

AGGUL, AYSU
Memorial University

Bridging the Explanatory Gap: On the Biology of Subjective Experience

This paper delves into the persistent challenge of the mind-body problem, specifically focusing on the explanatory gap between physical processes and mental experiences, often called phenomenal consciousness. First articulated by Joseph Levine in 1983, this gap highlights the intuitive separation between physical facts and mental experiences, posing a significant challenge to materialist accounts of mind-body identity. Levine's argument builds on Saul Kripke's 1972 assertion that true mind-body identities must be necessary rather than contingent. Kripke argued that because we can conceive of mental and physical states as distinct, physicalism is false. Levine, however, reframes this as an epistemological issue, suggesting that psycho-physical identity statements leave an explanatory gap, making it difficult to affirm their truth without rejecting materialism. He posits that bridging this gap requires either an eliminative approach to physicalism or a revised understanding of the physical, a notion reflected in recent philosophical movements toward panpsychism (Strawson, 2006; Chalmers, 2015).

I engage with Levine's challenge in this paper, seeking to narrow the explanatory gap through alternative resources. My approach involves critically examining the intuitions shaping the problem and the development of new theoretical insights. Central to my argument is the concept of subjectivity, which I propose as an evolutionary product essential to understanding subjective experience by based on the arguments advanced by Godfrey-Smith. The idea of a subject's point of view is a crucial phenomenological point for critiquing arguments against materialism and framing a biological theory of subjectivity. Levine's demand for an explanation of why specific physical arrangements give rise to particular qualia, such as the experience of seeing red, is reexamined here. While neurobiology can address direct correlates, this paper explores why certain physical systems possess subjective experiences, outlining a plausible structure for such explanations. The first part of the paper unifies and enhances existing materialist defenses by explicitly considering subjects and their perspectives. The second part advances a phenomenology of subjectivity, positioning it as a biological phenomenon. By employing the notion of a subject both critically and explanatorily, this paper aims to bridge the explanatory gap, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the mind-body problem.

ANDREWS, DEREK
Dalhousie University

The trouble with individuals, reference classes, and the limits of explanation - Or, why population-level statistical claims cannot justify restrictions on individual autonomy

Mounting pharmacological evidence (Laruelle, Kegeles, & Abi-Dargham, 2003; Nestler & Carlezon, 2006; Kendler & Schaffner, 2011; Moret & Briley, 2011; Hancock & McKim, 2018) suggests that mental disorders may be most accurately understood as being underlain by stable neurobiological mechanisms (Tsou, 2012; 2017; 2021). Accordingly, it seems that adopting an account of psychiatry in line with this will improve diagnosis and prognostication, as the predictable functioning of these mechanisms enables reliable inductive inferences to be made about the expression of the disorder(s) they underlie (Tsou, 2016).

However, as I argue elsewhere, these inferences cannot be relied upon to produce epistemically justified health care policy. This is due to their myopic focus on underlying causes, which pushes out consideration of the myriad social and/or biological factors that, along with relevant symptoms, explain the conduct of individual persons with mental disorders. That is, while we may be able to reliably predict the expression of a mental disorder qua disorder on the basis of its underlying mechanism(s), doing so regarding the behaviour of individual persons with said disorder requires much more in the way of epistemic resources.

Furthermore, I contend that this reveals a serious problem with how we develop social policy more broadly. Although policies act upon individuals, they are typically built with reference to population-level statistical claims - claims that, on account of their generality, do not attend to the individuating factors that explain the behaviour of the very individuals whose behaviour they purport to predict. Thus, I claim that, for those policies that deal with the restriction of individual autonomy in morally-relevant ways, if we appeal only to population-level statistical information, we lack the epistemic justification for the imposition of said restrictions, and so must radically reorient our approach to policymaking toward an individualfirst, rather than population-first, model, if we are to build policies that do not unjustly harm the individuals upon which they act.

AKSOY, ILGIN
Memorial University

Priority Monism on the One-Many Problem

The one-many problem is concerned with the presumably indisputable fact that there are some commonalities in distinct things (viz., ones in many). The most straightforward accounts are the realist ones that attribute an ontological status to universals such as Platonism, which takes universals as the single ontological category hierarchically structured, or four-category Aristotelianism, which treats substantial universals as ontologically fundamental along with substantial particulars against the more superficial categories of accidental particulars and accidental universals. Nominalist theories, on the other hand, denying universals of any ontological status, attempt to give accounts of the problem through their recognized category of particular properties. Nominalism can either be category dualist construing two ontological categories, substance and properties as in John Heil's two-category ontology, or be category monist such as modern trope theories which deny substance. In this paper, I offer a category and priority monistic solution to this long-standing problem that agrees with nominalism on denying universals of any ontological status while at the same time attributing to them mind-independent reality in line with realism. Priority monism posits being to be one single object composed of parts that ontologically depend on it, which implies category monism as the latter can be derived from the category of the former. It further amounts to a relational ontology as parts have no substantial existence but can only be derived within a nexus of relations to each other and ultimately to their whole. Priority monism can account for the one-many problem by taking the commonality of universals in distinct things as the similarities in the structures of distinct relationships. Accordingly, there are similar structures of relations in nature, that we call 'universals,' which are real in the sense of being mind-independent but do not possess a substantial existence in terms of ontological independence.

BARBOUR, KYLE J.
University of Guelph

The Transcendental Lure: Fundamental Ontology and the Collapse of Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism into Idealism

Recent Neo-Aristotelians have become concerned that the naturalism afforded by Aristotelianism might collapse into Kantian idealism. The potential collapse is the result of designating the human being, arguably the foundational concept in Aristotelian metaethics, as, “rationality plus a set of facts that we learn empirically about ourselves and then consider from a detached standpoint of reason.”¹ Despite recognizing this potential collapse, John Hacker-Wright argues that the careful Aristotelian naturalist need not fall into this trap. In a recent paper, he has suggested that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology provides a potential definition of the human in a way that is acceptable to the Aristotelian naturalist while *also* avoiding the collapse into idealism.

Against the possibility of saving neo-Aristotelian naturalism from this potential collapse into idealist, it seems that Aristotelian naturalism not only *tends* to slide into the idealist position but that it *necessarily* does so. While I disagree that Hacker-Wright’s attempt to save Aristotelian naturalism from its slide into idealism through applying fundamental ontology is successful, this is not an obstacle to my acceptance of Hacker-Wright’s broader ethical project. Indeed, I suggest that what the collapse of Aristotelian naturalism into idealism suggests is the necessity of transitioning into a form of neo-Hegelian idealism as the preferred form of metaethical foundation. In demonstrating this, my goal is to show that neo-Hegelianism provides the needed refinement of neo-Aristotelian naturalism that rectifies the possibility of an illicit and unintended transition into Kantian idealism through the *intentional harmonization* of the two positions that is found within the neo-Hegelian tradition. Through showing the way in which Aristotelian naturalism is an unstable position, I provide a potential point of *rapprochement* between idealist metaethical foundations and the foundations of virtue ethics within the Aristotelian tradition.

¹ John Hacker-Wright, “Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and the human good in Aristotelian ethics”, 2.

BILIOS, CONSTANTINE D.
Toronto Metropolitan University

The Capabilities Approach: Ecological Holism and Basic Rights

In her book *Justice for Animals*, Martha Nussbaum outlines a basic rights framework for applying the capabilities approach (CA) to non-human animals. In the human world, the CA is a political tool for measuring justice within a society through a state's ability to create an enabling environment for its citizens. However, this paper argues that the CA applied to a framework of ecological holism better resolves any tragic conflicts that arise between human and non-human entitlements. Those conflicts outlined by Nussbaum concern medical research, the consumption of animal flesh, cultural preservation, and the use of space and resources. Unfortunately, Nussbaum's basic rights approach does not adequately address these conflicts due to its failure to deconstruct what Val Plumwood has articulated as human/nature dualism, in which humanity takes itself to be distinct and of a higher order than the natural world. According to Plumwood, the character of human/nature dualism gives rise to two tasks: (1) situating human life in ecological terms and (2) situating non-human life in ethical terms. Nussbaum's basic rights approach addresses only the second, resulting in unsatisfactory solutions to tragic conflicts concerning the consumption of animal flesh and the preservation of traditional land-based cultures. In utilizing ethnocentric concepts of dignity and sentience as salient conditions for moral consideration, Nussbaum's dignitarian framework retains subtle notions of human exceptionalism, which results in the demonizing of predation in nature and traditional Indigenous foodways. In contrast, my proposal for an ecological framework applied to the CA attempts to bridge the gap between humanity and the natural world through engagement with Anishinaabe knowledge systems and conceptions of Indigenous food sovereignty.

BREEN, JASON

University of Lethbridge

The standard practice and some special points of view one may adopt when theorizing about human rights

From John Rawl's plea that we make our utopias realistic to the more explicit demands of John Tasioulas and Adam Etinson that normative conceptions of human rights must be faithful to practice, there is broad agreement that the practice of human rights (HRP) imposes restrictions on theorizing. HRP, however, is a broad and vague phenomenon. It may include such diverse activities as lying in front of a fifty-ton tank or attending an EDI training. If practice is to guide our thinking, it requires some degree of clarity and distinction. How, then, shall we theoreticians define it? And how does it constrain our theorizing? In this paper, I draw on James Nickles' analysis of human rights practice to explain what I call "the standard practice" and use this to identify a plurality of "special points of view" that normative theory may adopt while being sufficiently relevant to HRP.

BRETT, NATHAN
Dalhousie University

Charter Rights in Climate Litigation: Negative and Positive Obligations

In this brief discussion, I will consider one of the central arguments in Canadian climate change cases brought by two groups of young people, as well a case brought by Indigenous (Wet’suwet’en) groups -all alleging that current climate change policies violate their Charter rights. In *La Rose*, 15 young people claim the federal government violated their rights through environmental and climate change policies that greatly decrease their life prospects. In *Lho’Imggin*, brought by two Wet’suwet’en groups comprising the Fireweed Clan, there is a similar claim. Both suits against the federal government rest in major part on the rights enumerated in Section 7 of the Canadian Charter, namely, the rights to life, liberty, and security of the person.² In *Mathur*, seven young people raise these issues regarding the Ontario government’s cancellation of the cap-and-trade program of the previous government and its replacement with much weaker and largely unenforceable standards.³ A central issue in each of these cases is the interpretation of Section 7 rights as “positive,” that is, as requiring state action, as opposed to prohibiting certain kinds of interference in individual lives, liberty, or security. This is an important issue because the Supreme Court has been very reluctant to move to a positive interpretation of Charter rights. The institutional structure of Canadian law gives the legislature rather than the courts the power to set public policy. The question of what the appropriate greenhouse gas reduction targets should be and their enforcement are obvious matters of public policy.

This paper looks at two different ways of characterizing the decision in question.

On one view, the cases raise an issue about what the government *has failed to do*. It has failed to enact adequate policies to deal with the climate crisis. It has failed to provide adequate mechanisms for the enforcement of the policies that it does have. Essentially, these cases argue that because this legislation is insufficient, it violates individual rights to be protected from the existential harms that climate change threatens to bring and are even now being realized. Viewed in this way, the cases do seem to be open to the objection that the court is not empowered to make this judgement. It is the task of elected officials working with the public service to determine the appropriate level of resources and what

² The initial decisions to strike each of the cases (preventing them from coming to trial) were reversed on appeal. [Here](#) is the December 2023 decision in the two cases against the federal government, which were considered together.

³ The *Mathur* case survived Ontario’s motion to strike and a trial was held in September 2022. The judgement on the merits of the case was against the plaintiffs, though in the [reasons for the judgment](#) the judge agreed with the young people on many points. The reserved judgment in the trial held in January 2024 has not yet been given.

kinds of regulations are necessary in dealing with the climate crisis. If Section 7 rights do not impose positive obligations on the governments to provide support for the lives, liberty, and security of individuals, then it is not an issue for the courts to decide.

I do not agree with the wholesale rejection of positive rights embedded in this argument, but this is not the issue that I am raising in this paper. Rather, I want to argue that in these cases it is unnecessary to confront the question of a positive interpretation of Charter rights.

The second way of characterizing these issues focuses on what the government *has done to make the plaintiffs' situation worse*. That is, the focus is on government policy and decisions that contribute to and exacerbate the climate crisis. One example, raised in the Wet'suwet'en case, is the decision to move forward with the Trans Mountain Pipeline. This is an instance in which the government itself is imposing the burdens which individuals must bear. Given that climate change poses an existential threat, the courts do have jurisdiction to decide whether the government is justified in imposing this burden. This is a negative interpretation of the rights in question. Perhaps the imposition of this burden could be justified under Section 1 of the Charter, but that is a matter for the court itself to decide (although it is interesting that a Section 1 defense has never even been attempted in these climate cases.) A second example is from the Ontario case. In lowering the province's greenhouse gas reduction targets, the government has itself made the situation of its young people even more risky. But doesn't this presuppose that Ontario had a positive obligation to address climate change, an obligation based on Charter rights taken by themselves? My conclusion is that it does presuppose such an obligation, but as I argued in the paper given at last year's IVR meeting, this obligation rests on Charter rights in the context of national and international agreements. Because the only way out of the climate crisis is through collective agreement and action, failing to honour these agreements puts these individual lives and life prospects at greater risk.

CUGELMAN, BRIAN
Memorial University

MoraLogic: Meaning-Driven Social Structures Sustained by Quantitative Ethics

This presentation examines morality's role in collective human behavior and that of various animal species.

Despite the centrality of ethics in understanding human existence and civilization, we've had limited success using classic rational deduction and modern scientific induction. This may be due to complex mediation and moderation relationships that complicate generalization, the influence of upbringing on moral judgment, and the development of deontic logics that produce interesting but narrowly applicable logic.

This presentation explores how the moral emotions that shape human civilization are rooted in the same neurobiological drivers influencing mammalian social structures. In this context, the transition from "is" to "ought" should not be seen as a mere philosophical trick but rather, an evolutionary necessity. "Ought" is not a divine mandate; it is a survival imperative, requiring animals to avoid lethal threats and pursue opportunities vital for their future. At the population level, "ought" defines the need for collective action to mitigate threats and secure group survival opportunities.

This research integrates thinking from classic philosophers, neurobiologists, and moral psychology. It explores theories and potential explanations for human behavior and civilization, suggesting that our sense of morality is tied to social emotions, driven by our thirst to fill the "meaning gap."

Additionally, it will explain how the illusions of self and group identity are tied to our sense of purpose, leading to cognitive distortions and moral inversions, where good becomes evil and evil becomes good. Rather than viewing this as a human weakness to fix, it argues that we must honestly model logic on our paradoxical nature, no matter how repugnant its deductions.

The presentation emphasizes the need for a new approach that combines axiomatic logical proofs with inductive scientific methods.

CURRY, MARY JO
Memorial University

Liberalism and Non-controversial Virtues: Justifying Virtue Liberalism?

Liberalism, in contemporary political philosophy, seems to be the prevailing paradigm. Paul Curry argues that Liberalism needs to make room for non-controversial virtues as part of its fundamental, theoretical platform. Liberalism, he argues, needs to be enlarged to accommodate common sense political policy decisions that society makes all the time. If, however, we are going to broaden our theoretical liberalism, we need to find an epistemological justification for this practical or common-sense theoretical maneuver. I will present the beginnings of such a justification with a brief historical overview of the philosophy that led to the hopes of success in political liberalism. This historical foundation is, I argue, flawed and liberalism may have to make some significant theoretical changes if it is to offer practical value to contemporary societies.

CURRY, PAUL
St. Francis Xavier University

Liberalism and Virtue Reconciled

Political liberal theorists over the past thirty years have turned to the concept of 'civic virtue' to denote the habits of character the state can promote in its citizenry for the sake of preserving the liberal order. This contrasts with the traditional understanding of virtue which is meant to be conducive to the good life.

In the paper, I argue that the liberal attempt to make use of the concept of 'civic virtue' lacks coherence. Instead, a broadly Aristotelian conception of virtue can undergird a substantive liberal state that gives wide berth to autonomy and an individual's own conception of virtue and the good life.

DART, BRADLEY
Memorial University

A Semantics and Pragmatics of Representation: Diagrams as Models

Diagrams play a similar role in mathematics as models do in science. They have cognitive significance, help in understanding, explanation, and pedagogy, and form an integral part of (mathematical) practice. They also function as adjuncts to proof. In fact, it has been shown that diagrams constitute their own deductive system (Shin, 1994; Hammer, 1994). Given this conception of diagrams as models, there are fruitful parallels between philosophy of science and philosophy of mathematics. This paper addresses whether diagrams represent mathematical states of affairs, and if so, in what way.

A structural account of representation relies on the presence of a homomorphism between target and source, but there have been serious criticisms levelled against this approach (Suárez, 2003; Pero & Suárez, 2016). I will provide some counterexamples to this account as it pertains to diagrams. However, the importance of analogy and similarity – even if it cannot be rendered as a homomorphism – is crucial for representation. The failure of the structuralist account is partially its neglect of the semantic and pragmatic aspects of symbolic representation. Pictures – like language – require interpretation in order to portray or indicate. Diagrams, as symbolic representations, require a hermeneutics to explain their epistemic and methodological role in mathematics.

DAVIS, CHARLOTTE
Dalhousie University

Whiteness in a Post-Racist World: Possibilities for Reconstruction

Recent philosophy of race literature has contended with the question of whether and how a collective white racial identity could exist in a post-racist world given that it has only ever been defined in a way that perpetuates hierarchical racist structures and supports white ignorance. Andrew J. Pierce argues that because white identity has been defined negatively with reference to what it is *not* (ie. not inferior, not Othered), it lacks no other useful foundation upon which to build a collective white identity in ideal post-racist conditions. On the other hand, Shannon Sullivan sees the potential value of 'white self-love' in projects of racial justice. She contrasts the potential beneficial effects of white self-love with white guilt or fragility that interfere with progress towards a post-racist world.

In this paper, I argue for the value of projects that aim to reconstruct white racial identity in ways that actively disentangle it from its foundation of white supremacy. In my view, central to achieving post-racist conditions and maintaining them once they arrive is the dismantling of white ignorance. I then offer suggestions about how white identity could be reconstructed positively in a way that has the challenging of white ignorance built into it. To this end, I consider the mechanisms of white ignorance as theorized by Charles W. Mills and offer three suggestions for dimensions of a white identity that can be built up in efforts to dismantle white ignorance: playfulness as theorized by Maria Lugones, humility (in contrast to fragility), and the use of humour. Using applied examples of these three features at work in projects of racial justice, I argue that white racial identity ought to be, and can be, reconstructed in a way that makes it compatible with a post-racist world.

DIELEMAN, SUSAN
University of Lethbridge

Toward a Nonideal Theory of Civil Disobedience

Recent movements, from Black Lives Matter (hereafter, BLM) to the Freedom Convoy and Coutts Border Blockade (hereafter, the Convoy), have prompted renewed interest in questions about whether and when law-breaking is justified. A typical way of answering such questions is to refer to John Rawls's liberal theory of civil disobedience. However, Rawls's approach to theorizing civil disobedience is an ideal theory approach. That is, it deploys a methodology that derives conclusions by starting from idealized background assumptions, including, in this case, the assumption that civil disobedience is only justified in well-ordered society, i.e., a society that is nearly just. As critics of Rawls like David Lyons have shown, this starting assumption is descriptively and normatively problematic.

Thus, I suggest in this paper that an alternative approach is required, and I make an initial proposal to use the concepts of trust and distrust to develop a nonideal theory of civil disobedience. Following Annette Baier, trust and distrust are best understood as relations between people who need not be equals. As a result, focusing on trust and distrust permits a nonideal entry point into debates about the nature and justification of law-breaking. Such an approach will offer novel criteria that can be leveraged to distinguish between civil disobedience and mere lawlessness purporting to be civilly disobedient, and to evaluate cases like BLM and the Convoy. What I provisionally suggest is that, if the law-breaking arises as a result of warranted distrust of the relevant authorities, it can be understood as justified law-breaking (i.e., civil disobedience). By contrast, if the law-breaking arises as a result of unwarranted distrust, it can be understood as mere lawlessness.

DOUCETTE, DANA

University of Prince Edward Island

If one explores the discourse around pronouns that has gained momentum in the last decade, one might notice that this is a symptom of a much greater issue. Students are taught how to identify a pronoun, but many will find it difficult to answer what a pronoun is without giving an example. Although this lack of understanding does not seem to be divided along political or ethical lines, it allows for otherwise benign concepts to be used in both political and ethical ways. In a time when an increasing number of people seem to be less interested in understanding an idea and more concerned with which side of the political binary that idea sits on, it is increasingly important to examine the ways in which information is shared, consumed, and learned.

EDGAR, SCOTT
St. Mary's University

The myth of the solitary genius in philosophy

Since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, a recurring criticism of philosophy has been that it is practiced by solitary individuals (almost always men) thinking in isolation. Perhaps these individuals have believed they were capable of discovering important philosophical truths in this manner, because they were “geniuses” (a term that in this context is surely very fraught). But, the criticism goes, solitary geniuses cogitating in splendid isolation is not a reliable means of discovering philosophical truths, perhaps because humans require a division of cognitive labour to produce knowledge effectively, or because we require a community of inquirers to expose and correct the biases of individual knowers. Thus those who levy this criticism against philosophy seek to transform the way philosophy is practiced. No longer should philosophers think away in isolation, imagining themselves to be solitary geniuses. Rather, they should practice philosophy embedded within broader philosophical communities. Versions of this criticism of philosophy can be found in the work of, for example, the logical empiricists Hans Reichenbach and Moritz Schlick and the Oxford philosopher Iris Murdoch.

This paper argues that, in many if not all cases, this criticism of philosophy is badly misguided. The problem is that the criticism's main historical claim – that philosophy has in some important respect been practiced by individuals working in isolation – is largely false as a matter of historical fact. When historians of philosophy examine past philosophers with even slightly more than a cursory read of exclusively major works, we find the broad and dense networks of friends, family, students, teachers, colleagues, and (sometimes) enemies that philosophers developed their work in conversation with. Viewed against this more accurate historical picture, the criticism that philosophy has been done by “solitary geniuses” tells us very little about philosophy. Instead, it simply reveals the historical ignorance of the philosophers making the criticism.

FENTON, ANDREW
Dalhousie University

More than a pinch of Salt: Centering some of the work of Henry Stephens Salt

Henry Stephens Salt (1851-1939) is a largely neglected animal rights advocate and social reformer, despite being a deeply important figure philosophically and inspiring the likes of Mohandas Gandhi and George Bernard Shaw. My primary focus will be Salt's *Animals' Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress*, which first appeared in 1892 and went through three editions (I will focus on the third edition from 1922). As noted by Peter Singer in 1980, this book contains many objections to animal rights (legal and moral) and many reasonable responses from Salt, objections and responses that bear a striking resemblance to many anti- and pro-animal-rights talking points in contemporary debates (in ethics, law, or politics). Salt's overall framework is inclusive. His humanitarianism – which emphasized a just co-existence with all sentient beings (human or nonhuman), avoiding causing unnecessary harm, and protecting all sentient beings in ways that permit them to develop their full potentials within the constraints of greater society – lead him to agitate for a number of social reforms in the United Kingdom as well as co-found the Humanitarian League (1891-1919). Despite all of this, to the best of my knowledge there has been little published work on Salt that examines his arguments on animal ethics in any significant detail. I will focus on outlining Salt's sometimes tricky core position on our ethical obligations to other animals as well as his critical discussion of scientific animal use. Despite his own abolitionism regarding the use of animals in science, there are hints of possible “building blocks” for a non-abolitionist stance that I will also briefly discuss with the aim of pointing towards a Salt-aligned non-abolitionist animal research ethics.

FORTNEY, MARK
Dalhousie University

What does it feel like to think about nothingness? Buddhaghosa on the body's contribution to the phenomenal character of consciousness

I give a reading of Buddhaghosa's account of the body's contribution to how consciousness presents itself. I draw on his *The Path of Purification*. I develop my reading in response to some recent work by Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad in his *Human Being, Bodily Being*. Ram-Prasad looks to Buddhaghosa because of his interest in "...the intriguing way in which 'body' is the ineliminable presence in experience". He argues that in Buddhaghosa we find "... a view of the human being that, while drawing on the analytic categories of 'body' and 'mind', cannot be read in terms of either duality", one which "[destabilizes] any intuitions we moderns may have about a body-mind divide".

The "ineliminable presence" Ram-Prasad has in mind goes beyond the body showing up as an object of consciousness. He has in mind a sense in which the body's presence is ineliminable because we are conscious through or with our bodies. Ram-Prasad's descriptions of some parts of *The Path of Purification* are compatible with this. However, when we look other parts of the text, we arguably find a more diverse range of descriptions of consciousness. In Buddhaghosa's view, for instance, when we attain the bases consisting of "boundless space", "boundless consciousness", "nothingness", and "neither perception nor non-perception" during meditative practice, we can experience a range of states of consciousness in which the body's contribution to the character of consciousness has been eliminated; these experiences are aptly characterized with just one half of the body/mind duality.

I agree with Ram-Prasad that Buddhaghosa's perspective on consciousness isn't a Cartesian one. But I also maintain that Buddhaghosa's view on consciousness is multifaceted enough that there are limits to using "phenomenology in a minor key", as Ram-Prasad calls it, to interpret his view.

FOSTER, JAY
Memorial University

Crenshaw's Concept of Intersectionality: Against the Venn Diagram Interpretation

Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the concept of intersectionality in the now seminal paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" (1989). In subsequent literature and discussion, the concept of intersectionality has often been represented as a kind of Venn diagram. For example, an individual who is both black and a woman faces two kinds of discrimination, one racial (one circle) and the other gendered (another circle). The intersection of the two kinds of discrimination produces a new and distinct form of discrimination that is both racial and gendered (the overlap of the two circles). In the now vast literature on intersectionality, plural forms of discrimination are often pictured as two or more overlapping circles, each circle representing a distinct domain of discrimination. Such Venn diagram-like descriptions of intersectionality are now ubiquitous. However, this was not Crenshaw's metaphor in the original paper. The metaphor for intersectionality, developed by Crenshaw in extensive detail, was a traffic intersection. This paper begins with a close examination of Crenshaw's traffic-intersection metaphor. It goes on to argue that the specific development of the metaphor suggests an interpretation of intersectionality rooted to critical legal realism and a nominalist theory of justice.

GRANT, GAVIN
University of Windsor

The Lighthouse: An Investigation of Emerging Cultural Shifts in Perspective Toward Academic Freedom in Canada

"The Lighthouse" investigates the diminishment of academic freedom in Canadian universities. The pursuit of knowledge, once the guiding light of universities, is being overshadowed by student goals of career preparation and radical ideology. New generations of academics seem hesitant to defend academic freedom, viewing it as irrelevant to their goals or offensive to prevailing ideologies.

The academic world relies on principles of neutrality and self-governance to meaningfully pursue its purpose. However, the radical shift in campus culture has fostered an environment where values of objective-based reasoning and neutrality are replaced by the promotion of subjective experience, censorship, and exclusion. This is supported by numerous cases throughout Canadian universities where the practice and policy of academic freedom have broken down.

Ultimately, this paper calls for a recommitment to the foundational academic purpose, advocating for academic freedom and encouraging rigorous, open debate in both policy and practice. By maintaining the guiding beacon of light that the academic purpose serves, universities can ensure the continuation of the pursuit of knowledge and truth, fostering an environment where all ideas can be explored and challenged freely.

GROARKE, LOUIS

St. Francis Xavier University

What is Right and What is Wrong about Non-Cognitivism

In my presentation, I will try to locate the proper place emotions (passions) play in moral evaluation and behaviour. I will argue, in effect, for an Aristotelian mean. Passion is not, strictly speaking, the slave of reason (as Thomists insist); but reason is not, strictly speaking the slave of the passions (as Humeans and non-cognitivists have it). Virtue ethics provides a useful perspective from which to parse out worries in the present-day literature about how the emotions and reason diverge in good behaviour.

HOLT, JASON
Acadia University

Beautiful Performances by Morally Flawed Athletes

Much has been written about the presumed interaction between moral and aesthetic properties in art, about whether moral flaws in a work or its artist can compromise the work's aesthetic value. In philosophy of sport, similarly, the beauty of an athlete's performance may be undermined by moral flaws in the performance itself (e.g., in a case of cheating). Yet to be addressed, however, is a potential analogy between artists and athletes where personal moral flaws failing to register in the work may nonetheless compromise the aesthetic rewards of that work. Along with tracing the conceptual terrain in these debates, and drawing on earlier work endorsing pluralism in such matters, I will argue that, in contrast to creative artists whose presence is immaterial to accessing their work, in the case of performing artists and athletes—since they themselves are the essential vehicles of their work—it is, and ought to be, harder to avoid having one's moral response to the person diminish one's aesthetic response to the work. We want athletes to be moral exemplars, I propose, less because they serve as role models and more because we want to preserve unspoiled the aesthetic rewards they provide.

HYMERS, MICHAEL
Dalhousie University

The Strange Case of the Human Manometer

At §270 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, the diary-example of PI §258 is modified by the suggestion that I might use a manometer to discover a correlation between a sensation, S, and an increase in my blood-pressure. I endorse Hacker's claim that this example is meant to undermine the idea that the meanings of sensation-terms rest on the (re)identification of sensations, as they would if sensations were like objects. However, I argue that the example is usefully read through the prism of Wittgenstein's treatment of the inverted spectrum (PI §272)—the old idea that there might be undetectable differences in the ways you and I see colours. Wittgenstein argues that this seems possible only if we sever attributions of colour-perception from the behavioural criteria on which they ordinarily rest. Doing so reduces perceptions to superprivate objects with no bearing on the uses of our colour-terms. It cannot, then, matter whether we correctly identify those objects or not.

ISLAM, MD SAHIDUL
Memorial University

The Real Imaginary And The Structure of Reality: An Account of Being As Becoming

Reality is a relation. For Deleuze, it is not actual objects (the given) that constitute our reality, but rather the sensual variations and the variations in ideas that take place there for us to be actual things constitutes our reality. Reality as 'the flux of the sensible' entails the virtual structure. Some (Levi Bryant, 2008; Keith Robinson, 2016) have identified Deleuze's virtual structure as dual, and with the structure of the one and the many. What I find fundamentally problematic in their interpretations is the two ontologically distinct dimensions – thought and the world. They conceive thought as an actual, fixed, static being and offer a dichotomous account of established oppositions between the subject and the object. The other as encounter necessitates becoming new and different for the subject.

Here, I define another kind of virtual structure, which I call 'the real imaginary.' I link Deleuze's the flux of the sensible and Castoriadis's radical imaginary to define the structure of 'the real imaginary' - a relationship that the social individual establishes with herself and the other in the imagination. In this structural relationship, imaginary operates as a collection of impressions and images, or a set of perceptions rather than concepts and line of reasoning. Imagination supplies us with the capacity to trace ourselves, our experiences, and our life trajectories through representational forms and images. Imaginary operates in the domain to affect and to be affected. Imaginary constituting thus involves our positionality, relationality, and attachment to the actual world. In this structure, the experience and the object of experience – between we and what we are aware of – can not be separated.

In the context of Deleuze's virtual structure, the real imaginary shows that reality as the imaginary flux is irreducible to the binary categories of the subjective and the objective. Reality is a singular mode of being – the becoming being as made and in the making.

JOSEPH, DEAN
Queen's University

Trusting Conspiracy Theories

In social epistemology, conspiracy theories have mainly been of interest as a matter of (un)warranted belief. But despite its central place in the discussion, 'conspiracy belief' has received little critical attention. I argue that believing conspiracy theories is primarily a matter of trust and distrust. To demonstrate this, I examine the disagreements between conspiracists and their opponents arguing that such disagreements tend towards epistemic depth. Deep disagreement occurs when disputing parties hold divergent commitments at a level 'deeper' than the claims in explicit dispute. One such commitment may be the (dis)trust agents place in a source of claims and information—and this is just what conspiracy theorists are up to. Understanding conspiracy belief as a matter of trust (rather than assent or dissent to substantive explanations) 'deepens' the question of when believing a conspiracy theory is warranted, if ever.

LIGHTBODY, BRIAN
Brock University

Are animal lives intrinsically meaningless? Meaningfulness is a maladaptive exaptation

Philosophers are almost universally in agreement regarding the following proposition. While it is possible to determine whether an animal's life is happy, the same cannot be said regarding the meaningfulness of non-human animal lives. Animal lives are intrinsically meaningless. [See Metz (2013), Wolf (2010), Taylor (1987), Nagel (1971, 1986), Camus (1942)]. Such *prima facie* speciesism is platformed, presumably, on the inability of non-human animals to practice "self-transcendence," as Nagel puts it in his seminal work, "The Absurd" (1971) and, later, in *The View from Nowhere* (1986). In other words, ascribing intrinsic meaning to a mouse's life is a category mistake, as the mouse cannot take up a third-person perspective on its current (or future) state of living. Such an objective or "view from nowhere" standpoint is necessary for thinking about the meaning of life irrespective of the animal's limited or non-existent linguistic capacities.

In the following, I wish to push back on this "received view" regarding the intrinsic meaningfulness of animal lives by examining the etiological conditions for the emergence of the capacity to take up a third-person perspective. By drawing on the work of Michael Tomasello (1999, 2014, 2019, 2022) and his distinction between joint attention on the one hand and joint intentionality on the other, I unfold the biological, environmental, and, most importantly, social conditions that gave rise to the cognitive architecture required to platform questions about life's meaningfulness or lack thereof. In revealing the evolutionary contexts of joint intentionality, I demonstrate that the notion of life's meaningfulness is a maladaptive exaptation of an earlier ancestral social capacity. In providing this framework, meaningfulness dissolves for both human and non-human animals.

MACINTOSH, DUNCAN
Dalhousie University

Re-drawing the Boundaries of Sovereignty: Permissible and Obligatory Interventions in the Affairs of Sovereign Nations

Political arrangements are thought legitimate to the degree they are consented to. This transmits sovereignty – proper authority over the conduct of persons – from affected individuals to the arrangements. Here I take this idea to its logical extreme, using David Gauthier’s contractarianism. I take Gauthier’s theory of rationality as analyzing consent, and his theory of morality as its expression. I then deduce surprisingly anti-libertarian moral permissions and duties of legitimate sovereigns; and I deduce the falsehood of several dogmas about sovereignty, namely: that aggression by one national sovereign against another is necessarily illegitimate, and is necessarily additionally problematic if self-interested; that sovereigns whose citizens are broadly happy with their arrangements should always be left to their own devices by other sovereigns and their citizens; and that the proper expectations of legitimate sovereignty by the sovereign’s constituents should be different from those of individual sovereigns in their relations to each other and to each others’ citizens.

MCLURE, EMMA
St. Mary's University

Crazy Cat Lady: Responding to Microaggressions without Reproducing the Wrong

I aim to unpack the phrase, “crazy cat lady.” This phrase has returned to prominence because Republican VP nominee, J.D. Vance, has attempted to use it to smear Democratic Presidential nominee, Kamala Harris. While I’m pleased to see this phrase receiving journalistic attention, current discussions miss an important aspect: “crazy cat lady” is a microaggression—specifically, a microinsult. It functions to reinforce essentialist stereotypes and pressure women into certain scripts, behaviors, and life narratives. Identifying it as such is important.

Firstly, in addition to targeting a particular person microinsults also target bystanders. As such, those of us who want to resist the essentialism must be careful in how we word our responses. Defending Harris by saying that she is a loving step-mother, while true, fails to resist the implication that women should be mothers.

Secondly, microinsults draw from a history of violence, and simultaneously, push towards its repetition. Others have pointed out that “crazy cat lady” is the declawed version of witches—no longer threatening but now pitiable. But I haven’t yet seen the other side of this narrative: like landmines buried in the language, stereotypes that have in the past been used to justify violence can easily reignite vitriol. For now, “crazy cat ladies” are ridiculous, but it's all-too-easy to slip from laughter to fear, and from fear to destruction.

Thirdly, microinsults are difficult to reclaim. Their meaning depends on the function they play within an oppressive cultural context, rather than the intent of a particular speaker or the interpretation of a particular listener. Thus even joking, self-deprecating, or affectionate uses of “crazy cat lady” can still have negative impacts. Simply saying “I’m proud to be a crazy cat lady” isn’t sufficient to negate the negative essentialization or resist the pressure it places on bystanders to conform to a certain vision of femininity.

MURRAY, MALCOLM
University of Prince Edward Island

Supererogation and Contractarianism

The traditional moral theories (utilitarianism, virtue theory, and Kantianism) cannot well accommodate the supererogatory. How can we deem supererogatory acts to be morally better than a moral theory designed to be morally complete? Anything deemed to be beyond duty is either not morally recommended or is morally demanded. In neither case could the putative supererogatory act be supererogatory, assuming we define supererogation as (i) being beyond moral duty and (ii) being morally approved. Can contractarianism do better (assuming it is better for a moral theory to accommodate supererogation)? The answer, perhaps surprising given the dearth of positive obligations generated by as sparse a moral theory as contractarianism, is, “No.” Not because supererogation will be consumed by obligation, but because anything beyond moral duty done for good reasons will be consumed by the category of the merely permissible. On the bright side, contractarianism has available to it in a way other moral theories do not error theories to explain our penchant to believe in supererogation.

O,NEILL, SEAMUS
Memorial University

The Neoplatonic Foundation for an Empirical Demonology

In Aristotelian thought, matter is understood to be the principle of individuation: it is what contracts the universal form or species into a specific, concrete individual. This idea, foundational in peripatetic ontology, is adopted many later, Christian thinkers, including Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas, however, also maintains that there are certain entities, namely angels and demons, that possess no matter, no body whatsoever: they are separated substances, yet, they are still unique individuals.

To explain how spirits are individual and distinct from one another without matter, Aquinas relies on certain Neoplatonic principles, borrowed from Proclus and mediated to him through the Pseudo-Dionysius. First, Aquinas borrows from Proclus' henadology in his explanation of how the differences and distinctions between angels can be known in a relative way by the human being. Proclus claims that we can begin to understand the henads (i.e., the gods) by examining their observable effects in the world – something akin to the thesis that *operatio sequitur esse* – what a thing does, follows from what it is, or, in this case, *operatio sequitur super-esse*. So too does Aquinas argue that the differences between angels can be known by the human being in an approximate way from their effects. Second, Aquinas incorporates aspects of Proclus' understanding of hierarchy, as it pertains to the henads, into his conception of angelic hierarchy. For Proclus, hierarchy among the henads, insofar as they transcend the forms, has not to do with being and ontology, but rather, with power and activity. While Aquinas claims that the angels are beings, in the *Summa Theologiae* he too explains the differences between the angels and their choirs not according to ontological categories, but rather, according to their various angelic roles and missions. As in Proclus, Aquinas employs a conception of hierarchy distinct from ontology. I argue that this application of hierarchy in Aquinas' angelology, mediated to Aquinas through Dionysius, derives from Proclus' henadology. Further, the need to recognize the differences among the henads and the angels through their effects highlights the importance of practical engagement: theurgy, ritual, and revelation pick up where reason finds its limit. I conclude with a number of contemporary, empirical claims concerning encounters with demons that corroborate these philosophical positions.

ROYLES, JOSHUA
Memorial University

Being, One (or Several) Voices?: Univocal Substance in Aristotle and Deleuze

Gilles Deleuze and Aristotle seem to diverge on the question of substance. For Aristotle, desire moves to actualize all potential. Yet, according to Deleuze, desire flows in the opposite direction: away from actualized individuals towards unformed, asubjective matter—that is, pure potentiality. Deleuze calls this the “The Body Without Organs,” where the totality of all substances converges onto a single, consistent plane. Because Aristotle claims that being cannot be a genus, it appears that he would argue against such a univocal substance. However, Aristotle’s substance is rife with tension: while it points to an individual ‘this,’ it can also mean a general ‘such’. Here is Aristotle’s distinction between form and matter: matter individualizes, while form gives definition. Aristotle’s other candidates for substance are a compound of form and matter or his four causes. Aristotle thus concludes that, due to its abundance of different senses, “being is said in many ways.” While Deleuze’s substance is univocal, Aristotle’s is equivocal. However, I question whether this assumption is accurate, arguing instead for common ground between Aristotle and Deleuze. To demonstrate this, I first establish Aristotle’s understanding of substance. I then examine Deleuze’s substance, which, like Aristotle’s, is multi-sided. One side is stratified: flows of matter sediment and are formed into various distinct layers. The other side is the “plane of consistency,” where all individual structures and sedimentations are broken up and flow together as one undifferentiated mass—the pure potency of prime matter. In this sense, being is univocal without suppressing the many differences swarming underneath its serene surface. Upon establishing this dynamic understanding of univocity, a path between Aristotle and Deleuze is cleared. Aristotle and Deleuze’s understanding of substance are therefore far closer than they first appeared, for both are univocal thinkers despite (or because of) the many differences separating them.

STANTON, ROBERT & YONGHAO YU
University of Western Ontario

The Meaning of Sociolinguistic Register

In this brief paper, we present a comparatively theory-neutral explanation of what register-type meaning is, and, arguably more importantly, what the meaning of register is not. This will be done via two steps.

We begin with a series of intuitive examples, such as the meaning difference among 'shit', 'poop', 'excrement' and 'feces' or 'canine', 'dog' and 'bow wow'. The numerous examples are followed by a section arguing for the hypothesis that register-type meaning should be treated as a *sui generis* kind of type-encoded linguistic meaning. Put in terms of our examples, the idea is that the first four words all stand for the same (unpleasant) substance, while the latter three terms all stand for the same (pleasant) animal. However, the social situations where the words are expected differ. In this sense, they diverge in use-theoretic content.

As it is impossible to overview every purported kind of linguistic meaning, this paper will mainly be concerned with how register meanings are different from the two most prominent candidates, propositional meanings and emotive meanings. Beginning with the first, we will urge that the truth-conditional contribution of 'shit' and 'poop' are the same, with the difference lying only in the fact that the first is expected in vulgarity-permissible situations while the second is expected when one is speaking to a child. It merits stressing: though these are felicity conditions for the use of the contrasting terms, we will deny that one states, using 'shit', that one is being vulgar; nor does one state that children are around when using 'poop' in its stead. Nor, we will urge, is the difference a matter of the emotion expressed by a user of the term. One need not, for instance, exhibit a warm, semi-infantile attitude to excrement in order to properly use the term 'poop'.

SWEET, WILLIAM

St. Francis Xavier University

James Ward and Personal and Absolute Idealism

A teacher to both Russell and G.E. Moore, the Cambridge Professor James Ward is today often neglected, but was, in his time, an influential figure in British philosophy. Although sympathetic with the idealist rejection of materialism, he criticized the Absolute Idealism that dominated British philosophy in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. For example, in his *The Realm of Ends* (1911), he outlines a pluralistic account of 'social mind' that challenged conceptions of social consciousness in Absolutism. In this paper, after a short biographical note, I briefly present elements of Ward's critique of Absolute Idealism and his own, positive view. I then consider how his interlocutors did or might reply. As a result, one will better see the differences between Ward's personal idealism and the Absolute Idealism of figures such as F.H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet, and where any reconciliation between the two 'schools' of idealism might start.

YU, ERIC
Memorial University

The existence of social minds or not: Henry Jones's critique of Herbert Spencer's theory of the social organism

The social organism theory is a significant tradition in political philosophy, and it can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle. In the 19th century, with the development of evolutionary theory and the challenges to individualism, it was revived by sociologists and philosophers.

In Victorian Britain, this theory was closely associated with Herbert Spencer. The basis of his approach is the idea of social growth, by which he means that, like an animal, a society gradually differentiates itself by encountering external challenges. In this process, its parts will be more and more mutually dependent, as seen in the division of labour. Spencer regards society, then, to be an 'organism.' However, Spencer denies the existence of any consciousness of this 'organism.'

It is the absence of a social consciousness that some later philosophers, including Henry Jones, a British Idealist, find unsatisfactory. For Jones, there are two kinds of social organisms: material and ethical. Spencer's view falls into the first category. However, Jones argues that the real basis of a social organism is what he calls the mental relationship between the individual and society, not the social growth. Individual freedom can only be realized within society, and society can be said to become aware of itself through individual consciousness. Without a social mind or consciousness, society would simply be an aggregation of individuals rather than an organism.

I argue that Jones provides a better version of the social organism theory than Spencer. The latter merely considers human material needs and neglects the importance of consciousness. He is also inconsistent with himself in arguing for society as an organism and, at the same time, rejecting the social mind. A return to Jones's theory will help us understand the social mind and the social organism.

YU, HAOMIAO
University of Guelph

Epistemic normativity of lack of understanding and misunderstanding

This paper studies the epistemic normativity of lack of understanding and misunderstanding. As it is situated in the context of understanding based on scientific explanations, we view *lack of understanding* and *misunderstanding* as the epistemic failures to reach genuine understanding in relation to scientific explanations. Whilst some of the existing literature has touched on lack of understanding, no analysis of the difference between lack of understanding and misunderstanding yet exists.

To start with, we define understanding as the epistemic success that requires subjective and objective components. We describe its objective component in terms of a correct explanation. The subjective component for us can be captured by the cognitive abilities and skills necessary to grasp or construct a correct explanation, plus a positive phenomenology (the phenomenon of an insightful “aha!” moment or a gradual increase of satisfaction). Finally, we frame understanding as the alignment between the subjective and objective components.

We then define *lack of understanding* as the epistemic failure that results from a lack of an explanation or from an incorrect explanation. This can occur due to insufficient abilities and skills, or to fallacious explanatory information.

Finally, we characterize *misunderstanding* by cases where one’s epistemic inclinations do not align with an otherwise correct explanation. We define *epistemic inclinations* as the tendencies to receive a positive phenomenology from familiar types of explanations. We suggest that the lack of positive phenomenology leads to misunderstanding.

At the end, we provide a case study of misunderstanding in terms of the debate around the existence of distinctively mathematical explanations. We argue that misunderstanding results from the diverging epistemic inclinations of two sides of the debate.