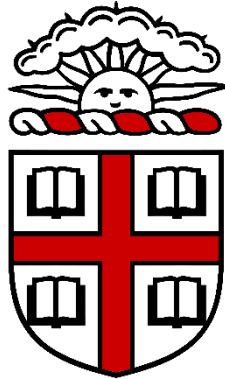


The Fourteenth Annual Mark L. Shapiro Graduate Philosophy Conference

Program of Events



BROWN

Presented by the Philosophy Department at Brown University

March 6th and 7th, 2021

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

Saturday, March 6, 2021

(All times in EST)

11:00 am Elek Lane (Berkeley), "Non-Verbal Metaphor"

12:45 pm Laura Nicoară (USC), "Two Conceptions of Gender Essences"

2:15 pm *Social hour*

3:15 pm Lucia Schwarz (Arizona), "Morality's Normativity May Be Ineffable, but We Can Still Talk about It through Metaphors"

5:00 pm Keynote Lecture

Iris Murdoch: Our Supersensible Calling in an Ordinary World

Justin Broackes
(Brown University)

Sunday, March 7, 2021

(All times in EST)

11:00 am Paul de Font-Reaulx (Michigan), "Penelope and the Drinks"

12:45 pm Nick Harding (Southampton), "Monogamy Is Neither Immoral nor in Need of Sophisticated Philosophical Justification"

2:15 pm *Social hour*

3:15 pm Evan Welchance (Virginia), "Ordinary Objects Are A Priori-ty"

5:00 pm Keynote Lecture

Should Ontology Be Explanatory?

Amie L. Thomasson
(Dartmouth University)

Abstracts

Nick Harding (Southampton)

“Monogamy is Neither Immoral nor in Need of Sophisticated Philosophical Justification”

Monogamy is the relationship arrangement in which two partners commit to sexual and romantic exclusivity. Natasha McKeever (2014) argues that monogamy is, *prima facie*, inconsistent with romantic love. Harry Chalmers (2019) argues that monogamy is immoral. Both question the legitimacy of partners restricting each other from having additional sexual and romantic relationships, arguing justification for these restrictions is required. They argue that many of the standard justifications for monogamy are unsuccessful. McKeever then offers her, what I call, ‘sophisticated philosophical justification’ for monogamy, which she believes applies to some/many couples, but not all. I argue that monogamy is neither immoral nor in need of sophisticated philosophical justification. A simpler, standard justification exists: the difficulty of managing jealousy justification. Many couples reasonably wish to avoid undesirable, intense, and painful feelings of jealousy. To have a successful consensually nonmonogamous relationship, they and their partner(s) will have to overcome or, at least, manage their jealousy to a sufficient extent. However, they can reasonably believe jealousy, because of its deep-evolutionary-rooted nature, is very, perhaps too, difficult to overcome or manage to this extent. Consequently, many couples can say that when balancing the risks and costs of trying to manage jealousy against the expected benefits of the freedom to have additional partners, they judge it unworthwhile. I examine how the monogamy challengers have addressed this justification, arguing that they fail to refute it.

Laura Nicoară (USC)

“Two Conceptions of Gender Essences”

There are two important questions we can ask about gender kinds such as women. The first concerns the criteria for membership in them: in virtue of what does an individual count as a woman? Some answers to this question, namely those which specify a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for womanhood, are said to be committed to the existence of an essence for the kind women; call this its membership essence. The second question is about the kind women itself: what is it, or what is its nature? Following Kit Fine’s influential account of essence as real definition, any answer to this second question will amount to specifying the essence of the kind women. Call this second conception of essence the real essence of the kind women. This paper examines the

relationship between membership essences and real essences for gender kinds. I first show that the literature has not sufficiently distinguished between them, and that, more generally, there is a persistent uninterrogated assumption that the real essence of a given gender kind partly or fully consists in the criteria for membership in that kind. I then show that this assumption is far from being a conceptual truth, and briefly outline a proposal for an account of the real essence of the kind women which makes no reference to its membership criteria.

Lucia Schwarz (Arizona)

“Morality’s Normativity May be Ineffable, But We Can Still Talk About It Through Metaphors”

Metaethical nonnaturalists claim that rival theories, such as expressivism or ethical naturalism, fail to capture morality’s normativity; however, they struggle to articulate what this normativity consists in. While some philosophers take this struggle to show that the nonnaturalist’s notion of normativity is illusory, I suggest an alternative explanation: morality’s normativity is ultimately ineffable. Moral facts are supposed to be facts and demands at the same time, but our intellect cannot make sense of this combination. Nevertheless, I also argue that, even if morality’s normativity is ineffable, that does not mean we cannot meaningfully talk and theorize about it; we may be able to do so through metaphors.

Paul de Font-Reaulx (Michigan)

“Penelope and the Drinks”

Sometimes we face a sequence of decisions during which we have a change of preferences. It is widely held that for a certain set of such cases expected utility theory requires an agent to prevent their later selves from making a choice, even when this means choosing an option that the agent disprefers at all times. If this were true, it would put serious pressure on expected utility maximization as a normative ideal for temporally extended agents. In this paper I argue that it is false. Even in such cases, it is not necessarily expected utility maximizing to tie oneself to the proverbial mast. The reason is that our later selves have a strategic incentive to forsake their short-term preference in order to prove themselves trustworthy to future time-slices of themselves, which can make it rational to trust them to choose on one’s behalf. I conclude that once the utility of being trustworthy to oneself over time is recognized, expected utility theory emerges as a more plausible normative guide for temporally extended agents such as ourselves.

Elek Lane (Berkeley)

“Non-Verbal Metaphor”

In philosophical discussions of metaphor, it has widely been assumed that metaphor is a verbal phenomenon. I think this is a mistake. There are certain features of metaphor, which I dub “open-endedness” and “parochiality”, that simultaneously (1) explain why metaphor is interesting and worth studying in the first place and (2) are shared by non-verbal productions such as political cartoons and musical pieces. If this is right, then accounts that seek to explain metaphor through recourse to some linguistic mechanism (e.g., loosening or implicature) necessarily leave out genuine members of the class of metaphor.

Evan Welchance (Virginia)

“Ordinary objects are a priori-ty”

Do ordinary objects, such as rocks, exist? One might be tempted to answer with the following speech: “Of course there are rocks – the term ‘rock’ was introduced into the language to pick out things like that [pointing at atoms arranged rock-wise].” I find these remarks attractive, but underdeveloped. My goal is to turn them into a full-fledged argument for ordinary objects. I argue in the following way: if an object kind *O* is ordinary, then we’re disposed to have perceptions with an *O*-ish phenomenal character in any situation *S* with atoms arranged *O*-wise. Moreover, if we’re so disposed, then ‘there are *O*s’ is true. This is because, I propose, we fixed the reference of our ordinary object terms in a manner similar to the way we fixed the reference of terms like ‘heat’. So there are *O*s. This gets me non-artifactual ordinary objects like rocks, plants, and tigers, but artifactual kinds like chair are trickier; however, I argue that this line of reasoning secures the existence of ordinary artifacts as well. I close by discussing some ramifications of my view within the material object metaphysics literature.