nussbaum suggests that Plato defends his view of how we should think of the soul through a defence of an account of the best way to live: we should think of ourselves and others as radically distinct from the body, since identification with our bodily nature renders us vulnerable to contingencies in a way that may involve deep suffering. This suggestion involves a reversal of views about the relation between 'metaphysics' and 'ethics' that dominate more recent philosophical thinking. This paper is primarily a sympathetic presentation of Nussbaum's treatment of the issues.

22 Nov Dr Carolyn Wilde, University of Bristol

Although first trained in Fine Art, Carolyn Wilde subsequently took a degree in Philosophy at Kings College, London, where she came under the lasting influence of Peter Winch and his Wittgensteinian scholarship. Her PhD and continuing research interests are in Aesthetics. She currently teaches in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Bristol, working with Andrew Harrison on the MA in Analytic Aesthetics. Although her first publication was a teaching text for the Open University on Wittgenstein's On Certainty in 1976, her writings since have been in Aesthetics and Art Theory, most recently articles on Richard Wollheim and the concept of style and on Arthur Danto's claims about the End of Art. She has just completed co-editing, with the art historian Paul Smith, the Blackwell Companion to Aesthetics.

4pm Wittgenstein and Aesthetics

Although we do have notes on Wittgenstein's thoughts on Aesthetics, I should like in this talk not to draw from them but to speak about some implications which I believe other parts of his writings have for thinking about judgement and value in that domain which philosophers call the Aesthetic. In particular, the obscure remarks at 6.421 of the Tractatus about Ethics and Aesthetics being 'one and the same' and related remarks in the Notebooks; passages 241 and 242 of Philosophical Investigations about agreement in judgements; and several passages from On Certainty. The idea is that each of these passages offers different ways of helping to think further about the nature and import of the Kantian claim that certain sorts of judgement can be personal and yet call objectively upon the agreement of others.

8pm A discussion on Art, Culture and Aesthetic Judgement

29 Nov Dr Jerry Valberg, University College, London

After getting his PhD from the University of Chicago, Jerry Valberg taught briefly at the Universities of Illinois and Chicago, before coming to London, where he has been ever since. His
publications include *The Puzzle Of Experience*.

**4pm Rational Instability**

This paper explores a familiar quirk, the possibility of which is intrinsic to the situation of rational minds mutually in touch with each other. Then, in light of this, it suggests a solution to a well-known paradox.

**8pm No session**

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6 Dec Professor David Bakhurst, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

David Bakhurst is Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. He was educated at Keele University and was a graduate student at Moscow State University and at Oxford. Before moving to Queen's in 1990, Professor Bakhurst was Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at Exeter College, Oxford, and Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of *Consciousness and Revolution in Soviet Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1991), and co-editor of two volumes of essays: *The Social Self* (Sage, 1995), and *Jerome Bruner: Language, Culture, Self* (Sage, 2001). In addition, he has published many papers on Russian thought, ethics, and philosophical psychology. At present, Professor Bakhurst holds a Visiting Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford, and is at work on a book on culture and mind.

**4pm Reason, Freedom, and the Sources of Normativity**

John McDowell has argued, in Kantian fashion, that freedom is exemplified when we exercise of our conceptual capacities to form judgments about the world. Our freedom is manifest when we recognize and reflect upon reasons for belief, and this must be so if we are genuinely responsible for what we think. Accordingly, McDowell identifies what he calls (following Sellars) 'the space of reasons' with the realm of freedom. This paper expounds McDowell's position, and defends it against two objections. The first, from David Owens, maintains that McDowell is just wrong to hold that belief is under our reflective control. The second, inspired by Korsgaard's work on practical reason, argues that the supposed link between reflection and intellectual freedom can be upheld only if we maintain that the sources of normativity somehow reside in us, a claim clearly in tension with McDowell's realist endorsement of the objectivity of the space of reasons. My discussion aims to clarify McDowell's position and to bring out some of its more radical consequences for epistemology and philosophical psychology.

**8pm The Social Construction of Social Constructionism**

It is sometimes maintained that reality, facts and truth are socially constructed. This paper takes issue with such constructionism, arguing (i) that a commitment to relatively robust conceptions of truth and reality is a precondition of empirical inquiry, and (ii) that many social constructionist positions are implicitly based upon philosophical views that constructionists are supposed to disavow. I conclude with some speculative remarks about the reasons why social constructionism, despite its incoherence, has such an appeal in certain areas of social science and philosophy. In this, I hope not only to expose the weaknesses of constructionism, but to do justice to its insights.

The programme of talks will resume in Semester B.
PHILOSOPHY SOCIETY

Semester B 2001-2002

All talks to be held on Thursdays in the staffroom, Wall Hall Mansion

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31 Jan Chris Cowley, University of Hertfordshire

4pm 'The Personal in Ethics'

One central debate in contemporary analytic moral philosophy is that between the cognitivists and non-cognitivists (and the related debate between realists and anti-realists) about the status of moral judgements. Looking respectively at the work of Thomas Nagel and Simon Blackburn as exemplary opponents, I want to suggest that the very framework of the debate be rejected. The key assumption that both authors make -- and that I want to argue is illegitimate -- is that of a meaningfully accessible 'view from nowhere'. Moral judgements are crucially different from theoretical judgements in that they are necessarily made within an individual's particular perspective on the world, and yet can achieve a different kind of objective status to that of theoretical judgements. As such I will argue for the irreducible and ineliminable role of the personal in moral judgements.

8pm 'Practical Necessity'

A classic example of practical necessity is that of Martin Luther, summoned in 1521 by the Catholic authorities to Worms in Germany, where he was asked to retract his reformist teachings after they had been condemned by the pope. According to tradition Luther ended his defence with the words "here I stand; I can do no other." I want to explore the philosophical implications of this use of the modal verb "cannot" (and the related "must"), and why it would be inappropriate to tell Luther to "come on, just try" to do otherwise. At the same time, I also want to distinguish practical necessity from ordinary moral obligations by asking why Luther was the only person in Worms that day who felt he could not do otherwise.

7 Feb Dr Rupert Read, University of East Anglia

4pm 'Philosophical problems are at root problems of mood, not really intellectual problems at all'
Anglo-American philosophy is still absorbing only very slowly the deep message of Wittgenstein and Heidegger: that philosophical problems are fundamentally problems of the will and of the culture (of 'form of life'), not problems of the intellect. This talk will look at what it would mean -- among other things, for us as professional philosophers -- to take that message seriously.

Suggested background reading, for those interested:

- Cavell, "Knowing and Acknowledging", from *Must we mean what we say?*

8pm 'Wittgenstein and film'

How can an understanding of Wittgenstein's style of philosophizing help us appreciate some great films -- and perhaps vice versa? This talk will feature excerpts from a few relatively recent films and some philosophical commentary.

Suggested background viewing, for those especially interested:

- *Memento, Blade Runner, Drowning by Numbers.*

14 Feb Richard Menary, University of Hertfordshire

4pm 'Three epistemic virtues: Critical common-sense, self-control and sentiment'

Virtue epistemologists tell us that we are responsible for what we believe: that we can be praised or blamed for our beliefs. This claim of doxastic responsibility runs up against an obvious problem: judgements of praise and blame presuppose voluntary control, and we lack such control over our beliefs. I suggest a solution to the problem based on the three Peircean virtues of the title.

21 Feb Jonathan Rée, formerly of Middlesex University


4pm 'Histories of philosophy: some problems, with reference to the early eighteenth century'

Ever since the eighteenth century histories of philosophy have exercised a powerful influence over philosophical practice, defining its salient issues, identifying its villains and heroes, and implicitly formulating its hopes for the future. Yet histories of philosophy are a curiously unconsidered sector of philosophical production, and often gruesomely unintelligent. What are histories of philosophy histories of? How should they relate to history as practised by the most enlightened historians and philosophy as practised by the most enlightened philosophers? This talk will raise some of these issues in connection with the moment of deism, atheism and republicanism in English-language thought at the turn of the eighteenth century.

8pm 'As if for the first time: Kierkegaard on becoming a philosopher'
There is a well-known phenomenon that is usually described as seeing something ‘as if for the first time’. It means allowing yourself to be surprised by something that has grown familiar. But the first time you see something you do not see it as if for the first time. Seeing things as if for the first time involves a kind of innocence that is possible only as a result of experience. In this talk I will use this paradox as a way of trying to explain Kierkegaard’s approach to both philosophy and Christianity.

28 Feb No session: mid-term breather!

7 Mar Professor Robert Stern, University of Sheffield

Robert Stern (MA, PhD Cambridge) came to Sheffield in 1989, having been a graduate and Research Fellow at St John's College, Cambridge. His main interests are in nineteenth century post-Kantian German philosophy and in contemporary epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and political philosophy. Disenchanted with Kantianism, and finding much to admire in the work of Hegel, he wrote Hegel, Kant and the Structure of the Object (Routledge, 1990), and has compiled and written introductions for a four-volume collection of articles offering a critical assessment of Hegel's philosophy. He has also recently completed a book on Hegel’s Phenomenology (Routledge, 2001). In epistemology, he has published a book on the metaphysical and epistemological issues raised by transcendental arguments as used from Kant onwards (Transcendental Arguments and Scepticism, OUP, 2000). He was formerly the editor of the journal Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain, and was a subject-editor for the Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, handling the entries for nineteenth century philosophy. He is currently editor of the European Journal of Philosophy published by Blackwell, which aims to bring together the best work in the 'continental' and 'analytical' traditions.

4pm ‘Coherence as a Test for Truth’

This paper is a consideration of coherentism, arguing that the position should best be seen as a view about the criterion, or test, for truth, rather than as an answer to the regress of justification problem. The paper considers the position of Bradley and Blanshard on this issue, arguing that they fit the ‘coherence as test for truth’ model, and that their arguments and targets differ significantly from that of contemporary coherenists, who take the question of justification as their starting point.

8pm ‘Does Ought Imply Can?’

In this talk, I will argue that while ought implies can in one sense (namely, we are not entitled to blame people for what they could not avoid doing), it does not do so in another sense (namely, that if there is some act we cannot help doing, there is nothing wrong with that act). I will therefore argue that the maxim applies to agents, but not acts. The importance of observing this distinction will be illustrated by reference to examples from ethics, political philosophy, and epistemology.

14 Mar Dr Paul Coates, University of Hertfordshire

4pm 'Perception, Causation and Action'

if matching is to be explained in terms of normal perceptual experience, the account becomes circular. In this paper I outline an alternative approach to the problem of specifying which types of causal process are essential to perception, an account that avoids this circularity, and also avoids the appeal to teleology favoured by Davies and Millikan. Linking up with recent work in Animate Vision and Real World Robotics, I show how perceptual processes must be understood as essentially connected with actions, by being connected with the current abilities of subjects to ‘navigate’ through an environment and make use of objects in that environment to satisfy their needs. This ‘navigational account’ of perception leads to the view that the ordinary, philosophical, and scientific notions of perception are all continuous with one another, and that the concept of causation is involved at the personal level in our understanding of the concept of perception. A corollary of the main argument is that even if the Weather Watcher creatures (cf. G. Strawson, *Mental Reality*, 1994) have some kind of experience, they cannot be said to perceive anything.

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**21 Mar Jamie Turnbull, University of Hertfordshire**

**4pm 'Kierkegaard, Truth and Personality'**

This paper examines the distinction drawn by Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, between subjective and objective truth. This is commonly cashed out in the secondary literature as the difference between the ‘truths’ of mathematics, which can be conceived in a disinterested and objective fashion, and the ‘truths’ of ethics and religion, which require a first-personal and essentially interested engagement to be understood. I argue that this distinction cannot be so easily drawn.

**8pm 'Philosophy and the End of Humanity'**

This paper argues that many of the virtues engendered by the study and practice of philosophy are also those required in fulfilling one's nature as a human being.

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**EASTER BREAK**

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**18 Apr John Docherty**

John Docherty holds an M.Sc from London University. His earlier career was in environmental teaching and research and the greater part of his research into the writings of Lewis Carroll and his friend George MacDonald has been carried out since his retirement. He has published numerous papers on aspects of these writings, plus the book, *The Literary Products of the Lewis Carroll-George MacDonald Friendship*, (2nd ed Mellen 1997). He is also honorary editor of the journal of the George MacDonald Society.

**4pm ‘Exploring the House of Alma: The Christian Neo-Platonic Structure of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland’″**

Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) believed that before people can do worthwhile work in the world they must first come to know themselves. His heroine Alice responds to the exhortation ‘know thyself’ through her exploration of Wonderland. He draws upon mediaeval Easter Imitation of Christ meditations, Spenser's House of Alma imagery in Book II of *The Faerie Queen*, and much traditional Christian Neo-Platonic imagery of soul-development, integrating all this into a traditional...
path of initiation via trials involving the four elements during which Alice learns the rudiments of the four Cardinal Virtues.

8pm ‘Alice, Oxford and Botticelli’"

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll's heroine Alice, having gained some understanding of herself through an interior journey of soul exploration in Wonderland, is able to pass through the mirror of selfhood and explore three important aspects of outer/social life: the religious, economic and political. In a dream exploration that perceives Oxford as a sacred landscape, she undertakes a spiral journey out from Christ Church (with the pool Mercury as its symbolic centre) to (the) Isis and then follows a reversed spiral route back again. In the course of this journey, Alice and most of the more important characters whom she meets take on the roles of the beings depicted in Botticelli’s most famous Neo-Platonic paintings. These Botticellian elements of the story, disregarded by traditional commentators, contain some of Carroll's most profound imagery as well as some of his finest humour and will be the principal subject of this illustrated talk.

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25 Apr Dr John Lippitt, University of Hertfordshire

4pm ‘ A sense of humour as a virtue: Aristotelian and Kierkegaardian reflections’

In this paper, I shall argue that a sense of humour is a moral virtue. In doing so, I shall build upon an argument advanced by Robert C. Roberts that is related to his further claim that there are figures, such Socrates and Tolstoy, ‘whose wisdom was partially constituted by a sense of humour’. Since the development of such wisdom goes hand in hand with the development of such a sense of humour, the latter could be a significant dimension of moral education, understood as training in the virtues. I develop this thought by considering some of the possible ethical advantages of developing a taste for incongruity, which leads to an account of how a sense of humour can be an index of one’s character. This idea has its roots in Aristotle. In an often overlooked section of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses wit [*eutrapelia*] as a moral virtue, but chiefly because 'one part of life is relaxation, and one aspect of this is entertaining conversation' (1127b). If the argument of this paper is on the mark, we would be able to make a far bolder claim than this on behalf of the ethical significance of a certain kind of sense of humour.

Moreover, Martha Nussbaum has argued for the importance of literature in moral philosophy. One of the most plausible reasons one could give in support of Nussbaum's thesis is that, through our imaginative identification with literary characters - their thoughts, feelings and perceptions - we are sometimes able to experience 'aspect-dawning' of ethical depth and profundity. As a result of this, our moral 'vision' can sometimes be transformed. But I suggest that there are significant parallels between this process as it occurs in literature, and as it occurs in the experience of humour. Aspect-dawning is clearly central to the experience of humour, and this can be ethically significant when the change of aspect enables me to enter a different ethical perspective. With this thought in mind, I aim to show how exposure to the 'virtuous' sense of humour of an appropriate role model such as Socrates can be a useful tool in the formation of character through habituation. I unpack this claim by a brief consideration of two themes in Kierkegaard. First, the role qua 'boundary zone' that the comic plays in the thought of his 'humorist' pseudonym Johannes Climacus. Second, in response to a question about how the virtuous agent might use his sense of humour as a pedagogical tool, a discussion of Kierkegaardian 'indirect communication'. I shall also begin to explain what features a sense of humour would need to have in order to count as virtuous. In particular, the idea that 'fine discernment' might involve seeing that a sense of humour is only a virtue if linked to other virtues or attitudes, such as compassion and hope.
2 May  **Cancelled Due To Illness**

**Professor David McNaughton**, Keele University

David McNaughton is Professor of Philosophy at Keele University. He is the author of *Moral Vision* (1988). He has written, with Piers Rawling of Florida State University, a series of articles articulating and defending deontology in general, and Intuitionism in particular. They are currently writing a book on this topic.

4pm ‘Does Rule-Consequentialism deliver as much as Intuitionism, and more?’

(Written with Piers Rawling)

Brad Hooker, in *Ideal Code, Real World*, claims that RC not only conforms with our moral intuitions as successfully as Intuitionism, but is theoretically superior since it offers a single principle which unifies, explains and justifies our various moral principles. We argue, first, that the fundamental principles to which Intuitionism appeals, when properly understood, neither have, nor could have, a theoretical underpinning. Second, we claim that Rule-Consequentialism fits in less well with our moral intuitions about other possible worlds, because it appeals to a morally irrelevant feature - the cost of inculcating the moral rules in the general population.

8pm ‘Is it good to forgive unconditionally?’

(Written with Eve Garrard)

Many philosophers have argued that it is unwise, bad or even immoral, to forgive serious wrongdoers unless they express genuine remorse and intend to reform. We argue, in response, that it is always morally admirable (though often not obligatory) to forgive, and that a belief to the contrary is largely occasioned by a misunderstanding of the nature of forgiveness.

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9 May  **Nini Praetorious**, Department of Psychology  **University of Copenhagen**


4pm 'Intersubjectivity of Cognition and Language'

Following a discussion of the status of our cognition and description of things in publicly observable physical material reality, and of our internal states, such as our thoughts, emotions and feelings of pain, it is argued that conditions exist which apply equally for the inter-subjectivity of cognition and description of both publicly observable things and internal states. It is shown that on these conditions rest the possibility of persons together developing criteria or standards for determining and distinguishing between what is and what is not publicly observable. These same conditions, so I argue, rule out any consistent notions of private cognition and languages. On these conditions, furthermore, rely the possibility of persons talking about their individual differences - concerning both what is and what is not publicly observable, and thus for a person to be a person different from other persons. The paper concludes by pointing out some consequences for the current philosophical debate concerning first person versus third person point of view.

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**Dr. John Lippitt**,

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