

Program Abstracts

Friday, October 15

1:00-2:20PM (1hr. 20 minutes)

Session 1A

NHIOP 4007 Session Chair: Susan Gabriel, Saint Anselm College

Paul McNamara

University of New Hampshire

Could Robots One Day Deserve Rights?

paulm@unh.edu

Ignoring the supernatural, until our time, the only serious candidates for possession of psychological attributes were biological entities. Bold AI is the view that it is possible in principle for a pure mechanism of some sort to possess psychological attributes. That's what "Bold AI" means, and that's what makes it theoretically and technically radical: it invites the quest to free the psychological from confinement to the biological, a quest characteristic of our times, and perhaps one that will end up marking an era. But what else of more practical weight might be true if the view is true? I explore the significance of Bold AI by asking this question with a focus on classical theories of rights, and various weaker and stronger versions of Bold AI.

Robert McKay

Norwich University

What is Agreement with Rational Nature?: A Proposal

mckay@norwich.edu

A definition of the natural law in terms of "agreement with rational nature" is characteristic of certain sixteenth- and seventeenth-century natural law theorists (including Suarez, Grotius, and Locke, though not, significantly, Pufendorf). The phrase 'rational nature' is historically striking. First, it does not seem to go back further than Gabriel Vasquez' commentary on the Prima Secundae of Aquinas's Summa. In particular, it does not occur in Aquinas' own treatment of law. Second, it turns up in several places in Kant's Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, including at least one in which Kant argues that autonomous morality cannot be based on contingent traits of human nature. This fact suggests that Kant may not have intended to reject any and every form of natural law thinking. What, then, might "agreement with rational nature" mean?

Session 1B

NHIOP 4006 Session Chair: James Mahoney, Saint Anselm College

C. Wesley DeMarco

Clark University

Nasty Imperatives

psychedoc@juno.com

"Do unto others before they do unto you!" "Look out for number one!" "Do what it takes to get what you want!" These are nasty imperatives. I argue (1) Each is the doppelganger of a morally pure imperative. The bond is intrinsic: every pure moral imperative is internally related to a specific nasty imperative. (2) There are intermediate cases between each impeccable imperative and its rudest counterpart. These cases form an ordered series. (3) Such series constitute a fact-value continuum where imperatives that can be ascribed as actual motives in some historical conditions function in others as obligations or aspirations. (4) A fact/value continuum implies a sliding scale of standards with several 'brackets' of prescriptions. What is invariant is not a fixed level of stringency but a *transformation-rule* that links effective morality to pragmatic conditions. I argue in favor of the sliding scale and against any flat tax of moral burdens.

Whitley R.P. Kaufman
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Is Retirbution a Moral Primitive?
Whitley_Kaufman@uml.edu

This paper analyzes one of the many different strategies to defend the retributive theory of punishment: the claim that it is a moral primitive and hence in need of no further justification. While such a strategy cannot be definitively refuted, there are many reasons why it is unpersuasive. This essay presents ten distinct arguments against the idea that retributivism needs no further rational explanation. The upshot is not that we need to abandon retributivism, since the alternative theories of punishment are even less plausible (utilitarianism, “expressivism”, etc.), but that the retributivist must not take the easy way out of evading the need to provide a plausible rationale for his theory of punishment, as well as a demonstration as to how it is consistent with the rest of moral theory.

2:30-3:50PM (1hr. 20 minutes)

Session 2A

NHIOP 4006 Session Chair; David Banach, Saint Anselm College

Jeff Buechner

Rutgers University Newark; The Saul Kripke Center CUNY

Four Ways to Kill a Zombie

buechner@rci.rutgers.edu

EXCERPT

I will present four new arguments that zombies are not conceivable. Two of the arguments use results in mathematical physics that have never been deployed in the zombie wars. One of those results is quite surprising and relatively unknown—a theorem in Newtonian classical mechanics that there are multiple solutions to the equations of motion given initial conditions that are fixed to any specified number of decimal places. This result, discovered in 1952 (by the Berkeley mathematician David Gale), is not an instance of chaos, since the initial conditions are fixed. Rather, it is an instance of indeterminacy in a classical system. I will exploit this indeterminacy to pose a logical difficulty for Chalmers. The only physical assumption about the actual world that I need is that in human neurophysiological systems Newtonian classical mechanics obtains and that the indeterminacy manifests itself in such systems in the following way: either the system enters a physical phenomenal state or it enters a physical non-phenomenal state. Given this assumption, I construct a disjunctive predicate for the consequent of the Chalmers conditional. The result is that the consequent of that conditional (necessary for making the modus tollens inference to the denial of physicalism) can be shown false only by conceiving of a being that is not one’s exact physical duplicate. (If human neurophysiological systems are entirely quantum in nature, I can easily construct the same kind of disjunctive predicate. Thus, if human neurophysiology is either classical or quantum in nature, one cannot conceive one’s exact physical duplicate.)

Brendan O'Sullivan
Stonehill College
Pain, Functionalism and the Synthetic A Priori
bosullivan@stonehill.edu

Functionalism can be understood as claiming that the satisfaction of the appropriate functional description is both necessary and sufficient for a creature's being in pain. I propose an argument for the functionalist's necessary condition [N] based on the simple observation that the quality of pain explains pain behavior. Reflecting on the explanatory import of the quality of pain leads to the surprising conclusion that [N] is a synthetic a priori truth. This conclusion receives some corroboration from the conceptual strains that emerge from attempts to deny [N]. In the end, however, functionalism is not vindicated, even to the extent that it endorses [N], insofar as it treats is as analytic, and not synthetic.

Session 2B

NHIOP 4007 Session Chair: Fr. John Fortin OSB, Saint Anselm College
May Sim

College of the Holy Cross
Separating and Uniting the Virtues for Aristotle's *Phronêsis*
msim@holycross.edu

What are the moral virtues and how are they related to *phronêsis* (practical wisdom) for Aristotle? While commentators agree about the significance of these key concepts in Aristotle, disagreements in their interpretations are rife. Commentators disagree about whether practical wisdom consists in grasping the universal principles which govern one's actions so that one can justify one's choices (Julia Annas), or the power to perceive particular actions without any knowledge of necessary ethical principles (Sean Kirkland). They disagree too about whether and in what ways virtues are like skills. Not surprisingly, these debates are divided along the same lines as these interpreters' emphasis of the universal or particular aspect of virtue and *phronêsis*. My purpose is to show where the representatives on either side of this debate are correct and wrong, and present a more nuanced version of how the moral virtues are related to *phronêsis* for Aristotle.

Max J. Latona
Saint Anselm College
Philosophy in an Age of Decline: Myth and Reason in Plato's *Republic*
mlatona@anselm.edu

Consistent with his letters and other dialogues, Plato's *Republic* suggests that Plato thought that he was living in an age of political and moral decay, and that prominent culprits in that decay were the traditional stories told by the ancient Greek poets and rhapsodes. Moreover, it would appear that for Plato, the only cure for such a diseased society is a healthy antidote of reason and dialectic administered by the philosopher (king). Through an analysis of two such stories in the *Republic*: the Ring of Gyges and the Myth of the Metals, this paper argues that, for Plato, it is not the presence but rather the absence of traditional narratives that is the problem, and the work of philosophical reasoning must be, in part, the very recollection, reiteration, and defense of ancient insights, in order to act both as a mooring for philosophical analysis, and a bulwark against cultural decline.

4:00-5:00PM (1 hr.)

Session 3A

NHIOP Reading Room Session Chair: Paul McNamara, University of New Hampshire

Bernard Gert

Dartmouth College

The Need for a Comprehensive Usable Systematic Account of Morality

bernard.gert@dartmouth.edu

An adequate moral theory must provide an account of what kinds of acts need to be morally justified, which I take to be violations of moral rules. It must also provide a procedure for determining whether, given the same morally relevant features, all fully informed impartial rational persons favor violating the moral rule; no rational person favors violating the moral rule; or whether fully informed rational persons disagree about whether they favor violating the moral rule. The theory must also show how one can determine which facts are morally relevant when deciding whether one favors violating a moral rule. An adequate moral theory must have many others features but simply the small list provided above, gives some indication that an adequate moral theory must be far more complex than any of the standard moral theories.

Session 3B

NHIOP 4006 Session Chair: James Mahoney, Saint Anselm College

William Edelglass

Marlboro College

Rethinking Responsibility in an Age of Anthropogenic Climate Catastrophe

wedelglass@marlboro.edu

I am presenting the first half of a longer paper in which I argue, against several recent views, that as individuals we are morally responsible for the suffering that results from climate change. I begin by framing climate change in moral terms and then turn to several philosophers who argue that because our individual GHG emissions are inconsequential and global warming can only be prevented by policy changes, as individuals we are not morally responsible. I then suggest that one of the reasons climate change is difficult to recognize as a moral issue for which we as individuals are responsible is that it lacks the characteristics of a “paradigm moral problem,” namely clear victims and perpetrators who intend harm and understand the consequences of their actions. While I agree with environmental virtue ethicists that environmental virtues are a necessary response to the problem of inconsequentialism motivating arguments against individual moral responsibility, I argue that more is needed to provide a normative force for individual responsibility to others who suffer from the consequences of climate change. I conclude with a brief sketch showing how Levinas’s approach to responsibility provides helpful resources for understanding the individual moral dimension of climate change.

Session 3C

NHIOP 4007 Session Chair: Joseph Spoerl, Saint Anselm College

Thomas Larson

Saint Anselm College

Socrates: The Teacher of Rhetoric

tlarson@anselm.edu

The philosophic arguments found in the *Gorgias* are so rich and worthy of our attention that they can cause us to overlook another important element of the work, namely, the dramatic character of the event. Part of the complex texture of the work is found in the interlocutors themselves and the different stakes each one has in the conversation. In this dialogue, philosophy confronts rhetoric. But Plato does not merely show how philosophic discourse is different from and superior to the supposed art of rhetoric. Rather, Plato gives us a Socrates who is in fact engaged in a multifaceted project of persuasion. Plato does not simplistically disparage rhetoric. Rather, in the dialogue he presents a series of complex obstacles to philosophic discourse, obstacles which can only be overcome by persuasive speech. I will show how in the dialogue Socrates, in what and how he converses with the various characters, employs rhetorical speech in a way that avoids the very dangers and shortcomings he himself attributes to it.

Saturday, October 16

9:00-11:00AM (1hr. 30 minutes) Goulet 3100

Plenary-Session

Drew Christie
University of New Hampshire
Godfrey-Smith, Dewey and Realism
Drew.Christie@unh.edu

Peter Godfrey-Smith's paper "Dewey and the Question of Realism" argues that Dewey's views are best interpreted as an unorthodox form of metaphysical realism. One of Godfrey-Smith's goals is to rescue Dewey from interpreters who believe Dewey is a linguist idealist. However, Godfrey-Smith's attempted rescue goes too far in claiming Dewey for the realist camp. Dewey himself explicitly rejected the term "realist." Another issue is Godfrey-Smith's focus on concrete particulars as opposed to Dewey's focus on the process of inquiry and the resulting changes in the meaning of general terms (e.g., mammal). My third concern is whether it is appropriate to make a sharp distinction between metaphysics and epistemology when reading Dewey. I distinguish weak realism, which Dewey accepts, from strong realisms that Dewey rejects. Like Joseph Margolis and Robert Brandom, I believe that the classical pragmatists aimed to naturalize Hegel.

David Banach
Saint Anselm College
Not You Again? Individuality, Reproduction, and Darwinian Nominalism
dbanach@anselm.edu

Nominalists are like moral reformers, condemning the sins of others while not noticing their own. Since categories, like sin, are inevitable, the ones employed by those who are trying to avoid them may be ad hoc or biased towards the examples considered.

Peter Godfrey-Smith, in his recent book, *Darwinian Populations*, centers on the the nature of the populations that undergo Darwinian processes and, in particular, the types of reproduction they undergo. Instead of attempting to formulate a definition of the essential properties of a Darwinian population by articulating necessary and sufficient conditions, Godfrey-Smith takes a few paradigm cases and sets out to delineate systematically how the peripheral cases are similar or different. This method produces some impressive results, illuminating such difficult topics as drift, group selection, and the role of the gene in selection. But it may fail at its central task: illuminating how Darwinian processes explain the origin of species, and, in general, how the types of organization that produce evolution differ from the levels of organization from which they spring and which they produce. I argue that, by refusing to articulate the type of abstract organization central to Darwinian processes and instead looking at similarities and differences from paradigm cases, the book arrives at an account that may be biased to processes that arise from a certain sort of biological organization and that this may affect the arguments given against agential thinking and clade selection.

Peter Godfrey-Smith Harvard University Reply and Discussion

11:10AM-12:30PM (1hr. 20 minutes)

Session 4A

Goulet 3103 Session Chair: David Banach, Saint Anselm College

Matthew Waldschlagel

University of Kansas of Kansas

The Language of Apology and Forgiveness: A Philosophical Analysis

mjwald@ku.edu

I argue that the concepts of apology and forgiveness, though analytically separable, form a nested whole in our practical lives such that the intelligibility and meaningfulness of either is dependent on the recognition and feasibility of the other. Apology and forgiveness are speech acts with an important moral function. I examine the kind of speech acts that apology and forgiveness are, thereby exhibiting their logical structure. Though they bear a prima facie resemblance to the performatives in J. L. Austin's account, they also differ. I argue that Austin's account fails to accommodate the unique logical structure of apology and forgiveness, and I offer a model that captures the form of their idiosyncratic logic.

Frederic Tremblay

University at Buffalo

Nicolai Hartmann's Influence on the Development of Phylogenetic Systematics

ft4@buffalo.edu

In the Aristotelian-Linnaean system of classification species were conceived as universals. But universals are unchanging, and Darwin has shown that species change. Hence, since Darwin biologists have sought a method of classification that reflects evolution. It is only in the twentieth century, with the German entomologist Willi Hennig, that such method was fully developed. Hennig was concerned with providing the new method—phylogenetic systematics—with a metaphysical foundation. To do so, he turned to the philosophers of biology of his time, among whom he found the German philosopher Nicolai Hartmann. He sought in Hartmann support for at least four basic metaphysical theses: that what is real is what is temporal; that species are processes; that species are individuals of a higher-order; and that species are individuals in virtue of having temporal boundaries, namely speciation events. In this paper I am concerned with documenting this influence.

Session 4B

Goulet 3104 Session Chair: James Mahoney, Saint Anselm College

Timothy Nulty

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

The Metaphysics of Mixed Inferences: Problems with Functionalist Accounts of Alethic Pluralism

tnulty@umassd.edu

Alethic pluralists argue truth is a metaphysically robust higher-order property that is multiply realized by a set of diverse and domain-specific subvening alethic properties. The higher-order truth property legitimizes mixed inferences and accounts for a univocal truth predicate. Absent this higher-order property, pluralists lack an account of the validity of mixed inferences and an adequate semantics for the truth predicate, and thereby appear forced to abandon the central tenets of alethic pluralism. I argue that the use of many-valued logics to support pluralism fails to address the pluralist's metaphysical problem regarding mixed inferences and mixed truth functional connectives. The high degree of heterogeneity of the alethic realizers (unlike the realizers for pain) challenges the plausibility of a single higher-order functional property. A functional property with such a heterogeneous base cannot be projectable at a theoretically significant level. The problem with mixed inferences and truth functions is but one symptom of the deeper projectability problem.

Jonathan Westphal
School of Cognitive Science, Hampshire College
The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Freewill
jontywestphal@gmail.com

On Friday God knew everything, including f , a proposition about what Jones would do on Monday; we can write the time-indexed proposition that on Friday God believed f as B_{gf} . If Jones does not do the thing that makes f true, then the resulting state of affairs will be $\sim f$. So on Monday Jones has it in his power to bring it about that $\sim f$. It seems to follow that on Monday Jones has it in his power to bring it about that on Friday God believed something false. Yet this is impossible, as $B_{gp} \supset p$ (God is infallible). But if f is false—if Jones makes it so on Monday—then so is B_{gf} , and God is not infallible. So either Jones cannot not do the thing that makes f true, and he has no freewill, or God is not infallible. I shall note the difficulties of the five standard solutions, and then offer an analysis based on the fact that God's foreknowledge of the truth of a specific proposition (B_{gf}) is not necessary. What is necessary is God infallibility: $B_{gp} \supset p$. So $\Box B_{gf}$ is false, though $\Box B_{gp} \supset p$ is true. The difficulty for the problem of Divine Foreknowledge is that we do not know whether to substitute "f" or "f" for "p" before Jones acts.

2:10-3:30PM (1hr. 20 minutes)

Session 5A

Goulet 3103 Session Chair: Robert McKay, Norwich University
Brendan Ritchie
Harvard University
Epistemic Akrasia and Rational Requirements
britchie@fas.harvard.edu

I understand epistemic akrasia to occur when you believe, on epistemic grounds, something that you think, again on epistemic grounds, that you ought not to believe. I argue (against Joseph Raz and Susan Hurley) that this is a real phenomenon, offering examples as well as an explanation of how it is possible, and comparing the practical case. I argue further (this time against nearly everyone) that epistemic akrasia need not be irrational. This raises some doubt as to whether there are any formal requirements of rationality, since epistemic akrasia is ordinarily taken to be a paradigmatic example of such a requirement.

Michael Deere
Salem State College
Sharing the Pain of my Body
mdeere@salemstate.edu

EXCERPT

One of the difficulties that attend the study of pain concerns the fact that pain lacks a perceptual object independent of the person that experiences it. Pain is incorrigible: there is no difference between the appearance of pain and the reality of pain. I cannot think that I am in pain, but not in fact be in pain and likewise, I cannot be in pain and yet think that I am not. To feel oneself to be in pain is just what it means to be in pain. From another perspective, the incorrigibility of pain demonstrates that pain is always mine. It is indissolubly tied to the body that experiences it. There is no pain without a body in pain; there is no pain independent of the person who bears it. Given that pain is always bound to us and our bodies, the question "What is pain?" gives way almost immediately to the question "Who is in pain?" It is this question that I will address in my paper.

Session 5B

Goulet 3104 Session Chair: Joseph Spoerl, Saint Anselm College
Gary Overvold
Clark University

The Value of Intolerance: France's Ban of the Burqa
govervold@clarku.edu

EXCERPT

Enlightenment thinkers had an easier time defining superstition and the irrational: writers such as Voltaire or Baron d'Holbach could just designate religion, predominately Catholicism, as the enemy and let the self evident irrationality of the beliefs define the categories. Nowadays such a question-begging injunction would not work.

The president of France, Sarkozy, last year announced that the wearing of Muslim burqas was not welcome in France. This summer, following the Belgium Parliament's earlier unanimous ratification of a similar law, the lower house of the French parliament passed a law to that effect with no votes against it. In 2004, the French legislature had enacted a law prohibiting the wearing in public schools of prominent religious symbols, such as the veil, large crosses, yarmulkes, Sikh headdress, etc. The French government and legal system are committed to ensuring that there is a clear cut separation of church/mosque/temple and state and contrary to the direction of the U.S. doctrine of separation which is directed to keeping the state out of religion, in France it is focused on keeping religion out of matters of the state. In this development concerning the burqa, a new perspective is taken on a religious matter.

Russ Couch
Keene State College
Violence and the Spectator's Space of Disclosure
jcouch@keene.edu

The preference for the "vertiginous experience" over that which is more contemplative has allowed violence to become a scintillating attraction to participate in, but an event still in need of interpretation to provide it with meaning. The role of the spectator is problematized by efforts to further entice, as well as prevent action. In both cases the space of disclosure is compromised as human spontaneity- freedom- is overcome by compulsion. To consider the implications derived from the encroachment of violence on the space of disclosure, the thought of Hannah Arendt will be used as a point of departure. Following her thought into certain of its aesthetic and political dimensions, the precariousness of reality along with the jeopardy of action and judgment will be revealed. Consequently, in an age of spectacular violence, Arendt's demand for "thinking" remains a timely reminder of the significance of the public space.

3:40-5:00PM (1hr. 20 minutes)

Session 6A

Goulet 3104 Session Chair: Susan Gabriel, Saint Anselm College

Teresa Celada
Wheaton College

Seductive Offers, Indecent Proposals, Undue Inducements, and the Commodification of Research
Participation

celada_teresa@wheatonma.edu

The question of whether and how much to pay persons to participate in research experiments poses a dilemma: a small inducement might exploit participants while a large one might cause them to act against their better judgment or commodify them.

In the U.S. and abroad research ethics guidelines prohibit the provision of *undue* inducements to research participants. Those texts only vaguely characterize “undue inducement”, and the defining characteristics of an *undue* inducement are something about which bioethicists disagree. For example, according to Emanuel, an undue inducement essentially involves: (i) an offered good, (ii) an excessive offer, (iii) a poor judgment, and (iv) a risk of serious harm. Emanuel’s definition leads him to argue against the very possibility of undue inducement. By contrast, according to Grant and Sugarman, the ethically suspect inducement is the one that “is used to induce someone to do something to which they are averse.” I argue contra Emanuel and distinguish a variety of undue inducements: indecent proposals, seductive offers, and incentives and show how each is ethically suspect, if indeed it is. In addition, I argue against the claim that inducements “transform the research subject into a commodity.”

Matthew Konieczka
Saint Anselm College

Must Religious Pluralists Be Religious Egalitarians?

mkonieczka@anselm.edu

Religious Pluralism, generally speaking, is the view that religious truth is *plural*. In other words, there is *more than one* religion that is true or close to the truth. Many Religious Pluralists go a step further and claim that all major religions are *roughly equal* in truth or in common reference. This view, I call Religious Egalitarianism. On my view, Religious Egalitarianism is an implausible view that ought to be shunned, not just by those who believe in the truth of one particular religion, but by those who consider themselves Religious Pluralists as well. In other words, even if we discard Religious Egalitarianism, Religious Pluralism need not be abandoned. On the contrary, an *inegalitarian* version of Religious Pluralism would offer more promise than the more common egalitarian versions because it would preserve a number of the benefits of Religious Pluralism without the implausible and unnecessary baggage of Religious Egalitarianism.