

# Yale University Graduate Philosophy Conference

April, 2015

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

All talks will take place at WTS A15 (Watson Center, 60 Sachem Street)

## Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>

- 9:30-9:50:** Light Breakfast (coffee, bagels, etc.)
- 9:50-10:00:** Welcome and Introduction
- 10:00-10:55:** Peter van Elswyk (Rutgers University): “Beautiful for a Lump of Clay”  
Comments: Reier Helle
- 11:00-11:55:** Cinzia Villanucci Smothers (Bowling Green State University): “The Knowability Constraint on Moral Truths”  
Comments: Yuan Yuan
- 12:00-2:00:** Lunch (not provided)
- 2:00-2:55:** Nader Shoaibi (University of Illinois-Chicago): “The Role of Art in Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*”  
Comments: Dylan Vollans
- 3:00-3:55:** Dylan Bianchi (MIT): “How Does Know-How Explain Skill?”  
Comments: Juan S. Piñeros Sánchez
- 4:00-4:25:** Coffee and Light Snacks
- 4:30-6:15:** *Keynote Speaker:* Cian Dorr (NYU)  
Comments: Samuel Elgin and Eric Guindon
- 7:00:** Conference Dinner: Thali Too (65 Broadway, New Haven, CT 06511. (203) 776-1600)

## Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>

- 9:30-10:00:** Light Breakfast (coffee, bagels, etc.)
- 10:00-10:55:** Daniel Murphy (Cornell University) “Qualitativism and the Identity of Indiscernibles”  
Comments: Will Ratoff
- 11:00-11:55:** Zoe Jenkin (Harvard University) “Perceptual Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade”  
Comments: Jessie Munton
- 12:00-12:55:** Lunch (provided)
- 1:00-2:45:** *Keynote Speaker:* Paul Franks (Yale)  
Comments: Justin D’Ambrosio
- 2:45-2:55:** Closing Remarks

# PRESENTERS AND PAPERS

*In Order of Appearance*

**Peter van Elswyk** (Rutgers University)

*Beautiful for a Lump of Clay*

Abstract: The pluralist about material constitution maintains that a lump of clay and the statue it constitutes are not identical. Although pluralism strikes many as extravagant because it requires distinct things to coincide, it can be defended with a simple argument. The monist has no such argument to offer. Typically, she has to argue indirectly for her view through finding problems with pluralistic extravagance. This paper aims to even the score. A new argument for monism is defended that takes a cue from the semantics of gradable adjectives and which is direct and as simple as the pluralist's own master argument.

Biography: Peter works primarily in philosophy of language and metaphysics. He is writing a dissertation on propositional anaphora.

**Cinzia Villanucci Smothers** (Bowling Green State University)

*The Knowability Constraint on Moral Truths*

Abstract: In this paper, I introduce and defend what I call the Knowability Constraint on moral truths.

Knowability Constraint—If  $P$  is a pure moral truth, then  $P$  is knowable.

By 'pure moral truth', I mean any proposition about normative reasons, values (etc.) whose truth-values are determined by necessary facts. The argument I offer in support of Knowability, roughly, is that, if morality is to be action guiding at all, a specific set of moral truths (i.e. pure moral truths) must be knowable. The argument has two premises. [Premise 1] states that if  $P$  is a pure moral truth, then it is possible to guide my conduct by  $P$ . This claim is derived from a particular account of the nature of moral guidance. [Premise 2] states that if it is possible to guide my conduct by  $P$ , then  $P$  is knowable. The explanation of this claim depends on understanding moral guidance as a distinctive kind of responsiveness to moral truths that requires, in addition to being sensitive to the right and wrong-makers that (i) recognize, or understand, truths about moral reasons and (ii) form justified beliefs about such truths. After I derive the argument's conclusion, I point to some interesting metaethical implications that follow from Knowability.

Biography: Cinzia is interested in metaethics, ethics and philosophy of education.

## **Nader Shoaibi** (University of Illinois-Chicago)

### *The Role of Art in Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy*

Abstract: I argue against a recent interpretation of Nietzsche, due to Alex Silk, according to which the role of art in Nietzsche's philosophy is significantly downplayed. I focus on Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and argue that in fact art plays a crucial role in the central problematic of that work. I offer an anti-realist alternative to the above-mentioned interpretation.

Biography: Nader received his first Bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Azad University in Iran. He then came to the US to finish a second bachelor's degree in philosophy at UC Berkeley, and is now a graduate student at University of Illinois, Chicago. He has pretty broad interests in philosophy including history of philosophy especially Kant and Nietzsche and philosophy of language.

## **Dylan Bianchi** (MIT)

### *How Does Know-How Explain Skill?*

Abstract: Intellectualists view know-how as knowledge of a proposition entertained under a practical mode of presentation. Practical modes of presentation have not been characterized in a way that permits an intellectualist account that invokes them to illuminate the explanatory relationship between knowing how to  $\phi$  and skill at  $\phi$ -ing. I develop a novel cognitivist account of know-how, centered on the idea of information accessible for a purpose, that casts new light on how know-how explains skill.

Biography: Dylan Bianchi is a fourth-year graduate student in the MIT department of Linguistics and Philosophy. His thesis is on know-how, and how it plays its action-guiding role.

## **Daniel Murphy** (Cornell University)

### *Qualitativism and the Identity of Indiscernibles*

Abstract: Robert Adams (1979) has argued from the possibility of qualitatively symmetric situations for the fundamentality of non-qualitative aspects of reality. Any two individuals differ in non-qualitative properties (e.g. being Castor). Accordingly, if there are two individuals with identical qualitative properties (in a symmetric situation), some individuals differ in non-qualitative properties without differing in

qualitative ones. Adams responded to such property-entailment failures by embracing the fundamentality of non-qualitative matters. In so doing, he rejected qualitativism, the view that fundamental reality is purely qualitative. Though recent work on qualitativism affirms, pace Adams, its consistency with these entailment failures, I think this verdict has yet to be sufficiently justified. In this paper, I rebut Adams' anti-qualitativism argument. In particular, I develop an alternative response to the entailment failures that takes the relevant non-qualitative matters to be holistically determined by qualitative ones.

Biography: Daniel is in his 5th year at Cornell University (ABD). He works primarily in metaphysics, and his dissertation defends a purely qualitative view of fundamental reality. He also has serious interests in philosophy of religion, philosophy of mind, and Medieval philosophy. When he is not doing philosophy, he is often driving (as a hapless commuter), and enjoys sports and making noises with a guitar.

## **Zoe Jenkin** (Harvard University)

*Perceptual Expectations and Epistemic Downgrade*

Abstract: The possibility of the influence of previously held cognitive or perceptual states on perception gives us reason to examine the rational role of perception when it is so influenced. Some such experiences have etiologies that mirror paradigmatic irrational belief formation, and it has been recently argued (Siegel 2013) that this makes them epistemically downgraded. I argue that cases of influence by both perceptually and cognitively stored expectations, on perceptual experience, such as color memory effects, are among such etiologies.

Biography: Zoe Jenkin is a first-year graduate student at Harvard University. She works in the philosophy of perception and epistemology. She is a big fan of hot sauce and striped socks.

## **Keynote Speakers**

Cian Dorr (NYU)

Paul Franks (Yale University)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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