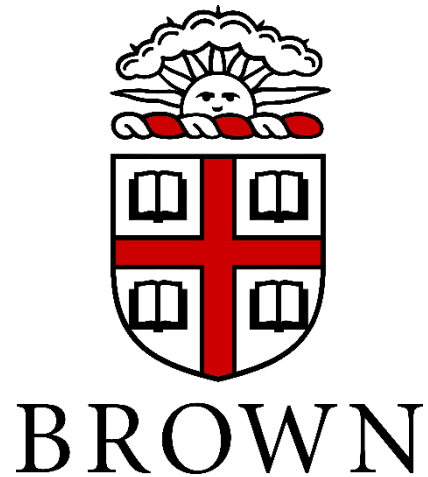


The Sixteenth Annual Mark L. Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference

Program of Events



Presented by the Philosophy Department at Brown University

February 18th and 19th, 2023

85 Waterman Street, Room 130

(For inquiries, e-mail browngradconf@gmail.com)

Saturday, February 18th, 2023

9:30 am *Breakfast*

10:30 am Ayooob Shahmoradi (UCSD), “Thought: Dependent vs. Independent”

12:00 pm *Lunch*

1:30 pm Kellan Head (Syracuse), “Internalist Perspectives on Moral Encroachment”

3:00 pm *Coffee Break*

3:15 pm Rutger van Oeveren (UT-Austin), “The De Re/De Dicto View of Moral Praiseworthiness”

5:00 pm Keynote Lecture

Are There Fitting Emotions?

Nomy Arpaly
(Brown University)

7:00 pm *Dinner at Lim’s Fine Thai & Sushi Restaurant, 18 South Angell Street*

Sunday, February 19th, 2023

9:30 am *Breakfast*

10:30 am Steven Hernandez (CUNY), “Rational Communication and Hoping for the Impossible”

12:00 pm *Lunch*

1:30 pm Jordan Myers (University of Houston), “Epistemic Resultant Luck and the Appropriate Target of Epistemic Blame”

3:00 pm *Coffee Break*

3:15 pm Jordan Walters (McGill), “Naïve Humanism”

5:00 pm Keynote Lecture

“Working on Yourself”

Zoë Johnson King
(Harvard University)

7:00 pm *Dinner at Andreas Restaurant, 268 Thayer Street*

Abstracts

Ayoob Shahmoradi (UCSD), “Thought: Dependent vs. Independent”

The greatest chasm in the philosophy of language divides two perspectives on the nature of reference. On the one hand we have (broadly) Fregean views on which reference requires the ability to uniquely individuate the referent. On the other hand, we have Kripke and his followers who deny that reference requires such an ability. I present a distinction between two types of mental reference and then I argue that part of the disagreement between these two groups of views is due to the fact that each side takes reference to be exhausted by one of these two types at the cost of ignoring the other. I will argue that these two kinds of reference have different properties. As a case study, I develop my arguments by focusing on Gareth Evans’s theory of reference. I show that Evans’ arguments for his much discussed Russell Principle—that reference requires uniquely individuating the referent—work only for one kind of reference (“independent reference”). At the same time, the typical Kripke and Donnellan style scenarios that are often brought up against Russell’s Principle work only for the other type of reference (“dependent reference”). Therefore, each theory captures only part of the full story about mental reference. A full story of reference requires both.

Kellan Head (Syracuse), “Internalist Perspectives on Moral Encroachment”

Moral encroachment theories state that moral considerations—in addition to evidential support—affect a belief’s epistemic justificatory status. They are externalist theories of epistemic justification, claiming that the moral features of a belief are dependent upon facts external to and independent of the agent’s evidential circumstance, and that these moral features affect whether the belief is justified. Here, I develop internalist moral encroachment (IME) which I will argue is superior to standard externalist versions (EME). While EME states that the moral factors relevant to a belief’s justificatory status obtain irrespective of the agent’s evidential context, IME is different:

IME: moral factors relevant to a belief’s justificatory status are relativized to and determined by the agent’s evidence about the moral status of the belief.

Suppose agent A has just enough evidential support of belief p’s truth to make believing p justified in normal, non-moral contexts, and A believes p. If belief p has a moral status, EME has us look at the objective moral features of the belief. Instead, IME has us look at what A’s evidence suggests are the moral features of a belief in p. If A’s evidence supports the proposition that believing p is morally bad, then A’s belief in p is epistemically unjustified. If A’s evidence fails to support believing in p being morally bad, then A’s belief is not prevented from being epistemically justified in this way. I provide cases that motivate IME over EME. I conclude by addressing additional advantages of accepting IME over EME.

Rutger van Oeveren (UT-Austin), “The De Re/De Dicto View of Moral Praiseworthiness”

One is only morally praiseworthy for performing a right act φ when it's not *accidental* that one does the right thing. And it's not accidental that one does the right thing only if one performs right act φ *for the right reasons*. But which reasons are those? Some hold that they are based on considerations of fairness, utility, and the like: the right-making features of an action (its rightness *de re*). Others suggest that the right reason to do the right thing is simply that it is the right thing to do (its rightness *de dicto*). In this paper, I give two arguments for thinking that being motivated by *both* is optimally praiseworthy. First, when more would have had to be different in order for an agent not to perform the right act for the right reasons, her doing the right thing is optimally *non-accidental*, and hence optimally *praiseworthy* (all else equal). Second, when a right act φ is performed for what its rightness consists in (which, as I argue, is its rightness *de re* and *de dicto*), it is optimally *non-accidental*, and hence optimally praiseworthy (again, all else equal). Along the way, I show how the argument provides a convincing response to a worry by Johnson King about *de re* motivation.

Steven Hernandez (CUNY), “Rational Communication and Hoping for the Impossible”

Consider Emily: Emily is at the zoo and wants to tell a monkey that she finds him handsome. She does, ”Hello, monkey! You’re such a handsome monkey.” The monkey looks askance at her, but otherwise does not respond. Emily seems to be engaging in a communication-attempt. Griceans endorse The Slogan about intention: an agent A intends to ϕ only if they lack the belief that ϕ is impossible. Thus, Griceans must say that Emily does not intend to communicate with the monkey. I show how this reveals a dilemma for Griceanism: it either implies all agents accept Griceanism, or agents like Emily believe they are not performing a communication-attempt. Moreover, those who endorse The Slogan do not specify the type of impossibility that is relevant. I argue that The Slogan is only defensible as a rational constraint with respect to conceptual impossibility. I suggest that intention-based communicative theories must reject The Slogan in order to avoid the above dilemma and accept that sometimes communicative actions are performed using practical hope, a complex attitude that contains intention, and that this is a rational thing to do.

Jordan Myers (University of Houston), “Epistemic Resultant Luck and the Appropriate Target of Epistemic Blame”

Blaming others for their beliefs is a common practice. For instance, I have blamed others for their political, moral, and religious beliefs. A burgeoning literature on epistemic blame has investigated (1) the distinct nature of this *epistemic* dimension of blame, (2) various accounts of what it means to epistemically blame others, (3) the normatively correct conditions to be genuinely epistemically blameworthy, and (4) the appropriate target of epistemic blame—i.e., that which one is blamed *for*. There are a variety of defensible replies to the first three questions, but a monolithic consensus on the appropriate target of blame. Normative epistemologists have assumed that *beliefs* are the appropriate target of epistemic blame—that we are right to blame others *for* their beliefs. In response to this consensus, I raise a concern around resultant luck from the moral blame literature and defend the

“rationalist’s” response to this concern, concluding that any appropriate target of blame must be immune to resultant luck. I apply this generalized principle to the epistemic domain, arguing that the widely assumed target of epistemic blame must be revised. In other words, beliefs are an inappropriate target of epistemic blame because they are subject to *epistemic resultant luck*. I propose and defend a new, appropriate target of epistemic blame: epistemic character. I conclude by suggesting that epistemic character can be thought of in terms of epistemic vice and virtue, drawing from the literature on moral character and virtue epistemology.

Jordan Walters (McGill), “Naïve Humanism”

Every philosophical discussion of the value of humanity must at some point address an inescapable yet vexing question: Why think that there is anything normatively significant about being human? Naïve humanists say that our bare humanity as such is valuable. Sophisticated humanists say that we are the host of some special property over and above our humanity which imbues us with value. Despite the variety of issues facing both naïve and sophisticated humanists, it is widely assumed that some form of the sophisticated humanist answer must be correct. I disagree. I develop and defend the following simple argument for naïve humanism. It is fitting to love X if and only if X is loveable. All human beings are loveable. There is a constitutive connection between X’s *being lovable* and X’s *being valuable*. Therefore, all human beings have dignity. I conclude by sketching a surprising upshot of my view: namely, that it can solve a longstanding puzzle about the ground of our duties to the dead.