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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)

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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.

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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.

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23 Feb

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2 Mar [Erik Myin](#) (Antwerp) Room: N212

## 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 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 immobile, 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.

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9 Mar [Anthony Duff](#) (Stirling) Room: N212

## 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.

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16 Mar [Sam Guttenplan](#) (Birkbeck) Room: N212

## 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.

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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>

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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.

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