

2013 UGA Graduate Philosophy Conference Schedule

Friday March 22nd:

2:30pm

205S: Eric Mack (UIUC): Logic, Reliability and Phenotypic Chauvinism

- Commentator: James Grindeland

Faculty Address: 3:30pm

115: Beth Preston (UGA): Philosophical Implications of Synthetic Biology: A Deflationary Account

Dinner: 6:30pm

- Potluck at Tess Varner's House

Saturday March 23rd:

9am

115: Chris Byron (UNF): The Normative Force behind Marx's Theory of Alienation

- Commentator: Nathan Wood

205S: Ryan Hubbard (Syracuse): Explaining Moral Normativity, Moral Criticism and the Wrong Kind of Reasons

- Commentator: Rebecca Neher

10am

115: Andreas Falke (UF): Why Spooky Action at a Distance Isn't Spooky

- Commentator: Charles Hollingsworth

205S: Adam Hamilton (FSU): Norm Expressivistic Analysis and the Milgram Experiment

- Commentator: Michael Yudanin

11am

115: Ben Guido (Baylor): Intentionality and Demonstrative Reference

- Commentator: Sean Meslar

Lunch: Noon-2:15

- DePalma's, Downtown Athens

2:30pm

115: Chuck Goldhaber (Pitt): An Account of Practical Wisdom Needs an Account of Intuitive Intelligence

- Commentator: Robert Scott

205S: Tobias Wilsch (Rutgers): Tensed Facts or Tensed Instantiation

- Commentator: Brad Patty

Keynote: 3:30pm

115: L.A. Paul (UNC-Chapel Hill): "Experience and the Direction of Time"

Dinner: 6:30

- Taste of India, Downtown Athens

Abstracts

Eric Mack (UIUC): Logic, Reliability and Phenotypic Chauvinism

In this paper I argue that any account of our reliability about logic along the lines of an evolutionary story will end up proving too much if “our reliability about logic” means that our beliefs and behavior track truth-preserving logical laws. Since any proof that a logical system is truth-preserving exhibits a special sort of circularity, rule circularity, these proofs are easy to come by even for a wide variety of logical systems. The result is that, modulo soundness, beliefs tracking mutually inconsistent logical systems can be claimed to be, say, the result of natural selection. Truth preservation cannot exhaust what we mean by reliability since it is not a feature that is unique to any logical system. Moreover, this conclusion generalizes beyond proposed evolutionary explanations for our reliability about logic. I will argue that any means of accounting for the seemingly coincidental correspondence between logical facts on the one hand and our beliefs and inferential behavior on the other will be subject to a similar underdetermination argument. I will conclude with some speculation about whether this constitutes some evidence for pluralism about logical consequence.

Chris Byron (UNF): The Normative Force behind Marx’s Theory of Alienation

Over the past few decades many of Marx’s theories have been adapted in the normative direction of rights and social justice claims. G.A. Cohen, Allen Wood, and Steven Lukes are but a few of the thinkers who have made this theoretical move. Ironically this is not what Marx would have wanted, and he made this explicitly clear throughout his life. Like Hegel and other German thinkers, Marxism, and Marx’s work, does try to be systematic and totalizing. One stone left unturned though, by Marx, is that of ethics. While he rejected rights and justice claims, this does not leave other outlets of normativity undeserving of consideration.

While I do not intend to develop an entire ethical structure from Marx, I do think developing some normative force behind his theory of alienation is possible and even necessary. By bringing in some insights of Aristotle, I hope to develop the normative foundations of Marx’s theory of alienation, in contradistinction to a rights and justice based approach. I also hope some recent empirical research will lend some credence to this approach. The blending of Aristotle and Marx has recently been taken up by Martha Nussbaum too, but she draws a few erroneous conclusions that I will highlight, and Marx draws more radical conclusions than she’s willing to bear. Thus, I hope by highlighting alienation, this normative approach will fork alongside the capabilities approach of Nussbaum, and will not follow in her shadow.

Ryan Hubbard (Syracuse): Explaining Moral Normativity, Moral Criticism and the Wrong Kind of Reasons

The aim of this paper is to critique what I call the further-reasons approach (FRA) to vindicating moral obligation. According FRA, a justificatory explanation of the normativity of morality requires establishing an independent reason to be moral. This approach is advanced by the Normativity Theorist. In order to explain moral normativity, the Normativity Theorist emphasizes the practical justification of norms over establishing the truth of moral propositions. I'll argue that FRA is unsuccessful at offering a justificatory explanation of the normativity of moral obligation, because it is explanatorily inadequate. This inadequacy is a result of FRA's inability to get the moral character of moral obligation right. I will support this claim by arguing that FRA is incapable of accounting for the platitudes of moral criticism and this is due to its failure to provide the right kind of justificatory reason to act in accordance with moral obligation. Furthermore, since the attempt to ground moral obligation in a prudential norm or a norm of justification simpliciter are instances of FRA, these particular approaches are subject to the same inadequacy and therefore fail to offer an adequate account of moral normativity.

Adam Hamilton (FSU): Norm Expressivistic Analysis and the Milgram Experiment

In *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (1990), Allan Gibbard expounds his norm-expressivistic analysis as an antirealist model of understanding moral reprehensibility. Within his norm expressivism, “to think an act morally reprehensible is to accept norms that prescribe, for such a situation, guilt on the part of the agent and resentment on the part of others” (1990:47). While Gibbard’s picture of norm discourse is useful in addressing some issues, his discussion of norms in conflict is incomplete in explaining the obedience experiments of Stanley Milgram (1974), because several influential factors in the experiment were not the socially accepted imperatives that Gibbard describes.

First, variables of proximity between the subject and the confederate become significant in changing the subjects’ behavior. There is also a marked decline in obedience when the experimenter moves away from the subject, which leads me to think that norms are not the only thing at stake, but that pragmatic and even the subtly coercive aspect of physical proximity may be influencing the subject. Furthermore, the verbal prods employed by the experimenter contained not only imperatives, but also ambiguous statements and outright falsehoods, which created a coercive environment for the subject. Ultimately, I conclude that while Gibbard’s norm expressivistic analysis is useful in providing some psychological insights to moral reprehensibility, it is not exhaustive in evaluating morally significant elements in the Milgram Experiment. Therefore, the blame that we hold for the subjects in the experiment, and for obedient people in real life oppressive situations, can be somewhat mitigated.

Andreas Falke (UF): Why Spooky Action at a Distance Isn't Spooky

Einstein worried that quantum theory would involve a spooky action—i.e. causation—at a distance. The philosophical literature has responded to this worry by utilizing somewhat obscure theories such as backwards causation to avoid the alleged spookiness. I argue that such theories are not necessary to make sense of action at a distance. To achieve this, I will first explain Einstein's bone of contention and how it gave rise to Bell's theorem. I will then show how thinking about large-scale objects allows for instantaneous causation or instantaneous changes of properties of events occurring very far apart of one another, partly because an unqualified reading of "Nothing can travel faster than light" is clearly false. The alleged spookiness is a result of importing intuitions we might have based on standard particle physics into our thinking about quantum phenomena. But we might as well base our intuitions on our thinking about macrophenomena. Since the spookiness can be avoided without endorsing obscure theories, it might be more reasonable not to endorse such theories.

Ben Guido (Baylor): Intentionality and Demonstrative Reference

Do speaker intentions constitute part of the context which determines the propositional content of various utterances? Recently, Christopher Gauker has answered this question negatively and proposed a theory to determine the referents of bare demonstratives. He is led to this theory by his supposition that hearers cannot reliably employ a method of interpreting utterances which is based in any way upon speaker intentions. Not only is this supposition erroneous, but counter-examples to Gauker's view abound. I present some counter-examples, showing the necessity of intentionality and relevant mental content to various conversational contexts. I further show the compatibility of a robust semantic theory, one which serves a theory of linguistic communication, and the inclusion of speaker intentions within utterances' contexts. However, I do not go as far as offering any theory myself. My conclusion is simply that Gauker's theory fails and that speaker intentions have some place within a semantic theory.

Chuck Goldhaber (Pitt): An Account of Practical Wisdom Needs an Account of Intuitive Intelligence

Aristotle's practically wise agent is "able to deliberate finely" and thereby comes to understand what she "must or must not do" in the present situation. But how or what practical wisdom contributes to the deliberative process is far from clear. I address a question that has polarized interpreters: Is the practically wise agent's fine deliberation in part a result of her pursuing the single right aim? Interpreters such as David Bostock, Richard Kraut, T.H. Irwin and Richard Sorabji answer "yes". I argue that this is wrong. Given Aristotle's conception of the good life (eudaimonia) as the practice of ethical virtue, a "yes"-answer implies that the practically wise agent must aim at practicing virtue. I argue that taking practical wisdom to require having this aim involves vicious circularity that results from practical wisdom's conceptual priority to ethical virtue. I then develop an alternative view of practical wisdom inspired by Sarah Broadie, Rosalind

Hursthouse and John McDowell, and explain that for this new view to succeed it must differentiate “deliberated choice” from mere “animal response” by giving an account of the intuitive intelligence that is present in only the former.

Tobias Wilsch (Rutgers): Tensed Facts or Tensed Instantiation

The paper gives a general introduction to the problem of change and sets out to adjudicate between the two solutions of this problem that are compatible with both 3D-ism about persistence and the B-theory about time. The two views disagree on whether to time-index the instantiation-relation (“copula-tensing”) or the occurrence of facts (“fact-tensing”). I defend time-indexed instantiation against two arguments from David Lewis, and develop a new argument against this view, which I take to be conclusive. I show that the same kind of argument does not apply to the fact-tensing strategy. I conclude that views on which fact- occurrence is time-indexed have the upper hand.