

ARPA at UPEI 2023

Abstracts

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Kant on the Social Demand for Dissembling

It can come as a surprise to know that Kant in his anthropological and ethical writings championed a role for dissembling.

At ARPA 2022 I developed some preliminary elements of this under-reported aspect of Kant's treatment of practical reason in the context of his treatment of speech and behavioural reticence.

In this paper I widen-out that analysis and anchor Kant's treatment of dissembling in his embodied conception of human social development.

I explore how the delicate balance Kant seeks to establish—between truthfulness as a moral demand and the social demand to disguise our private judgements—occupies a central role in his treatment of progressive social development. As such, the art of positive dissembling in public engagement is more than civic virtue or social grace. In its absence, social engagement is impoverished, and the otherwise open paths of material and cultural development are foreclosed. Equally disabling is the related damage that ensues when our ideal demands upon others are rendered inert by mutual knowledge of each other's faults: 'In just the same way [as we avoid intruding into the privy], we conceal our faults, and try to give a different impression, and make a show of politeness, despite our mistrust; yet by this we get used to politeness, and at length it becomes natural to us, and we thereby set a good example ... So, by this endeavour to look well we actually end up doing so' (Lectures on Ethics, 27: 445).

The paper concludes with some brief observations on the yawning gap between Kant's view and the emerging contemporary standpoint that privileges transparency as a necessary commitment for mutually respectful progressive social change.

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Doug Al-Maini

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Teacher Accountability in the Gorgias and Euthyphro

In the Euthyphro at 5a-b, Socrates asks that Euthyphro teach him what piety is so that at his trial Socrates can blame his own impiety on Euthyphro: "I will say to him [Meletus, one of Socrates's

accusers]: ‘If, Meletus, you agree that Euthyphro is wise in these matter, consider me, too, to have the right beliefs and do not bring me to trial. If you do not think so, then prosecute that teacher of mine, not me, for corrupting older men, me and his own father, by teaching me and by exhorting and punishing him” (5b). So Socrates seems to believe that teachers can be held accountable for the actions of their students. And yet in the dialogue named after him, Gorgias gives a spirited and well-reasoned defence of the claim that teachers should not be held accountable for the sins of their students (456c-457c): “Imagine someone who after attending wrestling school, getting his body into good shape and becoming a boxer, went on to strike his father and mother or any other family member or friend. By Zeus, that’s no reason to hate physical trainers!” (456d). This paper will try to clarify the dialogues’ position on when it is and is not appropriate to hold the teacher to account for the actions of the student, and what this might mean for our own careers as teachers, especially as supposed teachers of ethics.

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Hamid Andishan
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Body as Political Entity

Since the early 20th century, phenomenology has shed new light on contemporary socio-political phenomena by focusing on and elucidating concepts such as intersubjectivity, inter-corporality, embodiment, situatedness, and the lifeworld. However, phenomenological discourse is far from offering one a comprehensive political theory. In this paper I will explore the potential of a phenomenological political theory based on understanding the body as a political entity. I will explore how the bodies of people can be the subject of political power (like what is happening between the Iranian government and women in Iran); or how the bodies of refugees become a political problem for currently hosting and previously colonializing European powers. I will argue that because the colonial powers have exploited the natural resources of the colonized nations, they now have no choice except to receive the bodies of refugees as the continuation of that exploitation. In developing the main structure of a phenomenological political theory, I will ask how liberalism and social contract theory may change (possibly radically) if we consider embodiment as an element of social life and the political status of a citizen. What happens to the liberal meaning of citizenship if the condition for being a member of society changes from having property (re Locke) to having a body? In this project, I will be considering the works of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricœur, John Wild, Fred Dallmayr, Robert Bernasconi, Alfred Schutz, William L. McBride, Lester Embree, Hwa Yol Jung, and Sonia Kruks.

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Robert Ansell
Philosophy Department,

Logical Necessity And Linguistic Conventions

The paper begins by arguing that although the logical positivists failed to provide an accurate account of the relationship between logically necessary truths and linguistic conventions, the notion of linguistic conventions can nevertheless be used to explain logical necessity, and to draw a sharp distinction between logically necessary statements and contingent statements. Quine is attacked not only because of his denial of the sharp distinction but also because of his discouragement of conceptual analysis.

It is noted that commonly the value of a logically necessary truth lies in the contingent information about linguistic conventions that is indirectly conveyed, a point that emerges from solution of the so-called paradox of analysis. It is further noted that some people are confused by the practice of expressing the results of conceptual analysis in logically necessary statements, and think that a new "naturalised" approach is needed. It is argued that traditional methods of conceptual analysis are actually sound methods for generating contingent information about linguistic conventions, and that philosophers like Jesse Prinz have advocated and used unsound replacements.

The paper concludes by exploring the roles of logically necessary truths and contingent statements about word-meanings in the assessment and development of discourse.

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The Idealism of the Body: A Hegelian Consideration of Our Personal Identity as Embodied

In this paper, I will argue the counterintuitive point that understanding the body is only possible within an idealist metaphysics insofar as the body is defined as the physical manifestation of some subjectivity and is not a mere arrangement of physical objects but possesses a peculiar logic of its own. I will first provide an account of the body drawing on Hegelian phenomenology that will show how, due to the way in which our bodies provide the most immediate contact with reality that we might experience, embodiment is central to our engagement with the world and is therefore a crucial component of our personal identity that cannot be excluded from our speculative theorizing. I will then argue that the body differs from other physical entities insofar as it is characterized by its being the site of hermeneutic opening to reality through its immediate connection with the experience of some particular mind. However, this hermeneutic opening is only possible on the basis of the interpretive act of the mind thereby revealing the ontological dependence of the body upon the mind for its transcending the domain of mere physicality and enacting the specific logic which makes it a body. I will conclude that my account of the body is able to contribute to feminist discourses about identity through showing the central importance of the hermeneutic capability to making a body that which it is. This account has important bioethical implications for the way in which we consider personal identity in relation to the body

and the way in which the body persists qua body upon cessation of hermeneutic capacity such as in the event of death.

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We can't argue or buy our way out of the climate crisis

Abstract Environmental philosophy has a history rich of charismatic writers and transformative works. Unfortunately, outside of the academy these works have not led to a fundamentally changed attitude towards man-made climate change and environmental protection and one is reminded of Karl Marx's complaint that "The philosophers have only interpreted in various ways, the point, however, is to change it". Current policies to minimize or reverse human induced climate change focus on financial incentives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The federal government has mandated carbon pricing on goods and services throughout Canada. Yet, Canada is the only G7 country whose methane and nitrous oxide emissions rose between 2005 and 2021. The current system of carbon pricing is counterproductive. It places a disproportional burden on the poor (who pollute the least) and provides the rich with an excuse to pollute even more. Further, it distracts from the most important task Canada is facing: creating a public transit system that provides a genuine alternative to personal vehicle transport. Current policies suggest that leaders do not really believe that we are in an environmental crisis. By contrast, the swiftly imposed Covid-19 measures are demonstrating what government regulation is capable of. I'll argue that governments who really take the climate crisis seriously will act accordingly. A first step in this direction could be strict rationing of gasoline. This has been done, especially in Europe, during the energy crisis in in the 1970s. Philosophers could contribute to developing equitable schemes. Such policies would provide immediate benefits and motivate long term sustainable solutions. It might be objected that gasoline rationing is a too drastic measure. I suggest that anyone making this objection is not really convinced that we are facing an environmental crisis that could threaten the survival of our species

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Sport, Self-confidence, and Gender Violence

Recent allegations and arrests of those abusing athletes have raised awareness of the pervasiveness of gender violence in sport. We can understand gender violence as harms or injuries to persons based on perceived gender or sexuality, such as that experienced by women,

non-binary, trans, and queer persons (Burrow 2022). Impacts on individuals are extensive. Gender violence is associated with multiple physical, sexual, and psychological harms (Skinner, Hester, and Malos, 2013; Merry 2011; Westmarland and Bows 2018). While research on violence in sport is quickly growing (Lang et al 2023; Alexander, Stafford, & Lewis, 2011; Evans, Adler, Macdonald, & Cote, 2016; Fasting, Chroni, & Knorre, 2014; Vertommen et al., 2016), less attention is directed toward gender violence in sport (see Lut, Arnaut, Vertommen, and Lang 2016; Lang et al 2023). Philosophical analyses of the impacts of gender violence in sport contexts receives even less scholarly attention. I aim to address this gap through a rather narrow area of analysis. In this paper, I focus on harms to self-confidence due to gender violence. Self-confidence is integral to the flourishing of individuals as a key component of autonomy (Burrow 2020) and sport participation would seem to contribute to the overall flourishing of persons since self-confidence is a key outcome of sport participation (Gould et al 2020; Kim et al 2020; Ouyang et al 2020; Heydari et al 2008; Hassmén et al 2004; Feltz and Weiss 1982). Improved self-confidence bears additional athlete benefits since self-confidence seems particularly important to athletic success, including increased participation (Feltz 2007; Sari et al 2015; Baćanac 2014) and improved sport performance (Bostancı et al 2019; Beilock & Gray, 2007; Woodman & Hardy, 2001). Hence, targetting persons with gender violence is harmful not only to personal flourishing, it undermines sport performance and participation for members of targetted groups.

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Todd Calder

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Sexual Creepiness

We can all think of examples of sexually creepy behavior: an old man flirting with a young woman working at a coffeeshop; a surprising hug from a bare acquaintance, which lasts a little too long and is a little too close. But what makes these actions creepy as opposed to some other moral, or social, failing? And is there anything distinctively morally significant about sexual creepiness?

Surprisingly little has been written on this topic. Two notable exceptions are a paper by Bonnie Mann, “Creepers, Flirts, Heroes, and Allies, and a paper by Jeremy Fischer and Rachel Fredericks, “The Creeps as a Moral Emotion.” There are also several recent empirical studies on the notion of creepiness by psychologists.

In this paper I argue that, while progress has been made, extant theories of sexual creepiness fail to explain the nature and moral significance of the concept. I defend a theory of sexual creepiness which builds on the strengths and weaknesses of Mann's and Fischer's and Frederick's accounts, and coheres with empirical research on the topic. I begin with Mann's account, which contrasts sexual creepiness with flirtation. I argue that, while Mann offers insight into many (if not most) instances of creepiness, her exclusive focus on a particular form of sexual creepiness, the creepiness of men towards women, leads her astray. Next, I consider Fischer's and Frederick's moral insensitivity account which attempts to make sense of the notion

of creepiness more generally, including but not limited to, sexual creepiness. I argue that while this account is on the right track, it fails to distinguish creepiness from other moral wrongs. The crux of my position is that creepy behavior is crucially covertly threatening and insensitive to a victim(s) choices or autonomy. The paper also makes an important distinction between genuine and apparent sexual creepiness.

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Pamela Courtenay-Hall (UPEI)

Jordan MacPhee (UPEI)

Nathan Brett (Dal)

Alex Wellington (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Climate Change Symposium: Coping philosophically with climate change, ecological grief, and environmental policy

How can we cope wisely with the uncertainties, fear and despair that climate change raises in us, and the grief that ecological destruction brings? How should we respond to the devastating social and global inequalities that climate change is causing? Are young people's rights violated by policies that are inadequate to prevent or mitigate the harms of climate change? These are profoundly philosophical questions. They are also interconnected. In this session, we explore these interconnections.

In **Ecological Grief and Ecological Identity in Philosophical Perspective**, Pamela Courtenay-Hall will look at the resources we can find in the writings of Marcus Aurelius, Leo Tolstoy, John Dewey and environmental activist Vandana Shiva to help us cope with climate change and ecological grief. She will then share the perspective we can gain from considering the concept of ecological identity developed from almost 40 years of teaching environmental philosophy ... and its limits.

In **Healing Ecological Damage and Despair through Regenerative Farming**, Jordan MacPhee will explore the philosophical importance of opposing apathy through action, describing his own experience and observations as a young farmer of healing ecological damage and despair through healthy food and regenerative farming.

In **Philosophers Coping with the Climate Crisis**, Nathan will first outline some of the questions related to climate change that we, as philosophers, are best positioned to deal with given our training. He will then draw from his own work in philosophy of law to discuss some of the philosophical questions that arise in legal challenges to industry and government policy. For example, the distinction between acts and omissions - much discussed in the philosophical literature - is highly relevant to the decisions about whether young people's rights are violated by policies and regulations that are inadequate to prevent or mitigate the harms of climate change. Again, the climate crisis is a collective action problem, a tragedy of the commons. How should we conceive of liability for harm in this situation?

And in **Failings of Law and Visions of Future Climate Justice**, Alex Wellington finds hope beyond the dismal record of environmental laws to date. She will discuss the progress of recent lawsuits brought by young people, aimed at bringing governments and industry to account. The larger, deeper message behind these law suits is that if it is to protect human rights,

the law must not shield the failings of government that continue to enable nightmare scenarios into the future. Instead, the law needs to be turned around and made to work towards the goal of climate justice, not just in theory but in practice. Philosophers can help by articulating the normative and conceptual frameworks that underpin present environmental law, and identifying frameworks that can ground alternate visions of environmental law as it should be. Philosophers can thus show why, for there to be a viable duty to obey the law, there has to be law worth obeying.

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Tony Couture
Philosophy Department
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Relevance of Nestor Makhno (1888-1934)

A legendary freedom fighter from Huliaipole, Ukraine, Makhno has relevance as 1) an international anarchist and forerunner of Ukrainian independence from both Russian tyranny and Western bullshit support. 2) He was an early practical anarchist involved in debates over the 1926 Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists manifesto. Educated in peasant communal groups called hromady and later in Russian prisons by reading Kropotkin, Makhno fought a guerilla war from 1917 to 1921 for an independent people in Ukraine not enslaved by the Russian world nor subjected to hereditary landowners or European capitalism. 3) Makhno's rural Cossack roots and parrhesia (fearless speech) promoted reasonable forms of democratic self-government for Ukrainians but he was defeated by treachery of the Soviet Red Army in 1921. Makhno's dual purpose no-bullshit-anarchism provides means for debunking the aggressor culture of maskirovka and the Russian military doctrine of informational superiority, as well as criticizing the more passive tyranny by cultural hegemony, media distraction or money power facing Ukraine in its turn to the West.

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Mary Jo Curry, Memorial University,
Louis Groarke, St. Francis Xavier University

Utopianizing and Political Methodology: A Discussion

Are utopias a good way to do political philosophy? As a methodology, do they do more harm than good? The best known "utopia" in political philosophy is, no doubt, Plato's Republic. But philosophers, guided by theoretical impulses, often idealize aspects of proposed political systems. They "utopianize" to their heart's content. But do utopias obscure what good politics is about? Seen from a pragmatist perspective, one can criticize "utopianizing" tendencies as impotent and unrealistic, even as dangerous. Politics, understood as the active implementation of just social practices, may be a matter of compromises and everyday political realism. Utopias

tend towards extreme theoretical idealism of one sort or another. Removed from the concrete, messy, everyday physical world, utopianizing theories may be overly influenced by the academic, philosophical context in which they were created and largely disconnected from the practical context of real-world politics. Limited by the knowledge and experience of a given philosopher at a given moment in time, utopianizing theories risk being rendered quickly obsolete, retaining interest more as a matter of philosophical history than contemporary relevance.

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Paul Curry
Department of Philosophy
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Public Reason, Liberated

Rawls's political liberalism employs 'public reason' to govern the discourse of judges, legislatures, political candidates, and ideally some of the political actions of citizens. This involves appealing to premises we accept and believe others could reasonably accept in a society characterized by reasonable pluralism.

I argue that a better theory would see the development of liberalism, and its attendant public reason, as a tradition, the result of a reasoned, dialectical process. Concepts like liberty and equality result from historically connected developments such as habeas corpus, the right to trial by peers, the arbitrariness of distinctions by skin colour and so on. In a similar fashion, we can conceive of the parameters around public discourse, or what constitutes our public reason, as the result of a dialectical tradition.

A public reason based on analogical reasoning would not suffer the limitations of the Rawlsian version. The latter follows from the foundational assumptions of political liberalism and results in strict guidelines surrounding admissible public discourse. The analogical view I advocate allows greater latitude, being a collection of many different judgments which underdetermine future development. This view is amenable to admitting substantive goods even if it has a history of caution in this area. Our discourse can draw upon a rich tradition where a host of virtues play a substantive role.

In this exploratory talk, I will argue for the strength of this substantive liberal approach over against its political liberal rival.

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Molly Dea-Stephenson
Department of Philosophy and the Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminism
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Afterdeath: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Funerary Practices and the Corpse

Despite the wealth of recent philosophical literature on death and dying, the significance of corpses and funerary practices, or afterdeath, has largely been neglected within the recent literature. I argue that contemporary analytic philosophy of death and dying ought to expand its focus so that we can come to a better understanding of the philosophical significance of afterdeath.

To this end, I consider the philosophical significance of the development of alternative funerary practices, with a particular focus on Natural Organic Reduction (NOR), which I argue puts into practice Val Plumwood's suggestion that our funerary practices can be used to unsettle claims to human separation from and superiority over nature by highlighting the deep interconnectedness of humans and non-human nature. Next, I argue that we do not all have equal claim to this putative superiority over nature by thinking through the significance of Emmett Till's funeral and its relationship to more traditional African American funerary practices. We see, here, a tension between the drives 1) to use alternative funerary practices to undermine claims to human superiority and 2) to use more traditional funerary practices to claim superiority in death when it has been denied in life. I argue that this tension is of obvious philosophical significance and highlights that any adequate philosophy of afterdeath will have to be sensitive to the fact that different groups have different funerary needs and imbue funerary practices with different senses. Finally, I suggest that feminist philosophy is the subdiscipline best positioned to expand contemporary philosophy of death and dying into the field of afterdeath since feminist philosophy, at its best, actively works to confront such varied and contextual meanings, and because there is already a precedent for feminist philosophers to bring the body back into philosophy where its significance has been underemphasized.

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Dana Doucette

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Birkbeck College, University of London

People Who Can Eat People Are the Luckiest People in the World: A Philosophy of Taboo.

What is taboo and what role does it play in our story telling? This presentation will examine the roles that taboo play in our narratives and what our taboos tell us about how we perceive the world around us. More specifically, this talk will look at depictions of cannibalism and incest within cinema and how storytellers have been able to use these subjects to examine sexual identity, power structures, mental health, and addiction.

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Scott Edgar

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Reason and the infinite in Hermann Cohen's Principle of the Infinitesimal Method

The neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen's book, *The Principle of the Infinitesimal Method and its History* (1883), presents a number of challenges to anyone who wants to understand epistemology or philosophy of science in the nineteenth century. The book seems to be the origin of some of the most important doctrines of one of the two most prominent schools of neo-Kantianism at a time when neo-Kantianism dominated academic German philosophy. An adequate account of late nineteenth-century epistemology and philosophy of science in Germany must make sense of this book. Unfortunately, historians of philosophy have not made sense of the book. The simple reason is that Cohen's most central claim in it seems bizarre. He aims above all to establish that the concept of an infinitesimal magnitude has what he calls a "realizing meaning." That is, he insists that the concept of infinitesimal magnitude is what makes it possible for natural science to represent real objects. Further, he thinks this role is unique to that concept: other mathematical concepts, and the concepts of, for example, substance and causality do not have this important role to play. For Cohen, natural science represents reality when and only when it employs the concept of infinitesimal magnitude. Because Cohen's central claim is so bizarre, historians of late modern philosophy have failed to understand it, and so have failed to understand the book as a whole. This paper reconstructs the underlying philosophical motivations for Cohen's claim. It turns out that Cohen's claim rests, most fundamentally, on relations Cohen sees between the concepts of the infinite, arbitrariness (and freedom from it), universal validity, and reason itself. Cohen's rich thinking about those very general epistemological concepts explains much of his book's philosophical value, and starts to explain its influence on subsequent German philosophy.

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Rachel Elliott

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Recovering the Habit Body Through Music

'Recovery' has at least two senses. It can mean to re-acquire something lost. It can also mean to be overcoming some condition, such as addiction. These two senses might appear to express contrary tendencies: In the first sense, we do not have the thing we are trying to recover. In the second sense, we are trying to lose something that we have. What both senses capture, however, is a movement between having and not-having, as well as a certain orientation generated by this ambiguity. When it comes to recovering the body, this dual valence of having/losing is paramount. In our contemporary spectator culture, we often find ourselves lost in visual material in a virtual space. However, we are equally capable of shifting our focus back to our multisensory body as it exists in primary reality or the *Umwelt*. In my talk, I will present work-in-progress from my manuscript about Maurice MerleauPonty and music, specifically the chapter on musical epistemology. I propose to discuss how musical experience foregrounds our embodiment in particular ways that allow for the habit body to be disclosed and to become conspicuous - for it to be recovered, if you will. I suggest that this way of grasping the habit

body - through music - stand in contrast to Merleau-Ponty's own development of the concept in his analysis of the patient Schneider in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

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Kyley Ewing
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Freedom and Well-Being in the B-Theoretic Block

This paper considers the relationship between time, free will, and happiness. After motivating the B-theoretic block universe theory of time and defending the claim that it is not compatible with a world where free will genuinely exists at the ontological level, I propose a hybrid account of well-being and suggest that there is a strong connection between our perception of our own freedom and our well-being in the B-theoretic block universe. If it is the case, as is often argued by B-theoretic block universe supporters, that time does not really pass, then our main task would be to uncover and investigate the cognitive basis and mechanisms responsible for our perception of temporal passage. While I do not offer a full analysis of our perception of temporal passage in the B-theoretic block, I do want to suggest that one component of well-being is connected to our perception of the passage of time and our own freedom. While this would be an objective criterion to check off a list, the criteria itself would have a subjective component insofar as it is about perception and subjective experience. Overall, my analysis will bring me to conclude that those who view the future as more open-ended and feel as if more time remains to them, should in general have a higher sense of well-being than those who view the future as closed off to them and feel as if little time remains. This brings up interesting questions connected to the relationship between truth and what would be most beneficial for humans. For instance, would it be beneficial for humans to think of the future as more open-ended even if our best metaphysical and scientific picture of time informs us that free will is an illusion?

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Andrew Fenton
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On the CCAC's revised ethics document on the scientific use of animals

Over the last several years, the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) has been revising its core ethics document, which has not changed since 1989. I have been serving on the subcommittee working on the revised text and propose to compare and contrast the current ethics document with the one under development (using whatever is publicly available at the time of

my presentation). Russell and Burch's 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction, and Refinement) get special mention in the 1989 document and their emphasis on humane animal use informs the parameters it sets out. Unsurprisingly then, the current document leans heavily on non-maleficence (albeit implicitly), though understood through a lens that accepts that harmful animal scientific use can be ethical. Despite the dated character of the document, there are several elements that remain both ethically important and carry through to the revised one, at least at time of writing. A change visible in the revised document (referencing the draft posted for public feedback) is the explicit use of actual ethics principles to frame what qualifies as ethically constrained scientific use of animals falling under CCAC jurisdiction. This is a significant departure from relying solely or primarily on the 3Rs (perhaps along with some form of harm-benefit analysis). My presentation will walk through why this qualifies as a genuine advance over the more internationally common 3Rs orientation. It will also highlight other advances in the revised document. Though the revised document promises to be an ethically significant development for the CCAC community, it still falls short of our highest ethics standards. A long-neglected consideration in such documents is justice, despite its long-standing presence in human research ethics. This presentation will indicate what just animal use requires and where the revised CCAC document both aligns with while continuing to fall short of that moral ideal.

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Jennifer Flynn

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The Role of Personal Perspective in Philosophical Method

Philosophical bioethics pays a great deal of attention to its own methods. Within the relevant discussions, there is a general wariness towards methods that seem to allow too much room for the subjective. For instance, casuistry is often thought to give too much credence to past moral reasoning, in the absence of an appeal to anything like moral principles. Or again, various forms of narrative ethics are taken to give too much authority to an individual's perspective. At the same time, within these discussions there is some priority given to the importance of an individual's perspective. This can take the form of an emphasis on moral sensitivity, or an emphasis upon an individual's level of moral responsiveness.

This creates a tension. We have a criticism of methods of bioethics that rely too heavily upon personal perspective. At the same time, there is a priority given to such personal perspective, in the emphasis upon an individual's moral responsiveness. This paper involves three main tasks. First, I identify and argue for the existence of this tension. Second, I urge that there are special reasons for bioethics to keep a hold of both tendencies. Partly because there is a certain role for moral sensitivity within bioethics, motivations exist to reconcile this tension. Third, I offer suggestions as to how this might be done. Here I pay special attention to what we should view as the limits of the authority of personal perspective.

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Lisa Forsberg (Oxford)

Anthony Skelton (University of Western Ontario)

Difficulty, Achievement, and Perfectionist Value

Climbing Mount Everest and writing a convincing philosophy paper seem like activities that qualify as achievements. Many think that to qualify as an achievement an activity must be difficult. On Gwen Bradford's influential account of achievement, an activity is difficult only when it involves the exertion of a sufficient quantity of what she calls intense effort. Many think that achievements are themselves valuable. On perfectionist views like Bradford's, the exertion of intense effort also explains an activity's achievement value. An achievement is valuable in part because it involves the development or exercise of the will, which is, according to the perfectionist view Bradford defends, a valuable capacity. We present two problems for Bradford's account. First, we try to raise doubt about the intuitive plausibility of Bradford's view that only intensely effortful activities qualify as difficult. Second, we argue that there is a less than clear explanatory connection between Bradford's view of difficulty and her perfectionist account of the value of achievement. We argue that on Bradford's account of difficulty it may turn out that living a life high in perfectionist value may not be difficult in her sense.

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Mark Fortney

Department of Philosophy

Dalhousie University

Polishing a Mirror or Growing a Tree? On The Imagery of Buddhist Soteriology

This presentation is about the diversity of ways in which various Buddhist philosophers concretely characterize the path to liberation. For many Buddhists that path is not exhausted by (or, more weakly, primarily) stripping away our habitual ways of thinking. While such a "diminutive" account of the path to liberation is arguably an accurate one for Buddhists like Katsuki Sekida, there are non-diminutive accounts of the path in both Theravāda and Mahāyāna texts. These accounts of the path to liberation can help us address some objections to Buddhist accounts of the good life. Buddhaghosa, for a Theravāda Buddhist example, compares a part of the path to liberation called "the development of consciousness" to setting up scaffolding, beams, and rafters. He compares another part of the path called "the development of understanding" to growing a tree. These are not images of diminution. Hakuin, for a Mahāyāna Buddhist example, compares the difference between the Buddha-Nature of the enlightened and the BuddhaNature of the unenlightened to the difference between water and ice. While the same underlying substance is there in both cases, it has been significantly changed rather than merely revealed. Hakuin's image, like Buddhaghosa's images, are not images of diminution. This presentation focuses on one particular part of Buddhaghosa's account of the development of understanding, which is "purification of view". Part of the purification of view consists in abandoning the perception of persons, and this part of the purification of view is in a sense diminutive. But purification of

view also consists in learning to adopt “correct vision of materiality and mentality”, that is, vision which is in accordance with Buddhaghosa’s distinctive understanding of mind and body, as well as their interdependence. This part of the purification of view is a way of growing rather than being diminished.

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James Gerrie
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Is Political Polarization in Democratic Societies a Sign of Civilizational Collapse?

According to anthropologist and historian Joseph Tainter, societies collapse when they reach a point of complex cultural/technological development where the energy available to the system as a product of its level of cultural/technological complexity is no longer sufficient to respond to the social/environmental problems thrown up by that system. In times of excess energy, which allow societies to actually build new forms of complexity (i.e. to progress), if novel problems arising from complexity present themselves, politicians will actually be able to propose new kinds of complexity to address these issues. They might still lie for selfish or strategic reasons in certain circumstances, but this will not be an absolute necessity. If they can identify possible additions to civilizational complexity that truly address problems, they can present these to voters, who can then make real choices between options. However, once energy overshoot begins to take hold no real solutions will manifest themselves. Little practical difference will therefore result from the various false solutions and as a result the act of voting will increasingly become an exercise in random selection based on non-rational, essentially random features of human psychology, personality and circumstance aggregated across vast populations. Based on such an analysis of the current situation possibly facing global civilization, consideration of some basic principles for guiding better political discourse in the light of Tainter’s theory will be presented.

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Louis Groarke (St. Francis Xavier University)
Mark Mercer (Saint Mary’s University)

Words About the Wordless: What to Make of the “Ineffable”?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines “ineffable” as “too great or extreme to be expressed or described in words.” The *Merriam-Webster* defines it as “incapable of being expressed in words.” But are there in fact aspects of the world that in principle escape linguistic formulation? Are there things that no one could say, describe, explain, capture in words, in a theory, through an argument? Particular human beings often lack the knowledge, the eloquence, the intelligence to adequately express their understanding of the world. But are there features of reality—objects

inside (or beyond) the world, or types of experience—that even the most eloquent speaker, the most adept scientist, the wisest philosopher, must fail to express in words? And if there are, would philosophy, understood as a paradigmatic pursuit of knowledge, be inescapably fragmentary, incomplete, unfinished? Would a certain inevitable skepticism be part of what philosophy talks about and teaches?

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The Aesthetics of Taekwondo

Much sport aesthetics concerns sport generally or broad distinctions between different types of sport (e.g., aesthetic vs. purposive sports). By contrast, some sport philosophers have examined the aesthetics of particular sports (e.g., soccer and MMA). In the latter vein, I will examine the aesthetics of taekwondo. I begin with a five-level analysis, proposed elsewhere, for engaging the aesthetics of human movement. I then analyze four key elements in the aesthetics of taekwondo: (1) spectacular kicks, (2) an analogy with soccer (deriving from restricted use of the hands), (3) joint status as a martial art and a combat sport, (4) a kind of underdog appeal as a martial art. I conclude with some observations about the aesthetic psychology of belt rankings from white to black in martial arts generally and taekwondo in particular.

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Building Lena Blanche: Ship-building Notes for Socrates's Progeny

We worry about our children's souls, abstracted from their bodies by video games, virtual reality, and social media. But we suffer from a deeper disembodiment, too, as old as Western philosophy. Our liberal arts, manipulating information in the abstract, imagine themselves distinct from and immeasurably superior to the mechanical arts: manipulating the information embodied in an artisan's materials, tools, hands, eyes, and brain. The question I'd bring to P.E.I. is this: how do we recover from so deep a prejudice? In her 1993 work, *Socrates Ancestor*, Indra Kagis McEwen begins with Socrates mentioning to Euthyphro "the handiwork of my ancestor Daedalus". Through a meticulous reading of Anaximander B1 and other fragments, she expands on this moment to show how Greek speculation arises in archaic crafts - notably shipbuilding. The gnomon of the sundial stands as paradigm and epitome of subsequent knowledge-making, reducing Helios to a mere shadow, and inscribing that onto a dead block of marble.

Taking as implied the benefits of recovering embodied life, and taking as a premise McEwen's account of the origins of abstraction, this paper suggests three ways in which we might regain our embodied selves. The body of this paper explores the possible extension of the academy into the gymnasium, the painter's studio, and the manufactory; not as counterpoint to, or relief from, or ornament upon the philosophical garden, but as integral to its purpose.

In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle proposes that architects are more estimable and are wiser than handworkers because they know the reasons for things being done. I beg to differ. Architecture removed from the exigencies of the site and from the lives of its inhabitants forgets the reasons construction is undertaken. By helping build the schooner *Lena Blanche*, some young architects seek to remember.

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Emerson Kang
Independent Scholar

Towards a Social Ontology of the Unhoused Person: A Critique of Neoliberal Discursive Strategies for Othering Homelessness

Discursive strategies for othering homelessness have led to increasing stigmatization of the homeless across the U.S. in the last few decades. In the same period, policies criminalizing homelessness have cast a certain legitimacy back on this othering discourse, creating a reciprocal and self-reinforcing relation between policy and concept, further marginalizing homeless persons. Neoliberal discourse peculiarly singles out homeless persons by their material circumstances, reducing the understanding of their personhood to a diminished status narrowly defined by economic conditions. Thus, people are reduced to a single characteristic; when this characteristic is homelessness, a status perpetually problematized and criminalized, it effectively reduces the human person to a criminal condition due to their economic need. Ontologically, it is unclear why/how homelessness can legitimately be construed as a constitutive characteristic of a person as opposed to a contingent circumstance. The philosophical problem suggested by this discursive strategy is further deepened and complicated by its real political, social, even legal consequences. Following Plato, this paper undertakes an analysis identifying the philosophical conditions appearing to justify the concept of homelessness within neoliberal ideology. This analysis seeks to show how recent forms of neoliberal discourse have led to an ontologically dubious, unacceptably reductive conception of persons. Given that we have found a self-reinforcing, reciprocal relationship between such discourse and increasingly marginalizing anti-homelessness policies, this paper will argue that a broader philosophical conception of the social ontology of the person must be evolved if current trends towards the othering of the homeless within neoliberalism are to be reversed.

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AUTISM AND THE PSEUDOSCIENCE OF MIND

Research on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has aimed to elucidate the psychological or cognitive mechanisms underpinning autism's behavioural manifestations. Such cognitive explanations are supposed to further our aetiological understanding of ASD by positing an 'intervening variable' between biology and behaviour. Numerous hypotheses have been forwarded in the past half-century, including the popular claim that autistics lack a theory of mind. Theory-of-mind-deficit explanations of autism have been of particular interest to philosophers in light of the normative and theoretical entailments of an individual who is 'unable' to attribute mental states to others. This fact would have consequences for epistemology, theories of mind, theories of meaning, and normative theory, among others. However, the claim that autistics lack a theory of mind is false. The purpose of this paper is to describe how this claim is false. I begin by reviewing research that suggests that theory-of-mind-deficits cannot be adequate as an explanatory model for autism. I then rehearse the empirical failures of experiments intended to measure theory-of-mind abilities. Finally, I argue that experimental 'evidence' for the theory-of-mind-deficit explanation of autism amounts to pseudoscience by exploring the following two questions: Do tests of theory of mind measure theory of mind? What test could disprove the claim that autistics lack a theory of mind? I conclude by examining this argument's consequences for philosophers who uncritically invoke autism (qua theory-of-mind deficit) as a thought experiment.

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For Nietzsche's Theory of Drives: Mapping Executive Intentions onto Drives

Nietzsche's musings on drives in such works as *Human All Too Human*, I. 32, *Daybreak* 119, *Beyond Good and Evil* 7, 19 and *On the Genealogy of Morals* III: 24 have given way to a perspicuous and remarkably homogenous reconstruction of his philosophical psychology in the secondary literature. According to the standard reading in the scholarship, Nietzsche contends that all human psychology is directly reducible to animal drives (e.g., sex, aggression) or indirectly explicable to their historical transformations (e.g., resentment). As Paul Katsafanas summarizes its role, the drive is "Nietzsche's principal explanatory token within psychology" (Katsafanas 2016, 74).

But what exactly are drives? In his more sober moments, Nietzsche takes a pragmatic approach toward drives. Drives are bridging explanations Nietzsche utilizes to understand human embodiment. On the mental side, drives are representational: they take an object as their aim. For example, I seek food when I am hungry. Qua physiological drives appear to be signals from the body: a hunger pang is a painful interoception caused, in part, by the

release of the stomach hormone ghrelin. Minimally drives serve as conduits transporting information from the body for the mind to act on.

Yet as Tom Stern points out in a recent article, “Against Nietzsche’s ‘Theory’ of Drives,” there are significant problems with the theory itself. In brief, he argues that drives are too vacuous to perform the work they were designed for, namely explaining conscious acts. I argue that Stern is right: mapping deliberative intentional actions onto drives is difficult. However, other intentional actions are not subtended by deliberation. Alfred Mele calls these executive intentions. I conclude by suggesting that mapping executive intentions onto drives may answer at least some of the difficulties Stern raises in his article

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Artistic Abstraction is Metaphysical

Barker Fairley’s (1887-1986) philosophy of art was a pivotal stimulus for the development of our Canadian cultural identity, and, although he was a celebrated Canadian academic, an expert on Goethe, an art theorist, a poet and a painter and he and others wrote about his art, neither he nor others documented or systematized Fairley’s theory of visual art and literature. In the early twentieth century, partly as a result of Canada’s performance in the first world war, the idea of Canada as a nation arose in the consciousness of the western world and a sense of Canadian identity evolved in the young nation. Fairley was an important voice in that period of surging cultural development and his ideas about art, particularly literature and visual arts, shaped a national conversation about what it means to be Canadian. In this paper, the title of which is a quote from Fairley, I argue that Fairley’s philosophy, the source of his cultural influence, was a cogent blend of Expressionism and Formalism based in Romanticism, and we see that philosophy reflected both in his own art practice and in the artists and artistic ideas that he chose to promote.

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Simone de Beauvoir Barbie

In this talk, I will explore Greta Gerwig’s Barbie as a modern retelling of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*—specifically, the Justification chapters. We see Stereotypical Barbie (hereafter, Barbie) progress through an existential journey. She begins in a Barbieland, which represents de Beauvoirian narcissism (the first chapter), where the barbies are defined by their Dream Houses

and superficial interests in dancing and numerous outfit changes. When stereotypical Barbie attempts to raise existential questions—“Do you guys ever think about death?”—her attempts are rebuffed and she is forced to meet with Weird Barbie to attempt to discover a more authentic self. After a foray into the complexities of our world, Barbie returns to Barbieland to find it changed—but not for the better. The other Barbies, corrupted by Ken’s patriarchal messaging, have moved into de Beauvoir’s second attempted justification for existence: from “Narcissism to “Women in Love.” Barbie, like de Beauvoir, finds this response equally unsatisfying, eventually convincing the other Barbies to throw off their temptation towards complicity in their own oppression. But while the other Barbies are content to return to the superficial, Barbie journeys through the final stage of de Beauvoirian justification: “The Mystic.” she meets with her God-like creator, Ruth Handler (who founded the toy company, Mattel) and searches for meaning as a good creation. Ultimately, however, Barbie rejects this false path as well. At the end of the movie, she chooses to embrace her authentic human self—thereby quite literally embodying de Beauvoir’s famous quote: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (283).

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Lisa McKeown
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[Austin, Barbie]

In this paper I bring Austin’s speech act theory to bear on Greta Gerwig’s hit film *Barbie*, to explain why Gloria’s final monologue has divided audiences. While some find the monologue superfluous, I argue that the speech’s power is consistent with the logic of the film.

Speech acts – what language does in the saying of it – shift throughout the film. Barbies run the world, so their speech shapes reality: they declare Ken healed, that ‘every night is girls’ night’, that logic and emotion are compatible. Their language often takes the form of an explicit illocutionary act: by stating what they want to be true, the Barbies make it true.

In the real world, words lose this force. Barbie and Ken describe their reality rather than creating it, which, for Barbie “very much has an undertone of violence.” Barbie approaches Sasha, but someone warns that ‘no one talks to them.’ Sasha’s speech shames Barbie, leaving her feeling helpless.

Back in Barbieland, Ferrera’s monologue identifies typical double-binds, and in naming the Barbies’ experience, they snap out of their Ken-induced trance. The words have revelatory power, through the recognition of a very adult, embodied experience.

This speech is an example of what Stanley Cavell called a ‘passionate utterance’ – an utterance that demands someone’s experience be acknowledged. However, passionate utterances are messier than declarative illocutionary acts. In the real world, identifying double-binds often creates dissonance as we still desire things while understanding that such desires are self-destructive. Yet the speech works within the logic of Barbieland exactly because Barbies don’t have the complex emotional lives of humans. By naming the internalization of oppressive beliefs they diffuse, solving the crisis of ideology, but leaving viewers with a level of dissonance, because we both do and do not relate to the Barbies’ journey.

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[James's Squirrel]

A man runs feverishly around a tree, trying to catch a glimpse of a squirrel on the other side. No matter how quickly he moves, the squirrel matches his pace and successfully evades him. While their arboreal dance goes on, onlookers consider a metaphysical question: does this man go around the squirrel or doesn't he?

This scenario, first proposed by William James at the beginning of the 20th century, is meant to showcase pragmatism's special ability to resolve metaphysical disputes. To see if there is really a debate to be had here at all, we just need to look at the empirical consequences of the question--whether the man "goes around" the squirrel depends only on our definition of "around", and thus the matter is idle. In *Pragmatist Quietism* (2023), Andrew Sepielli proposes that we call disputes like this "superficial", as they have no bearing on our non-conceptual representation of the world. This is in contrast with the "deep" disputes that do have the power to alter our 'map-like' understanding. In this paper, I push back on this distinction. When we try to define a boundary between these 'deep' and 'superficial' realms of inquiry, we come up short – on Sepielli's definition, as well as a related view from Chalmers (2011), some things which ought to be properly "about the world" end up as merely conceptual upon closer investigation. And the opposite is true as well: I argue for a perspective from which we may see all disputes (deep and superficial) as raising empirical, substantive questions about the arrangement of 'substances' in the universe. This view, which I have (tentatively) called Concept Physicalism, draws from process philosophy and 4E cognition, and is the subject of the second half of my paper.

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Letitia Meynell
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Image and Inference: What Aesthetics Can Contribute to the Logics of Science

In this presentation, I will make a case for why aesthetics should take a significant role in the philosophy of science. Specifically, I will argue that different modes of representation (such as mathematical expressions, pictures, and natural languages) and different genres within those modes (say narratives, thought experiments, and deductive arguments) support different types of inference. This is because of the different ways that these modes of representation display their content. Given the ubiquity of pictorial representations, data visualizations, narratives, models,

and metaphors in the sciences, understanding the distinctive epistemic characteristics (strengths and weaknesses) of these various modes of representation is urgent.

With the exception of formal and informal logic and mathematics, the analysis of the distinctive character of these modes of representation and, importantly, the different ways the viewing/reading subject accepts or appreciates these modes of representation in their many genres has been carried out in aesthetics. Without an appreciation of these different modes of representation and the inferences that they support philosophers are unlikely to be able to offer useful insights into epistemic practices in the sciences.

I will begin by presenting the theoretical tools through which I will examine my example—Kendall Walton’s theory of representation (1990) and John Willats’s analysis of pictorial representation (1997). I will then turn to an example, Einstein’s famous train thought experiment proving the relativity of simultaneity/time. What’s of particular interest is the dependence of this thought experiment on a picture and what this tells us about the inferences that pictures support in contrast to those characteristic of language. I will then muse about what this example tells us about how analyses of various modes of representational content from aesthetics can help to make science better.

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How should we characterize the relationship between feminist and social epistemologies?

Thanks to the work of contemporary social epistemologists, we can see the problematic impact of echo chambers and epistemic bubbles. Perhaps one of the most concerning implications of echo chambers is the inability for expertise to play its appropriate role. If a person in an echo chamber can reasonably think that the information they receive from so called experts is reliable, and they have been indoctrinated with simple explanations to dismiss legitimate expert testimony, we end up in a dramatically polarized landscape surrounding even the most basic scientific facts. This concern has been discussed by scholars like C. Thi Nguyen, Elijah Millgram, Regina Rini, Neil Levy and many others, highlighting how “bad beliefs” can easily happen to reasonable people (Levy 2022). What’s perhaps even more concerning is that these social structures preventing knowledge translation effectively eliminate the possibility of enacting any sort of feminist-informed interventions to address inequity. The central tenets of feminist standpoint theory, often arising in conversations about moral disagreement, lead to recommendations insisting on elevating the testimony of people who have been oppressed and marginalized to better understand how our social systems are perpetuating injustice. When translation between epistemic communities is nearly impossible, as social epistemologist the measures we take to hear the testimony of marginalized people ends up wildly ineffective. When it comes to this hold that echo chambers have on epistemic communities, focusing solely on the social epistemology or solely on the standpoint theoretical approach leaves us with only half of the picture. In this paper, I insist that any philosophical discussions about conflicting epistemic frameworks must be informed by both social epistemology and feminist standpoint theory. I start

by sketching the differences between social and feminist epistemologies, highlighting why each of these theoretical approaches brings its own unique contributions to discussions about the collective ignorance that can flourish in an echo chamber. Then, I go on to explore and excavate some of the philosophical and pragmatic challenges that emerge when polarized communities try to engage with each other.

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Propaganda: Filtering Reality to Further an Agenda

In our modern liberal society, we expect nothing short of total transparency from the systems that govern us. It would seem counter-intuitive, then, for a philosopher to propose that a propaganda-fuelled society would enjoy internal stability and rally in the face of foreign threats. However, like a benevolent doctor, Plato prescribes “a Noble Lie” as medicine for political conflict. In referring to Plato, his student Aristotle tries to determine propaganda’s ideal dosage. Throughout my presentation, I will define propaganda as the filtering of reality to further an agenda. I will argue that while the expediency of propaganda may be tempting, there is an intrinsic value to telling the truth and pulling citizens into enlightenment. On the topic of recovering our embodied bodies, we are challenged to reflect on cases where the opportunity to live truthfully is withheld from us. In the “Allegory of the Cave,” Plato suggests that the unenlightened soul is like a prisoner chained in a cave who is forced to watch shadow cast upon a wall. And yet, while the Plato of the Republic seems to envision a society where only the philosopher-rulers escape the cave, leaving the rest of the citizens in darkness, spellbound by shadows, this negative attitude deprives ordinary people of the opportunity to live in a way that is truthful and oriented towards true virtue. I would argue, furthermore, that the Republic and the Nicomachean Ethics detail how society is ultimately optimized when individuals’ relationships are genuine, rulers are honest, and people are freed from their ignorance. A reality that exists at odds with a government lying to its citizens, depriving them of enlightenment, even for apparently benevolent reasons.

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A Subtle Transformation of Voice in Digital Environments

Often described as ‘auto complete on steroids’, Large Language Models (LLMs machine learning models designed to understand and generate human-like text based on the input they receive. While LLMs seem to democratize content creation and minimize manual editing, this

article contends that this efficiency may inadvertently standardize expression, compromise the linguistic idiosyncrasies, rhythms, and stylistic elements defining an individual's 'voice', especially for those underrepresented in the training data. Halcyon M. Lawrence's analysis of digital voice assistants such as Apple's "Siri" and Amazon's "Alexa" highlights a similar phenomenon. Lawrence posits that these technologies enact a form of "othering," which demands a kind of postcolonial assimilation to standardized accents, thereby neglecting the speaker's sociohistorical context. Comparable biases manifest in text-based generative AI systems like LLMs, where the user's unique style may be supplanted by normative, uniform expressions that align more closely with the statistical patterns in the training data rather than the individual's unique voice.

This paper aims to explore the potential diminution of individual 'voice', both stylistically and substantively, and its associated social implications. LLMs may unintentionally produce a homogenized voice emphasizing dominant narratives over diverse, nuanced discourse by generating content based on their training data's frequency distributions. This raises a critical question about the impact on autonomous mental development when the 'voice' engaged in dialogue is no longer entirely one's own. The concern becomes more acute if these systems emerge as the primary channels for disseminating information. Such a role could restrict access to a range of perspectives and reinforce what Hilde Lindemann terms as "Master Narratives." Ultimately, the analysis seeks to provoke discussion about the societal consequences of potential standardization of voice due to advancements in AI, emphasizing the critical importance of preserving individual expression in the context of rapidly evolving technology.

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Clamorous Bodies Without Organs: Badiou's Misreading of Difference in Deleuze

Alain Badiou's critique of Gilles Deleuze in *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being* misses its target. Badiou argues that Deleuze does not aim to liberate difference, as is commonly understood, but rather re-inscribes the multiple into a totalizing One. In this paper, I will first investigate how Badiou reaches this conclusion, then show why his interpretation of Deleuze is incorrect. Badiou rightly describes Deleuze's account of being as univocal; for being in Deleuze is said with one and the same voice. However, Badiou's conclusion as to what this univocity of being means is inaccurate: he misconceives Deleuze's concepts of being and the event that are both singular and multiple, a repetition of the same and a unique instantiation of difference. Since the event involves the expression of both forces simultaneously, a repetition with a difference, the difference separating them is never subsumed; instead, it is in and through this very difference that they become one. Being—though one substance for Deleuze—has a fractured or kaleidoscopic lens. The fractures or different parts of being belong to the exact same lens. Unity, for Deleuze, thus emerges through separation and difference, not despite it. I will employ Deleuze's concept of the Body without Organs to demonstrate how these radically different forces occupy a single plane of being without silencing the clamour of the many: this is a full and

teeming body crawling with intensities, not the dead body Badiou portrays. Therefore, Deleuze's repetition is not a repetition of the same that levels down difference and variation, but rather a repetition of the event continually producing it anew.

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What Makes a Phenomenological Account of Empathy?

Recent years have seen a proliferation of phenomenological accounts of empathy and associated concepts. Some of these – like Matthew Ratcliffe's "radical empathy" and "philosophical empathy," Alastair Morgan's "hybrid empathy," and Jolanda van Dijke et. al.'s "relational empathy," draw on phenomenological methods or concepts to argue for an expansion or variation in our understanding of how we experience others' experiences. Others – like Dan Zahavi's "basic empathy" and Zahavi and Shaun Gallagher's account of "direct social perception," as well as, arguably, Stephanie D. Preston and Frans de Waal's "Perception-Action Model (PAM) of empathy" – respond directly to wider debates in philosophy of mind, and draw on phenomenology to demonstrate an alternative to the ostensible dualism between so-called Theory-Theories (TT) and Simulation Theories (ST) of empathy. Beyond their common appeal to phenomenological concepts, however, these accounts are strikingly diverse; while Zahavi is explicit that empathy must not involve imaginative projection, Ratcliffe explicitly invokes imagination as necessary for filling in gaps in empathic understanding; and the PAM model invokes phenomenological conceptions of embodiment alongside an explicitly projectionist account of empathy, despite phenomenologists' virtually unanimous opposition to explanations based on projection. These not insignificant discrepancies would seem to betray a lack of consensus about what empathy consists in, phenomenologically. I propose an alternate reading: that the common commitments and divergences of these accounts instead point to the need for a variegated phenomenological understanding of empathy as both a fundamental capacity and refinable ability – that is, as an ameliorable form of other-relation – and that this raises questions about empathy's moral character.

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['Natural kinds' in Philosophy of Science]

'Natural kinds' in philosophy of science is a grouping or collection (kind) that demonstrates discrete categorizations of entity properties that have been identified to be similar and stable

enough to justify the grouping. Those properties should be ‘mind-independent’ (natural), i.e. free from personal, social or even physiological bias and observational perspective. Such groupings have been used in various disciplines from physics to sociology and psychology. Their use in species, race and class categorizations is notorious for flaws in logic and justification, resulting at least in misunderstanding, yet also in applications to provide supposed scientific support for subjugation of different peoples. However, it is still believed that at least physics and chemistry has demonstrated the existence of natural kinds, at least the elements and isotopes of the periodic table; the elementary particle ontology of the standard model; and minerals. In this paper I offer the conjecture that the entity ontology of atoms and elementary particles supposed to be at the foundation of natural kinds identification collides with the problem of change. Since all of the radioactive isotopes and all of the elementary particles are spontaneously unstable and/or change ‘kind’ due to various common interactions, their membership in a kind may be revoked, which obviates the purpose of such a grouping in the first place. Rather than an ontology of entities, an ontology of symmetry invariances as indicated by conserved quantities such as mass, spin, electric charge, etc. should be identified as the natural kinds. Conserved quantities never change, while which entity they ‘reside in’ may. They are the very definition of objective properties that enable natural kind-ness. From this basis, it may be possible to expand the view into other disciplines if relevant process-oriented symmetries can be determined.

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Kierkegaard on Embodiment as Vehicle and Limit for Self-Becoming

Kierkegaard, throughout his authorship, figures and refigures a conception of selfhood prioritizing becoming—one’s self is not a given, it manifests through active engagement in existence. However, it remains common to find Kierkegaard’s concept of selfhood interpreted through a spiritualist lens that posits the self as pre-formed and the individual needing to embrace a self that is given (perhaps best illustrated in *Either/Or II*, where Judge William discusses the need to accept and live the self that has been handed down by God). However, this perspective misses the importance attached to corporeality in the “original synthesis” of the human being as discussed in *The Sickness Unto Death*. Here, the spirit does not pre-determine one’s self but, in collaboration with one’s physical body, relates to the self through activity and reflection—the body, from this perspective, is co-equal with the mind and neither monopolizes selfhood. Our interest in this paper is to explore Kierkegaard’s conception of selfhood in a way that emphasizes the role of embodiment in providing the freedom to act, as well as placing limits on those actions. This is especially important in understanding the distinct characteristics of religiousness A and B, distinctions essential in conceptualizing the structure of Kierkegaard’s ethos (as religiousness A is predicated on a recognition of others as embodied whereas religiousness B focuses more acutely on one’s spiritual relation to others, i.e., whether they are a Christian). Understanding embodiment as promoting an ethical disposition before assent to Christianity accents his Christian writings on ethics, particularly *Works of Love*. Viewed from

this angle, the body is not an encumbrance distracting us from spiritual interiority, but the vehicle through which we approach, defend, and care for other embodied beings; the body is integral to not only one's own self-becoming, but also supporting the self-becoming of others.

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Here I am, for you: The Continental Ethics of the Biblical “Here I am”

In the Hebrew Bible the words “here I am” are said in response to a call from God by Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, and Ezra. What results from these responses is an acceptance into the service of God which comes to be through the creation of community. As such, the relationship between God, self and community becomes solidified through the answer to God. At the heart of this matrix is the problematic of the stranger, i.e., the “Other”. For philosophers like Levinas and Derrida, we derive an absolute duty from the other. Yet, as Kearney writes on the idea of a blind absolute duty toward the Other, it “downgrades [...] our legitimate duty to try to distinguish between benign and malign strangers” (2002, 70). This issue of not knowing the other, yet still bearing responsibility for them, is what concerns this paper. In this paper I will highlight how the “here I am” must further be understood as a “here I am for you”, where the “you” is expressed in God, the community and the Other. In this articulation of necessity, then, I argue that one can only come into being through the response of “here I am”, thus establishing the co-constitutive being of self/other. With the co-constitution of the self and other, I further argue that trying to find the difference between the benevolent (instead of benign) and malevolent stranger is a wrong approach that closes oneself from the stranger. Rather, in focusing on how the “other” and “I” are co-constituted we will be able to open future possibility. Through texts by Emmanuel Levinas, Richard Kearney, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Achille Mbembe I hope to uncover the self/other/God matrix through an understanding of the faithful co-constitution of selves present in the “here I am for you”.

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Less than Zero: Do We Need a Theory of Intrinsic Badness?

Following Shelly Kagan's (2015) claim that any adequate and complete theory of well-being requires a theory of ill-being – that is, of intrinsic prudential badness – philosophers have recently attempted to expand their preferred theories of well-being to include a complimentary account of ill-being. Dale Dorsey (2022) has given reasons to think that Kagan is wrong on this

score: all an adequate and complete theory of well-being is required to furnish is a comparative notion of prudential badness – roughly, as one thing being worse than something else. This paper critically examines Dorsey’s arguments and then briefly assesses the implications of the success (or failure) of these arguments for further theories of ill-being.

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Queen’s University

Where does a body live the good life? Aristotle and Meng Zi on the city and the family

The question of what the good life is rightly commands a lot of attention. But the question of where the good life is led has received rather less. In this paper I take a comparative approach to the latter question, looking at the stage on which the good life should ideally be led for Aristotle on the one hand, and his almost-exact contemporary Meng Zi on the other. The great Chinese philosopher Meng Zi (Mencius) sees the family as the first, and normatively ideal, space of ethical formation; the best politics should be modelled upon the best family life, and the best form of government serves the family realm as the setting for the good life. Much of Meng Zi’s political and ethical philosophy concerns how to limit political power in order to preserve the privacy of family as the locus of good living. There is an interesting contrast to be drawn between this view, and Aristotle’s view that the good life is led in the polis. Meng Zi, concerned with living well and how the good life is embodied, focuses on the physicality of routines (or “rituals”), and thereby highlights the ways in which the good life—the best life—is reachable through conduct as a mould for cognition. This is particularly so in the intimate world of the family, where the good life is (hopefully) modelled down the generations. Aristotle, of course, thinks the same about virtue as cultivated through habitual conduct, but differs in thinking that the city is the scene of human flourishing. In this talk I raise, and assess, the arguments of each for their conclusions about where to lead the most worthwhile life: in public, or in private?

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Monasteries & The Market: Thomas Aquinas’s Perfection of the Spiritual Life & Business Practices

In this paper, I propose an alternative to the business first principles of efficiency and capital gain by analyzing the underlying reasoning of Thomas Aquinas’s treatise on the monastic ideal, *The Perfection of the Spiritual Life*.

In the present-day discourse surrounding business's first principles, efficiency and capital gain have become the dominant orthodoxy that unavoidably serves as the starting point of every conversation. These principles, for many, have become the indubitable framework for thinking about the purpose of exchange. Amid these mainstream principles' pre-eminence, it is worthwhile to seek out balanced alternatives that preserve the unprecedented material well-being we enjoy today, but also bring a proportionate increase in our society's intellectual and moral well-being. I lay out such an alternative by describing precepts I derive from the abovementioned work, ultimately showing how a market constructed around Thomist justice and duty would have an increased focus on cultivating human well-being.

The pursuit of 13th-century religious life and present-day business have little common ground at first glance. So, I start the paper by showing the connection between them by using Aquinas's ideas of happiness and the universal good; this allows me to show that the same underlying principles govern the two pursuits. However, I also qualify their fundamentally dissimilar natures.

Next, I move on to the three means of becoming a just businessperson- the first set of precepts concerning Thomist justice and duty. The first precept is the reasonable attitude toward extrinsic goods, the second is the rectification of desire, and the last is the renunciation of undue capital gain. This set of precepts structures the actions of a businessperson under Thomist justice in the like manner that Aquinas's "three means of perfection" shape the life of a monk around charity. Lastly, I discuss the two principles of just business relations, a set of precepts that regulate relations between businesspeople that I created from the reasoning in Aquinas's "perfection of brotherly love." These are the sincere treatment of businesspeople and the rightly ordered treatment of businesspeople.

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Was J.C. Smuts an idealist philosopher?

The history of South African philosophy is only recently becoming widely known. Recent books and articles have been written on figures such as Martin Versfeld, Mongameli Mabona, Andrew H. Murray, and Alfred Hoernlé. And perhaps the best known book bearing on philosophy written by a South African is "Holism and Evolution," by Jan Christiaan Smuts (and from whom the term 'holism' has entered popular discourse). Yet Smuts - who was both Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa (1919-24 and 1939-48) and a military leader in both world wars, never taught as a philosopher, denied that the book was a work of philosophy, and also denied that he was an idealist. In this paper, I talk a bit about the idealism of the early 20th century and also review some elements of Smut's work and personal biography in order to determine whether one might describe him as a philosopher and, in particular, an idealist philosopher.

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Are Humans Worth It?

This paper will raise what may be a paradoxical question. As humans we are all self-involved in the 'human project' or at least some more localized iteration of it. Is it possible to question the worth of this project? This seems no question for a philosopher, as a philosopher, assumes that any question he raises is a worthwhile one. He is self-involved in the philosophical life as a good. Myths, however, depict the things it may be incoherent to think. Film makers are our modern 'mythographers' and directors like Darren Aronofsky and Andrei Tarkovsky have, in the films *Noah* and *Stalker* issued what seem to be powerful, if not final, indictments of the human project. Do humans need redemption? What form could that redemption take? A sacred one? A secular one? Are humans, in fact, redeemable at all? We will consider this in relation to Kant's notion of radical evil and the 'universalism' of the medieval mystic Julian of Norwich.