



Eastern Michigan University

Undergraduate Conference in Philosophy 2024 Abstract List

Anna McConnell

November 9th | 9-9:50 | SC 348

The Interplay of Internalism and Externalism

Philosophers have long sought to set boundaries for what constitutes knowledge. On the Western front, two opposing schools of thought arose out of this search for knowledge: internalism and externalism. Internalist camps are known for setting a stricter standard for what constitutes knowledge than their externalist counterparts believe to be necessary. In Fred Dretske's, "Two Conceptions of Knowledge: Rational vs. Reliable Belief" he details these two opposing accounts and argues in favor of the externalist school of thought, believing the internalist view to set ludicrous standards. This search for knowledge was not limited to Western philosophers, however, and we also see the underpinnings for internalist and externalist thought seeded throughout Indian philosophy. Specifically, the Buddhist philosopher, Dignaga (also seen as Dinnaga), argued that the kind of knowledge that internalists argue for can only be gained due to the type of knowledge we attain through externalist methods. I agree with Dignaga. In this paper, I will examine Dretske's argument in favor of externalism and Dignaga's argument that we gain knowledge from both perception and inference and will demonstrate how these two views work in tandem to undermine the internalist criteria for knowledge.

Jade Hua

November 9th | 9-9:50 | SC 342

Which Equality is More Just? An Investigation of Two Egalitarian Theories of Justice

In her essay, *What is the Point of Equality*, Elizabeth Anderson pioneers a theory of democratic equality, a theory of justice that introduces equal access to effective opportunities as the requirement for societal equality. Using this theory, I will highlight the drawbacks of an alternative theory of justice, luck egalitarianism, by criticizing the harmful effects of enacting luck egalitarianism. While there can be no perfectly egalitarian theory, some egalitarian frameworks are more conducive to justice because they prioritize equality in more necessary domains. I will support Anderson's view by illustrating that luck egalitarianism does not achieve the type of equality ultimately valued by society. Overall, this paper will argue that democratic egalitarianism offers a more defensible theory of justice because its threshold nature guarantees equality to even those responsible for their own misfortune; it focuses on equalizing a more necessary domain than resources. To show this, I will first contrast the luck and democratic egalitarian frameworks and argue that democratic egalitarianism would guarantee a state of equality more practical and compassionate than luck egalitarianism. I will do this by evaluating both luck and democratic egalitarianism in the case of equalizing disabilities. Then, I will anticipate a critique from the luck egalitarian perspective of the narrow extent of equality that democratic equality guarantees people,

especially when state resources are too scarce to guarantee everyone effective access to basic functionings. Nonetheless, I will ultimately argue that in equalizing access to opportunities, democratic equality guarantees equality in a more valuable domain than resources.

Thomas Nathan

November 9th | 10-10:50 | SC 348

No Believers Know: A Case Against Gail Fine's Critique of the Two Worlds Theory in Plato's Meno

Against Gail Fine, in this paper, I defend the traditional interpretation on which Plato in the Meno is committed to the Two Worlds Theory, which following Fine, I take to be view that one cannot at the same time and in the same respect have both knowledge and beliefs about the same objects or propositions. On Fine's interpretation, Plato thinks there can be knowledge and beliefs about some of the same objects and, thus, that knowledge is a species of belief since a true belief can transform into an object of knowledge. To the contrary, I contend that, for Plato, Forms are the only things there can be knowledge of. I defend this by arguing Forms are non-predicative, non-relational, unchanging predicates, such that forms, unlike sensible instances, do not undergo any transformation, making any knowledge of Forms infallible. For if Forms can undergo transformation, then knowledge need not be infallible. This examination sheds considerable light on some of the dangerous implications of Fine's account of Plato's epistemology.

Jiayuang, Zhang

November 9th | 10-10:50 | SC 348

Shared Guidance

In Harry Frankfurt's Guidance, he proposes the notion of guidance as the explanation of how to distinguish individual intentional action from purposive movements. When you wave your hand, it is intentional because it is under your guidance. In contrast, a pupil dilating is simply a purposive movement because the act is not under your guidance. I propose that by imposing a natural extension of Frankfurt's framework of guidance onto collective action, it becomes explainable why Margaret Gilbert's notion of group obligations renders unnecessary. This extension is called shared guidance. Frankfurt characterizes individual guidance as either active or passive. In collective action, all the actions of every member in the group are subjected to a member's passive guidance, and the same condition is applied to every other member. This raises concern about Gilbert's argument that the entitlement to rebuke stems from an obligation to the social group. shared guidance suggests that the entitlement to rebuke is dependent on an individual's intention to fulfill a shared goal with another person. After the Gilbert section is defended, I will use the implications derived from the Gilbert section to critique Michael Bratman's inconsistent condition of shared intention by arguing that shared guidance shows that Bratman's notion of mutual responsiveness is incomplete as a condition to shared intention. Instead, the phenomenon of mutual responsiveness can be explained by the necessity of interference, justified under shared guidance.

Megan Bonne

November 9th | 11-11:50 | SC 342

Can the Biological Concept of Epigenetics affect our Understanding of Philosophical Determinism and Free Will?

This study explores the implications of epigenetics on the philosophical debate between determinism and free will. Traditionally, biological determinism has held that human behavior is largely controlled by genetics, suggesting that our decisions and actions are predetermined by our DNA. However, the field of epigenetics, which studies how gene expression can be influenced by environmental factors such as stress, diet, and chemical exposure, challenges this deterministic view. Epigenetics reveals that life events and environmental conditions can alter gene expression, with these changes potentially being inherited across generations. This discovery suggests a more dynamic and reciprocal relationship between genes and the environment, necessitating a reevaluation of deterministic frameworks and their impact on our understanding of free will. This research argues that epigenetic mechanisms not only influence genetic outcomes but also call for a reconsideration of moral responsibility and individual liberty. By examining the biological concept of epigenetics, the study aims to challenge traditional deterministic perspectives and contribute a novel viewpoint to the ongoing discourse on free will, questioning the extent to which individuals can control their behavior and life trajectories.

Evan Zicklin

November 9th | 11-11:50 | SC 348

Choking, Hegemonic Masculinity, and Perfectionism

In this essay I connect the vice of intellectual servility to hegemonic masculinity showing that servility is required to subscribe to the ideology. I then demonstrate that this connection extends to sexual choking and propose perfectionism as a solution. Intellectual servility is a vice that causes agents to unthinkingly cling to ideas without reflection as they underestimate their own intellectual capacity and defer to others' intellects. Adherents of hegemonic masculinity suffer from this vice; these men defer to a standard of behavior put forth by that ideology. Hegemonic masculinity demands categorical acceptance of sex; to turn down sex is to contravene the ideology. Aggression is also considered to be included in sexual acts, and manifests as sexual choking. It is prevalent among young people; but, to do so without reflection results from servility. Therefore, men who obey the strictures of hegemonic masculinity without reflection become intellectually servile. In order to rectify this issue, I propose the ethical theory of perfectionism as a solution. Finally, I rebut objections that cast doubt on the efficacy of perfectionism in this case.

Joseph Funk

November 9th | 3-3:50 | SC 348

Deontic Caring

This paper explores the intersection of care ethics and justice by building on the work of Virginia Held in her book *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. Held argues that moral

theories have two primary criteria: justice and care. She believes we must find a way to utilize both to achieve a more moral society. The thought experiments explored herein highlight the conflict between our care obligations and our duty toward impartial justice. This care-based ethical criterion assigns moral weight to our interpersonal relationships, which are rooted in human interdependence. These relationships are prioritized by metaphysical proximity, with greater duties associated with closer relationships. Conversely, a justice-based ethical criterion concerns equitable disbursement and enforcement of minimum ethical standards. I argue for a harmonious fusion of justice and care, termed deontic care for its focus on duties, to fulfill Held's vision. Justice, conceived as a minimum standard of care, is complementary and necessary for proper care. By unifying justice and care, deontic care offers a more complete framework than either does separately and offers solutions to ethical dilemmas like the Trolley Problem. This then promotes a more compassionate and just society through unifying moral duties. Furthermore, by integrating care ethics into governance and public services, societal institutions can be transformed to ensure compassionate treatment and equitable justice.

Marin Schwarz

November 9th | 4-4:50 | SC 348

Redistribution on Trial: Rawls, Nozick, and the Social Security Dilemma

The American Social Security System is a redistributive tax that fails to meet the requirements of John Rawls's property-owning democracy and Robert Nozick's entitlement theory. The idea of pretax income is central to understanding how ownership rights and property are allocated within Rawls's property-owning democracy. I argue that the current implementation of the Social Security System ultimately falls short because it undermines those ideas and fails to adequately address the needs of the least advantaged under Rawls's difference principle. Additionally, Nozick's theory of minimal state intervention and the preservation of citizens' rights pose challenges to the process by which Social Security benefits are collected and redistributed. I, therefore, conclude that the American Social Security System in its current form is an unjustifiable mechanism for redistributive taxation based on aspects of Rawls and Nozick's theories of justice.

Eleanor Brannen
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Intersectional Environmentalism and the Future of Care

The term "environment" often signals images of nature and ecosystems, yet its connection with human activity reveals a deeper layer of inequality and exploitation. This paper explores the concept of intersectional environmentalism, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental issues to advance true environmental justice and sustainability. Originating from Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, the paper argues that understanding environmental injustice through the lens of intersecting social injustices is crucial for prosperous advocacy. The concept of intersectional environmentalism, coined by Leah Thomas, highlights the necessity of addressing environmental injustices alongside social inequities, particularly for marginalized communities disproportionately affected by

environmental policies. The paper touches on how systemic issues like environmental racism and socioeconomic disparities intensify environmental harm for communities of color, shown through statistics on toxic waste exposure and lead poisoning. It critiques traditional environmentalism for often neglecting the needs of marginalized groups and advocates for more inclusive and equitable policies. Examples of successful intersectional environmentalist initiatives, such as Intersectional Environmentalist and Ecojustice, are discussed to demonstrate practical and accessible applications of this framework. The paper also integrates Aldo Leopold's land ethic, which advocates for an encompassing view of the relationship between humans and the environment. By pushing the moral obligation to respect and protect the planet, the paper argues that true sustainability can only be accessed by integrating social justice with environmental advocacy. The paper concludes that effective environmental solutions must be established in intersectional approaches to foster a more just and sustainable future for all.

Ava MacDonald
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Trust in Testimony: Standpoint Theory and Moral Reasoning

Standpoint epistemology provides a case in which it would seem that moral reasoning, understood as different from moral theorizing, is not possible due to the epistemological asymmetry present between dominant and marginalized groups. However, I argue that this issue may be bridged through the testimony of the marginalized individual which must then be accepted and respected by their interlocutor, with consciousness-raising being a prerequisite for the giving and reception of this testimony.

Paige Hannan

November 10th | 10-10:50 | Tower Room

Between Belief and Blame

This paper explores Miranda Fricker's theory of epistemic culpability and Gideon Rosen's Parity Thesis, arguing that Rosen's conclusions about non-culpable ignorance are an unintended consequence of Fricker's framework. Fricker's concept of epistemic "bad luck," particularly in cases like the Solomon example, leaves room for situations in which agents, influenced by social prejudices, are excused from culpability. Rosen's Parity Thesis, illustrated by his Hittite Lord example, similarly suggests that non-culpable ignorance can excuse harmful actions, even when agents are confronted with counter-evidence. I argue that Rosen's application of non-culpability logically extends from Fricker's framework, narrowing the scope of epistemic culpability more than Fricker intended. This unintended consequence arises because Fricker's reliance on epistemic bad luck lacks a clear boundary for when ignorance excuses culpability, leaving her theory vulnerable to Rosen's conclusions. I suggest that refining Fricker's theory to include a stronger emphasis on epistemic obligation, rather than epistemic luck, could prevent the reduction of culpability and provide clearer guidelines for determining when ignorance excuses harmful beliefs or actions.

Learning Moves in Game Theory

Decision theory as a concept finds itself in numerous different disciplines, both within Philosophy and without. The age-old question of “what is the right choice” is one that deserves as much thought as decision theory grants it. Within decision theory, there is a subset for situations involving multiple people interacting with each other under some set of rules or circumstances, called game theory. Game theory deals with games of all kinds, loosely defined to allow a wide range of situations, both social and competitive, trivial and monumental. Games can be categorized into games of either perfect or imperfect information. Games of imperfect information often have options for players to, whether explicitly or implicitly, gain information. These options I call Learning Moves, and discuss herein, along with the peeling back of the layers within game theory and decision theory to better understand learning moves. Learning moves are moves which may or may not directly affect the state of the game but provide information about the state of the game to the player who makes them. There are also extrapolative learning moves which serve to estimate unattainable information, such as a player’s strategy or a given order of chance (e.g. the orientation of a deck of cards).

Dialectic Disorder: Integrating Cultural Influence on Diagnostic Kinds

In seeking a way to study mental disorders across culture, the model and definition of culture used matters. John Tsou introduces a possible way to study disorder across cultures by focusing on a biological kind model in which a central biological mechanism remains the same across culture but may present differently depending on cultural influence, this is the pathoplastic model. Tsou also calls on culture to be a judge of the boundaries of disorder, marking a biological kind as disordered when it results in harm as judged by cultural standards. Without an integrated model of culture the definition of disorder remains ambiguous. I argue for an interpretation of disorder-marking harm which relies on an interaction between a disordered person and their (culturally loaded) world. To defend this, I draw on the homeostasis of property clusters in biological kind models, present an embedded model of culture as interaction with world, and look at the dialectic nature of disorder itself.

A Scientist and a Journalist Walk Into a Bar: An Exploration of the Inner Workings of Science-Media Relations

Scientific research and knowledge have long been safeguarded by researchers within the community, who feel a sense of privilege (Kearney et al. 1). However, safeguarding scientific information severely limits those who have access to it, limiting its influence and stifling public comment and criticism. In "Values & Objectivity," Helen Longino first outlined how socializing science increases objectivity. I take this argument one step further and find that researchers increasing communication (and communicative efficacy) with media specifically increases objectivity. In order to do so, I outline the tenets of Longino, apply them to an increase in scientific communication, and draw implications along the way. Instead of arguing purely on goodwill, I develop an argument showing how an increase in science-media relations benefits society at large through increased access to science and benefits scientists themselves through a more objective science that ultimately leads to material gain.

Shuyun NIU

November 10th | 2-2:50 | SC 342

Comparison and Complementarity Between Wang Yangming's Heart-mind Principle and Edmund Husserl's Intentionality in Phenomenology

In the different contexts of Eastern and Western cultures and the metaphysics, Wang Yangming's philosophy of mind coincides with Edmund Husserl's phenomenological reductionism from the perspective of ontology and epistemology. This article compares between Wang's "heart-mind is principle" and Husserl's intentionality in phenomenology. In the first two sections, the specific meaning and practice process of Wang's "heart-mind is principle" in the dimensions of moral practice and cognition of external objects, and the basic meaning of intentionality in Husserl's phenomenological reduction are analyzed respectively. Then in the third section, the two theories are compared in the ontological aspect, which focus is on the ontological argument and their characteristics of humanistic philosophy. The fourth section discusses the similarities and discrepancies of the two theories in terms of epistemology. In terms of cognition, they both believe that "intentionality" is a necessary condition for the generation of conscious activities, and both innovatively pay attention to the reaction of conscious activities and intentional objects to the subject's cognitive activities. Nevertheless, due to metaphysical discrepancies, the teleology of the two theories is discrepant and presents two practical tendencies. Husserl is committed to constructing a rigorous first philosophy for natural science research, while Wang focuses on moral cultivation, thereby establishing a rational order within oneself and outside. Finally, through a comparison of Wang and Husserl, this article discovers that these two similar theories can have more dialogues and complement each other in ontology and epistemology, and open new avenues for the development of the two philosophies.

Nathan Graves
November 10th | 2-2:50 | Alumni Room

Essential Secrets: How Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Schlegel Found a New Home in the Postmodern Condition

Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* set the groundwork for postmodern philosophy in the 20th century and beyond. Thinkers like Baudrillard, Derrida, Blanchot, and more, wrote about and in a period that embraces "play" and rejects metanarratives, transcendental signifiers, and so on. Is this dangerous or merely destructive, or could it be just what we need as philosophers to bravely move into the future of thought? I enlist the works of Kierkegaard and the Early German Romantics (particularly Schlegel) here to show that there is a deep wellspring of early continental thought that can be engaged in fruitful dialogue with theories adjacent to and defined by Lyotard's conception of the postmodern. I argue that Kierkegaard and Schlegel's ironic methods, showcased in *Fear and Trembling* and the fragments of the Early German Romantics respectively, "teach" their readers to rely less on any sort of transcendental signifier and instead grants them a subjectivity that is missing from metanarratives such as those of Hegel that have left a lasting impression on how we interpret our world and our history.

Adeline Navarro
SC 348

November 10th | 3-3:50 |

Political Posters, Performativity, and Power: An Analysis of the Connections Between an Activist Movement's Image and Sound

This essay aims to reconcile a gap in scholarship on the AIDS crisis as prior scholars have looked at ACT UP's image, only recently focusing on their sound. First, this essay argues that we can gain a better understanding of the relationship between ACT UP's image and sound, specifically its political posters and subsequent chants, by using Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of performativity to examine the performative dimension of these chants and thus the power they lend ACT UP members during civil disobedience demonstrations. Second, it argues that the performative has the capacity to register historical change because it is an instance of we-work. This provides new insights into how a movement's image and sound are connected and function to sustain a movement by allowing it to represent itself to itself. Ultimately, keeping them together as a collective and continuing the fight through direct action to end the AIDS crisis.

Marie Peterson

November 10th | 3-3:50 | SC 348

Ethnorace and Latine Decolonial Feminisms: Filling the Gaps of Erasure

This paper discusses how decolonial feminists, specifically from a Latine perspective, can mitigate issues of erasure using the concept of 'ethnorace.' One major figure in decolonial Latine feminist theory, María Lugones, has offered notable contributions to the field through her analysis of the modern/colonial gender system. Despite the advancements her work makes, her readings of

Black feminist scholars have been critiqued for the potential erasures enacted by her account of decolonial feminism. For example, Kathryn Sophia Belle and Emma D. Velez have highlighted how Lugones's interpretation of intersectionality may misrepresent the theoretical framework as developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, as well as the history of intersectional approaches in Black feminist theory. In this paper, I argue that the concept of ethnorace can be used within decolonial feminism to address these erasures. Using Linda Martín Alcoff's argument for Latine identity as an ethnoracial identity, I propose a new account of ethnorace as an identification category that considers the racial, ethnic, and historical/political aspects of an identity. Such an account, I argue, brings awareness to both the heterogeneity and racialization of such a group. If this account of ethnorace is used in a rereading of Lugones's work, it can alleviate the erasures of Black feminist theory committed in her original reading of intersectionality and, moreover, bring into focus the experiences of multiply-marginalized Latine people. This paper therefore serves as a contribution to feminist decolonial theories concerned with coalition-building across marginalized communities.