

2010 NNEPA Undergraduate Program Abstracts

9:00-10:10AM (1hr. 10 minutes)

Session A1

NHIOP 4007 Session Chair: Ed McGushin, Saint Anselm College

Bridget Martin

Saint Anselm College

Tentative Truth: The Expression of Human Nature in Greek Tragedy

bmartin@anselm.edu

This paper explores the duality of human nature represented in Ancient Greek tragedies and its relevance to modern audiences. The Dionysian and Apollonian impulses and their dramatic representations are introduced in the paper and compared to the emotional and rational intrinsic characteristics of individuals. Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* is alluded to, since the play encompasses both impulses and demonstrates their role in human decisions and expressions. The ability for *Oedipus Tyrannus* to resonate with modern audiences demonstrates the universality of human nature's duality and how the recognition of possessing these dual impulses can compel human beings to live life more genuinely.

Jillian Joubert

Saint Anselm College

Art, *Oedipus Tyrannus* and the Everyday Philosopher

JJoubert@anselm.edu

This paper challenges Plato's assertion that art and poetry are inherently inferior to the real thing, and therefore deceptive. The danger surrounding art lies not in its deception, but in the possibility that it might not be used to its full potential. Using Heidegger's philosophy, I argue that art occupies a vital place in working towards an understanding of truth and beauty. I further make the point that the blind prophet Tiresias in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* acts as an example of an artist leading his audience to truth. Through concrete works of art, we, as everyday philosophers, work towards an otherwise unattainable approximation of truth. By understanding the qualities that make a piece beautiful, we can continuously get closer to ideal truth and beauty. Reason can be applied to further developing this understanding, but reason alone can only extend so far without art to show us beauty.

Session A2

NHIOP READING ROOM Session Chair: Paul McNamara, University of New Hampshire

Marisa Stafford

Keene State College

The Modern Corporation: The Role of Citizenship and Social Morality

mstafford@ksc.mailcruiser.com

EXCERPT

In January of this year, millions of Americans were outraged when the Supreme Court ruled that the government could no longer ban political spending by corporations during candidate elections. Many thought of this day as a huge conquest for wealthy stockholders; in fact, President Obama described this decision as "A major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and other powerful interests that marshal their power everyday in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans". There is no doubt that this decision will greatly impact future elections and the lives of the American people. The role of corporations in our daily lives is so immense that we often don't realize how greatly these companies affect us, but the truth is, corporations are so economically powerful that they greatly impact our society and every American citizen. Since corporations play such a consequential role in our lives, the subject of their ethical responsibility is one that deserves much inquiry.

Maya Randolph
Wellesley College

Innocence as Protection: Locke's Social Contract as a Means of Prejudice
mrandolp@wellesley.edu

In his piece "The Price of a Ticket" James Baldwin, an African American writer, expresses his disappointment in his "innocent," white countrymen. This concept of innocence as blamelessness and the alleviation of responsibility is apparent in the social contract created by John Locke. Based on Locke's limited definition of the state of nature and view on the development of money, it is easy to mitigate the role of the "innocents" in the oppression of others. In this presentation I will use Baldwin's definition of innocence to critique and criticize Locke's social contract theory and the way it subtly advocates prejudice. I will also compare and contrast the two different ideologies and examine how both affect the future of race relations.

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

Session B1

NHIOP 4007 Session Chair: William DeVries, University of New Hampshire

Alan Barton

Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy" and Punk Aesthetics

Hartwick College

bartona2@hartwick.edu

The aim of this article is to explore the punk movement's twofold critique of reason through music intertwined with principles stemming from Nietzsche's metaphysics and "The Birth of Tragedy."

Alexandra Forst

Hartwick College

Comic Books and Authenticity

forsta@hartwick.edu

This paper attempts to make a correlation between the German-philosopher Martin Heidegger's notion of authenticity and inauthenticity to comic books using specific examples such as Batman as an authentic Dasein. An excavation of comic books reveals their capacity to lead Dasein to state of resoluteness or averageness resulting in authenticity or inauthenticity, respectively. Comic books integration into the mainstream may appear to be, at first, a function of the "they" and their pull to keep Dasein in its average everydayness yet there lays great potential for what Heidegger discusses extensively in Being and Time, choosing a hero – arguably the most important function of comic books is their ability to give Dasein a choice.

Session B2

READING ROOM Session Chair: Paul McNamara, University of New Hampshire

Javier Gomez-Lavin
College of Charleston

On The Fence: The Role of Language in Cognition

jgomezlavin@gmail.com

Traditional and computational accounts of cognition stipulate linguistically structured internal representational systems as a prerequisite for language use (Fodor, 1975). Andy Clark and other notable adherents of embedded and embodied cognition reject this claim, and posit that language use does not require a fundamental reorganization or reformatting of internal representational systems (Clark, 2008). Furthermore, Clark offers us a series of empirical studies which tentatively support his thesis. In my paper I revisit one of these studies, finding after examination that it fails to support his claims. Instead, I argue that the studies cited by Clark – along with subsequently reviewed empirical evidence – better support an intermediate compromise between these two camps. This intermediate explanation of the role of language in cognition allows for both: i) Clark’s externalist take on language, with it acting as an attention focusing “scaffold”, and ii) the computational view that language-based mental representations will recapitulate the inherent structure of language.

Patrick Greer

Clark University

A Battle for Aesthetic Supremacy: Kant and Peirce

pgreer@clarku.edu

This essay compares and contrasts Kant’s view of the subject of aesthetics with Peirce’s quite broader view, in which aesthetics is the master normative science governing logic and ethics as well as the arts. I use the four “moments” of Kant’s judgment of taste to structure the comparison. The essay addresses two key topics: first, the different definitions and roles of aesthetics, and second, the issue of whether or not Kant’s narrower definition can fit within Peirce’s broader theory.

11:40AM-12:50PM (1hr. 10 minutes)

Session C1

NHIOP READING ROOM Session Chair: David Banach, Saint Anselm College

Ben Feintzeig
Dartmouth College

Disjunctive Definitions and the Reduction of Mendelian Genetics

benjamin.h.feintzeig@dartmouth.edu

In this paper, I discuss the condition of definability for the reduction of Classical Mendelian Genetics (CMG) to Molecular Biology (MB). Anti-reductionists argue that the concept of gene from CMG cannot be adequately defined in the language of MB. They argue the only definition we can give of gene in the language of MB is a disjunctive definition, and this is not a good reductive definition at all. I interpret this worry in two parts: first, a disjunctive definition cannot capture the underlying nature of the definiendum, and second, a disjunctive definition cannot adequately explain scientific laws, as is required in a reduction. I offer a way out for reductionists, claiming that the concept of gene has no underlying nature, and there are no laws in CMG. Hence, a disjunctive definition of gene would suffice for the reduction of CMG to MB since it faces neither of the above problems.

Adam Alexander
Viterbo University
Smolin and Darwinism in Cosmology
atalexander@viterbo.edu

EXCERPT

This paper is a summary and response to Lee Smolin's book chapter on Darwinism as a cosmological explanation.¹ In this chapter, Smolin examines competing attempts to explain why the universe obeys the particular laws it does. I examine Smolin's arguments for and against the scientific character of each explanation, and agree that given a modification, his own theory that universal laws evolve is the only possible scientific explanation of our universe's laws being as they are. However, whatever one's position on theology, Smolin's dismissive, and at times, dogmatically hostile attitude towards theological explanations needs serious alteration.

Session C2

NHIOP 4007 Session Chair: William DeVries, University of New Hampshire

Erica Lieblich
New England College
The Power of Forgiveness
elieblich07@nec.edu

Have you ever thought of forgiveness as something beyond a common act taught to us from an early age? Forgiveness has been shown to have an impressive psychological background, tracing its roots not only through science but through religion, an ideology that to me seems to have "brainwashed" its participants. Victims of abuse, both physically and mentally, show increased levels of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder when the idea of reconciling and forgiving their abusers come into play. Individuals such as the Amish are able to forgive their abusers almost instantly even at the most horrific of times, as seen during the 2006 murder of five Amish children in [Lancaster County, Pennsylvania](#). What about the Jewish people, can they ever forgive what happened to their people during the Holocaust? Does religion play an important role in forgiveness, or do we all have a separate psychological makeup that lets us decide when it is the right time to forgive?

Conor Stokes
University of New Hampshire
Discipline, Ideology, and Terror: The Formation of the Camp Guard
cjl47@cisunix.unh.edu

EXCERPT

The original mode of citizenship in Western society was that of the citizen-soldier, a landowner trained and equipped for seasonal campaigning on behalf of his polis against its neighbors. Of course, the state has since evolved and society has evolved with it, but the demands of the state, the *raison d'état*, have always been the source of the ideal citizen model. Today it is the productive worker-citizen that is sought, and it is the self-concerned 'family man' that our institutions create. There are times, however, when concepts of national interest have gone so wildly awry as to demand that the citizen becomes something much more awful than a mere worker: the population of workers is then mobilized into an unthinking machine for the purposes of mass murder and ideological war.