

# Kentucky Philosophical Association

**2016 Annual Meeting**  
**Saturday, April 16, 2016**  
**Bellarmino University**  
**Louisville, KY**

8:00-8:50	Registration – in the Fireplace Room, Horrigan Hall		
8:50-9:00	Welcome		
Session Locations	<b>Horrigan 104</b>	<b>Horrigan 106</b>	<b>Horrigan 109</b>
9:00-9:50 Session 1	<p>“From Epistemic Luck to Moral Luck”  Robert Hartman  <i>Saint Louis University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Corey Reed (Louisville)</p>	<p>“Hope for the Morally (and Otherwise) Unpleasant”  Kiran Bhardwaj  <i>University of North Carolina</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Jennifer Hudgens (UK)</p>	<p>“Divine Simplicity and Truthmaker Theory”  Allen S. Gehring, Jr.  <i>Brescia University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Rick Ray (Northeast State CC)</p>
10:00-10:50 Session 2	<p>“In Defense of Theistic Assuming”  Caroline Paddock  <i>Baylor University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Julianne Chung (Louisville)</p>	<p>“Utilitarianism and Actual Moral Rules”  Ben Cordry  <i>Lorain County Community College</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Jason Chen (SLU)</p>	<p>“‘Exists’ as a Real Predicate”  Christian Willett  <i>Northern Kentucky University</i></p> <p><b>KPA Annual Undergraduate Student Essay Contest Winner</b></p>
11:00-11:50 Session 3	<p>“Debt and Moral Confusion”  Graham Hubbs  <i>University of Idaho</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Rory Goggins (Murray State)</p>	<p>“The Intrinsic Value of the Least in Leopold’s Philosophy”  Bob Sandmeyer  <i>University of Kentucky</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Wendell O’Brien (Morehead St.)</p>	<p>“A Critique of Strong Emergence”  Joshua Johnson  <i>Saint Louis University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Will Simpson (Louisville)</p>
12:00-1:00	<b>Lunch</b> (on your own – see below for details)		
1:00-1:30	<b>Business Meeting:</b> to be held in the Private Dining Room at BU (All registered conference attendees are KPA Members and may attend)		
1:30-2:20 Session 4	<p>“In Defense of Biological Normativity”  Jeff Wisdom  <i>Joliet Junior College</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Alexandra Bradner (EKU)</p>	<p>“Microaggressions in Clinical Medicine”  Lauren Freeman &amp; Heather Stewart,  <i>University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Commentator:  William James Lincoln (UK)</p>	<p>“A New Reading of the Modal Theses in Theta 4”  Everett Fulmer  <i>Saint Louis University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Eva Cadavid (Centre College)</p>
2:30-3:20 Session 5	<p>“Whiteness and Worldmaking”  David S. Owen  <i>University of Louisville</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Caroline Buchanan (UK)</p>	<p>“Ancient Western Reconciliations of Justice and Mercy”  Audrey Anton  <i>Western Kentucky University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Yaw Frimpong-Mansoh (NKU)</p>	<p>“Accidental Forms as Proper Parts of Individual Substances”  Jeremy W. Skrzypek  <i>Saint Louis University</i></p> <p>Commentator:  Evanthia Speliotis (Bellarmino)</p>
3:30-5:00	<p><b>Keynote Address: Charles Mills</b>  <i>In Conjunction With the Ethics &amp; Social Justice Center of Bellarmine University</i>  <i>Northwestern University</i>  <b>“Liberalism and Racial Justice”</b>  Location: Hilary’s (Horrigan Hall)</p>		

## **Abstracts of Papers (listed by session)**

### **Session 1 (9:00-9:50)**

#### **From Epistemic Luck to Moral Luck**

Robert Hartman, Saint Louis University

Abstract: There is a contradiction in our idea moral responsibility. We believe that luck can affect a person's praiseworthiness and blameworthiness and that it cannot. I resolve this contradiction by arguing that luck can affect a person's praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. In particular, I argue that certain kinds of epistemic luck that enable epistemic agency have analogues in certain kinds of luck in circumstance and in character that enable moral agency. And since the kinds of epistemic luck that enable epistemic agency can partially determine a person's creditworthiness for knowledge, I argue, by analogy, that the kinds of circumstantial and constitutive luck that enable moral agency can affect a person's moral praiseworthiness and blameworthiness. Thus, we have good analogical evidence that luck in circumstance and in character can partially determine a person's praiseworthiness and blameworthiness, which means we have good evidence for extant circumstantial and constitutive moral luck.

#### **Hope for the Morally (and Otherwise) Unpleasant**

Kiran Bhardwaj, University of North Carolina

Abstract: Morally (and otherwise) unpleasant people are a common feature of our lives. While we may often wish to withdraw from such people, in some cases, circumstances—or moral reasons—require us to continue to engage with them. In such cases, we must ask ourselves about whether or not it is right or prudent to have hope for those people who we think may be hopeless in character. I suggest that the answer is yes: either for own sake, for the sake of that person, or for the sake of third parties, hope helps ground the kind of behaviors that lead to actual moral improvement.

#### **Divine Simplicity and Truthmaker Theory**

Allen S. Gehring, Jr., Brescia University

Abstract: Recently, philosophers have argued that the notion of truthmaking is required to understand divine simplicity. An important issue overlooked here regards truthbearers. I contend the truthmaking account of divine simplicity is implausible, because it is committed to the view that the only truthbearers are human beliefs.

### **Session 2 (10:00-10:50)**

#### **In Defense of Theistic Assuming**

Caroline Paddock, Baylor University

Abstract: In this paper, I argue that when faced with a proposition of a certain kind, assuming the truth of the proposition is often the most epistemically advantageous course of action. That is, when  $p$  is a proposition of a certain kind *and* one has a positive attitude toward the truth of  $p$ , one will gain more and better evidence precisely by assuming  $p$  and acting on it, than by assuming not- $p$  or refraining from assuming at all. Furthermore, "God exists" is a proposition of this kind for at least some people. So if one is positively oriented toward the

possibility that God exists, and one wants to discover the truth of the matter for oneself, one's most epistemically advantageous course of action is to *assume that God exists*, and act on that assumption.

### **Utilitarianism and Actual Moral Rules**

Ben Cordry, Lorain County Community College

Abstract: In many forms of utilitarianism, the actual moral rules of a society's conventional moral code play no constitutive role determining a person's moral obligations - we are obliged only to act to maximize happiness or to follow ideal rules that would, under certain conditions, maximize happiness. In "Actual Rule Utilitarianism", Richard Miller has recently argued for a form of utilitarianism in which actual moral rules play a constitutive role determine one's moral obligations. Working from Mill's analytic characterization of moral obligations, I develop a similar view. However, my analysis yields a conceptually richer system that gives a broader role to direct considerations of utility in practical reasoning. Additionally, I construct a conceptual space in which one could judge an action to be "moral but unethical" or even "ethical but immoral". Although I don't argue for it here, I think this view is akin to Mill's own version of utilitarianism.

### **"Exists" as a Real Predicate**

Christian Willett, Northern Kentucky University

*Winning entry for the KPA Annual Undergraduate Student Essay Contest.*

Abstract: This paper examines the most common arguments for and against the notion of existence as a predicate of individual objects. Since Kant and Hume, it has been a common view that existence is not a predicate of individuals, or a "real predicate". This tradition continues through Russell, Quine and other analytical philosophers. They rely on two types of arguments, concerning the apparent absurdity of predicating existence and analyzing negative existential propositions. However, against this tradition are those who believe that there is a sense of existence that does apply to individuals, the *actuality* sense. And it is this sense of actuality that is key to understanding a fundamental aspect of reality. This paper explores these arguments in greater detail and argues in favor of treating existence as a true predicate.

## **Session 3 (11:00-11:50)**

### **Debt and Moral Confusion**

Graham Hubbs, University of Idaho

Abstract: According to David Graeber, a "profound moral confusion" runs throughout the history of thought about debt. It seems wrong to be in debt, but if one is in debt, it is wrong not to repay the debt. On the other hand, if it is wrong to make one effectively into a slave, then it also seems wrong to put another in any debt that does so, but if one puts another in such debt, the former is wronged by the latter if the latter fails to repay. To gain clarity here, I argue, we should distinguish between two different conceptions of debt, *contracted debt* and *neighborly debt*. Contracted debt, I believe, is fundamentally debt between strangers, and its corresponding form of justice exists to provide social structure to a fundamentally unsocial relationship. The unsocial character of the underlying relationship is, I argue, the *sine qua non* of the moral confusion surrounding debt.

## **The Value of the Least in Leopold's Philosophy**

Bob Sandmeyer, University of Kentucky

Abstract: In Aldo Leopold's early writings, he expresses a strong hostility towards predatory animals in the policy of game protection. I will show how, as Leopold's views matured, he gained a deep appreciation for the role of predatory populations in the stable and integral functioning of the land ecology. The question arises, however, whether animals (or other species) have value merely insofar as they preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community? Or is there a place for the intrinsic valuation of animals in Leopold's land ethic? If the answer is yes to the former but no to the latter then the land ethic not only allows for but commands the culling of destabilizing "varmint" populations for the benefit of land health. I will present evidence both from his writings and from anecdotes in his personal life that speak against this fascistic interpretation of the land ethic.

## **A Critique of Strong Emergence**

Joshua Johnson, Saint Louis University

Abstract: Carl Gillett has in various places defended a theory of emergence that he considers to have been largely neglected by philosophers in the contemporary literature. He calls this theory "Strong Emergence", and claims that it occupies a place between merely epistemological "Weak Emergence" and anti-physicalist "Radical Emergence". I present and explain Gillett's theory, and proceed to consider objections to it – particularly with respect to its two crucial conceptual components: Dimensioned Realization and Machretic Determination. After considering two possible interpretations of Machretic Determination, I argue that Strong Emergence fails as a theory of ontological emergence because it is either incoherent or the emergent properties that it proposes are ontologically superfluous.

## **Session 4 (1:30-2:20)**

## **In Defense of Biological Normativity**

Jeff Wisdom, Joliet Junior College

Abstract: This essay aims to show that the rejection of biological normativity on the ground that it is inconsistent with our best science generates a *reductio* against the very epistemic commitments that undergird the move to reject biological normativity in the first place. I also briefly outline an Aristotelian approach to normativity that avoids the *reductio* while remaining broadly in line with naturalist sympathies. Embracing this approach to biological normativity unifies normativity across biology, epistemology, and metaethics. Insofar as simplicity and explanatory unification are theoretical virtues that constitute evidence of a theory's truth, there is at least some reason to believe in the existence of objective biological norms.

## **Microaggressions in Clinical Medicine: A Critique of Beauchamp and Childress' Principle of Non-Maleficence**

Lauren Freeman, University of Louisville

Heather Stewart, University of Louisville

Abstract: This paper critiques Beauchamp and Childress' principle of non-maleficence as set out in *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. We argue that it is reductive insofar as it considers only *physical* harms and thus fails to capture another class of non-physical harms that

patients frequently experience in clinical settings that are just as serious as physical harms. There are three kinds of non-physical harms that concern us, all of which can result from microaggressions: emotional harms, epistemic harms, and existential harms pertaining to self-identity. Insofar as these harms result from microaggressions experienced in medical encounters, they have the further consequence of undermining physician-patient relationships, precluding relationships of trust, and therefore of compromising the kind and quality of care received. Insofar as this is the case, we argue that the non-physical harms that result from microaggressions are just as serious as the physical harms upon which Beauchamp and Childress focus, and thus, that it is a deep oversight that they fail to include them in their account of the principle of non-maleficence.

#### **A New Reading of the Modal Theses in Theta 4**

Everett Fulmer, Saint Louis University

Abstract: Several commentators have seen in the second half of *Metaphysics* Θ4 an argument for the fundamental  $K\Diamond$ -Rule of contemporary modal logic. Yet the same paragraph that seems to show such logical acuity ends with Aristotle “proving” a second, and patently invalid, modal rule. The most recent attempt to absolve Aristotle from this logical blunder comes from Kit Fine (2011) who goes so far as to attribute to Aristotle an idiosyncratic modal system that, among other things, denies the T-axiom. In my view, the solution is much simpler. The key that has been overlooked is that Aristotle is offering a modal analysis of entailment relations. Once this is seen, the possibility operators in the passage gain scope over the entire sentence of analysis. The results are as much as can be hoped for: valid modal rules, sound arguments, and no need to appeal to anything beyond standard modal logic.

#### **Session 5 (2:30-3:20)**

#### **Whiteness and Worldmaking**

David S. Owen, University of Louisville

Abstract: In this talk I will examine some of the ways that whiteness generates a social world and how that figures into recent events leading to the Black Lives Matter movement. I will argue that whiteness is not simply a racialized identity, but is instead a social structure that shapes both the social world and our perception of the social world. The modes of worldmaking identified by Goodman can be useful for explaining the worldmaking functions of whiteness. Once we understand how whiteness makes the world in this way, we can better understand why unarmed black men and boys are perceived as threats, why the phrase ‘black lives matter’ is warranted, and the reactions to the BLM movement. Understanding the worldmaking function of whiteness is essential to effectively disrupting how whiteness works.

#### **Ancient Western Reconciliations of Justice and Mercy**

Audrey Anton, Western Kentucky University

Abstract: The virtue of mercy seems to be in direct conflict with that of justice. Mercy is the definitive suspension of deserved punishment, while justice is the meting out of such punishment. This tension is only further compounded if one believes in a unity, or at least a compatibility, of virtues—something the virtue ethicists of Ancient times seem to assume. In this paper, I shall explore the ways that three Ancient Western thinkers attempt to reconcile these two virtues: Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca. I argue that each has some element of what

contemporary scholars call the *rehabilitative* theory of punishment. The rehabilitative theory of punishment holds that one deserves punishment for transgressions if and only if such punishment would rehabilitate the offender. This seems to have been Socrates' view, and it is, in part, Aristotle's. However, what is most interesting (and what I shall argue) is that with Seneca, we find an inversion of this theory: if one could be rehabilitated by mercy, it is just to forego otherwise "just" deserts.

### **Accidental Forms as Proper Parts of Individual Substances: An Alternative to Jeffrey Brower's Model of Aquinas's Ontology**

Jeremy W. Skrzypek, Saint Louis University

**Abstract:** Like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas takes material substances to be composed of form and matter. But Aquinas also distinguishes between two sorts of forms: substantial and accidental. Of which forms, then, is a material substance composed, on his view? According to Jeffrey Brower's model of Aquinas's ontology, Aquinas's view is that a material substance is composed of prime matter and its substantial form. According to the alternative model that I present here, Aquinas's view is that a material substance is composed of prime matter, its substantial form, *and* all of its accidental forms. In this paper, I argue that the alternative model more accurately reflects Aquinas's ontology. Given the way in which he describes the difference between an essence and a *suppositum* throughout his works, I argue that there is good reason to believe that Aquinas thinks that the accidental forms of a material substance are included among its parts.

### **Additional Conference Information:**

**Registration:** Full-Time Faculty: \$30; Part-Time Faculty and Students: \$10. Registration must be paid on the day of the conference, cash or check. Receipts will be provided. Registration fees directly support current and future conference costs.

**Location, Campus Parking, and Map:** Registration and all presentations will be in Horrigan Hall at Bellarmine University. Permit parking is not enforced on the weekends so you will not need a visitor parking pass and may park in a lot close to Horrigan Hall. A campus map is available at this link: [http://www.bellarmino.edu/images/admissions/CampusMap\\_Public.pdf](http://www.bellarmino.edu/images/admissions/CampusMap_Public.pdf).

**Lunch & Business Meeting:** The KPA has reserved the private room in the University Dining Hall (UDH) (in the Brown Activities Building). Lunch itself is not provided by the KPA, but the UDH offers many options. You may also go off campus for lunch (and return for the business meeting if you choose to attend it). At 1:00 the KPA Business Meeting will officially begin in the private dining room; all who have registered for the conference (and thus are KPA members for one year) may attend.

**Contact Information (incl. accommodations):** For recommendations for those seeking overnight accommodations in Louisville as well as any other information about the conference, please contact the KPA President (preferably by email):

Matthew Pianalto, Department of Philosophy & Religion, Eastern Kentucky University, 521 Lancaster Avenue, Case Annex 268, Richmond, KY 40475. Office: 859-622-2979. Department: 859-622-1400. Email: [Matthew.Pianalto@eku.edu](mailto:Matthew.Pianalto@eku.edu)