**Open Minds X**

**A graduate conference in all areas of philosophy**

**Friday 3 July 2015, 9.30am-5.00pm**

**2.016/2.017 Arthur Lewis Building, Oxford Road** ([Find us on the campus map](http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/maps/interactive-map/?id=33), and see the final page for more travel information)

We are pleased to announce our tenth annual graduate conference. Following on from the success of Open Minds I - IX, this conference is intended to provide a supportive and stimulating environment for postgraduate students and early career researchers to share and discuss their work.

Our keynote speaker will be [Dr Maja Spener](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/profiles/philosophy/spener-maja.aspx) (University of Birmingham), who will give a talk on her paper ‘Abilities and the Nature of Perception’.

**Abstract**: In this paper I put forward an argument for experiential pluralism about visual experience. Experiential pluralism is the denial that conscious visual experience has a single common nature. The argument rests on a claim about the explanatory role of visual experience in relation to our possession of certain kinds of ordinary abilities. In defending this claim, I will discuss the force and limits of appeals to common sense explanatory practice in reasoning about experience.

Registration, lunch and refreshments are free for all, thanks to the generous support of both the Analysis Trust and the Mind Association. However, you must register so that we can order enough lunch and refreshments; please contact [openmindsx@gmail.com](mailto:openmindsx@gmail.com).

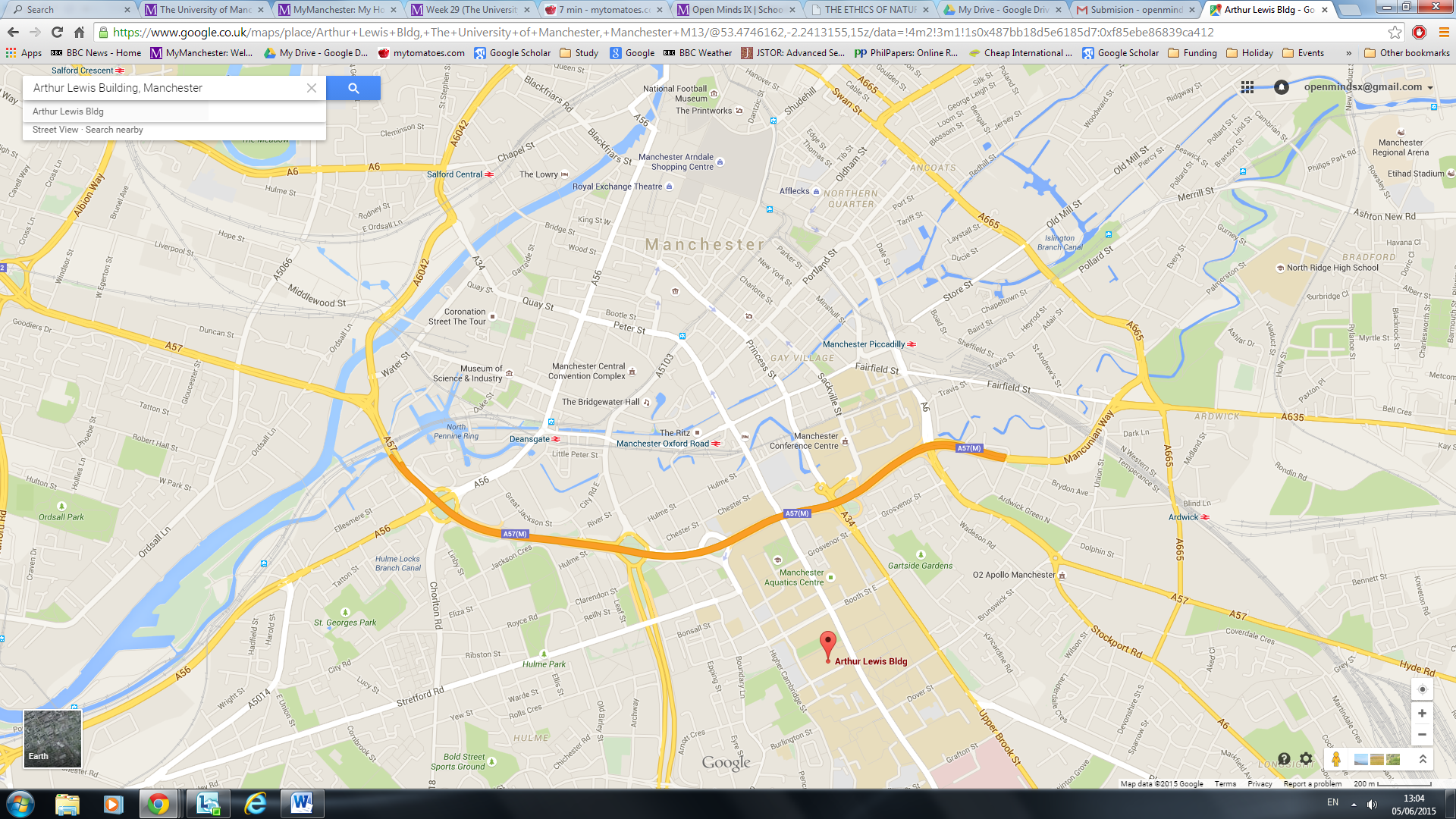
In addition, if you would like to register for dinner with the speakers on the 3rd July, let us know. We will be eating at east Z east, eating from the silver menu, c. £21, which has plenty of vegetarian options.

**Aims of the conference**

One of our key aims, as the name ‘Open Minds’ is suggests, is to facilitate open discussion across a wide variety of philosophical topics and perspectives. To that end, Open Minds has never had a theme, preferring to hold talks from any area of analytic philosophical inquiry. With this in mind, speakers are encouraged to deliver their papers in such a way as to encourage debate with an audience largely unfamiliar with their area of study. Our hope is to foster links across different institutions and specialization areas which will hopefully stay with attendees throughout their future careers.

**Timetable information:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 9.30am | Registration & coffee |
| 10am | Parallel session 1: The Generality Problem for Intellectualism (Joshua Habgood-Coote)  Parallel session 2: Brains in Bliss: What Can Neuroscience Tell Us About Pleasure? (Lucy Tomlinson) |
| 10.30am | Parallel session 1: To What Extent does the Demand for Objectivity in Knowledge Practices Contribute to Epistemic and Social Injustice? (Fidaa Chehayeb)  Parallel session 2: What the temporal content of consciousness tells us about the future of neuroscience (Andy Routledge) |
| 11am | Parallel session 1: Externalism about Mental Content, Slow-Switching and Epistemic Reasons (Ben Sorgiovanni)  Parallel session 2: Are thoughts ever experiences? (Peter Forrest) |
| 11.30am | Coffee Break |
| 12pm | Parallel session 1: This is not a sentence. Or: Where on Earth are the syntactic units of natural language? (Nick Tasker)  Parallel session 2: Consequentializing and Underdetermination (Marius Baumann) |
| 12.30pm | Parallel session 1: Is Ludlow’s Metalinguistic Move Plausible? (Jumbly Grindrod)  Parallel session 2: Developing Autonomy and Transitional Paternalism (Faye Tucker) |
| 1pm | Parallel session 1: ‘Making Room for Reality’: Intersectionality and the Double Bind in Feminist Philosophy. (Amy Kings)  Parallel session 2: Striving as Suffering: Schopenhauer's A Priori Argument for Pessimism (Patrick Hassan) |
| 1.30pm | Lunch |
| 2.30pm | Parallel session 1: An Ordinary Definition of a Boundary: Bringing Finiteness in to the World (Gonzalo G Nunez)  Parallel session 2: The Agent’s Causal Role in Action (Vanessa Carr) |
| 3pm | Parallel session 1: Natural Properties and Counterparts (Aaron Wilson)  Parallel session 2: Committed Agency: Incompatibilism for Compatibilists (Chris Ovenden) |
| 3.30pm | Parallel session 1: A Problem for Modest Identity Theories of Truth (Daniel Brigham)  Parallel session 2: Why Intuitions Are Not Reasons (David Jenkins) |
| 4pm | Keynote address: Abilities and the Nature of Perception (Maja Spener) |
| 5pm | Drinks and dinner |

**Travel information**:

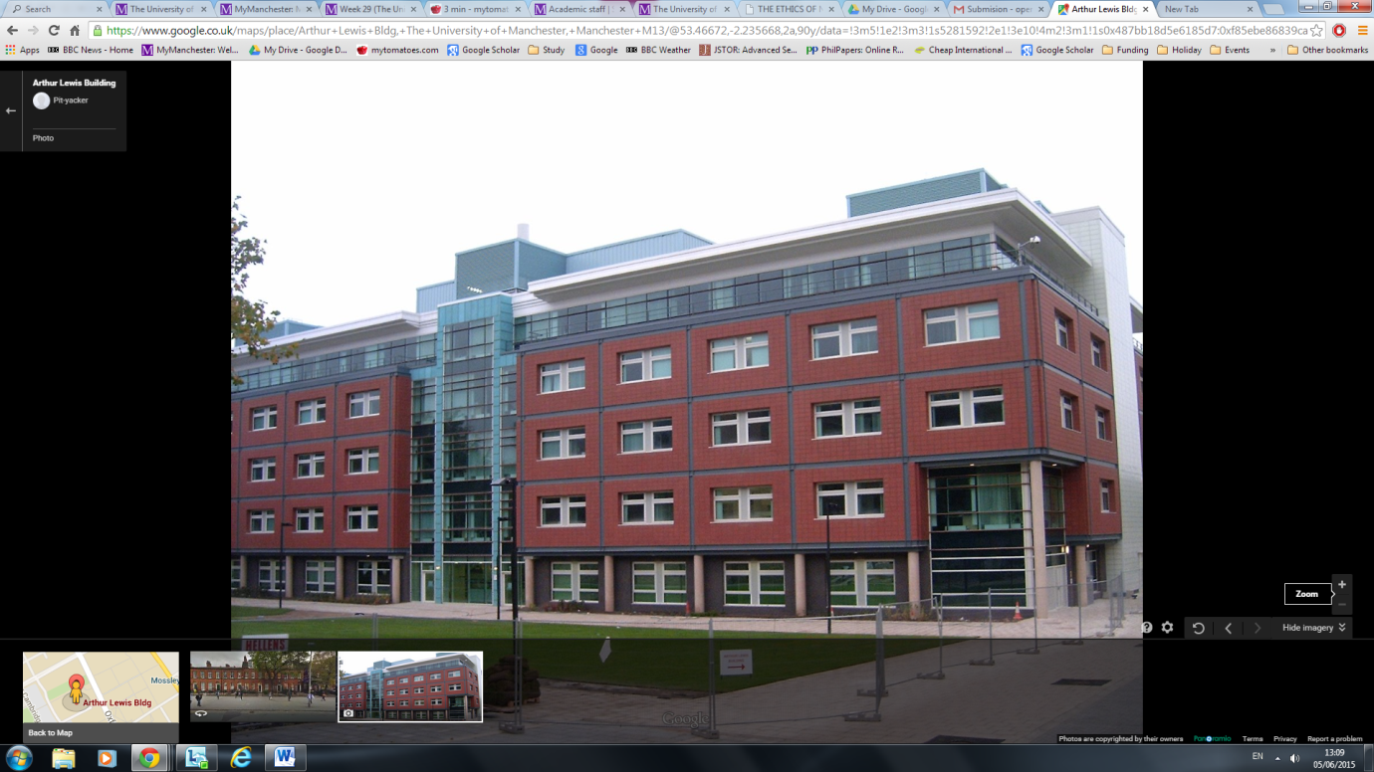
The Arthur Lewis Building is just off Oxford Road. From the airport, the train takes you directly to Oxford Road Station, taking about 20 minutes, and the Arthur Lewis Building is about 15 minutes’ walk from there. Or catch a bus from the other side of Oxford Road. They are very frequent and most go past the University (also on Oxford Road); ask the driver.

From Piccadilly Station it’s about a 20-minute walk. Or go out of the back entrance (follow the signs to the taxi rank), cross over Fairfield St., and catch the 147 from the stop about 20m on your left.

For more information, see the university website:

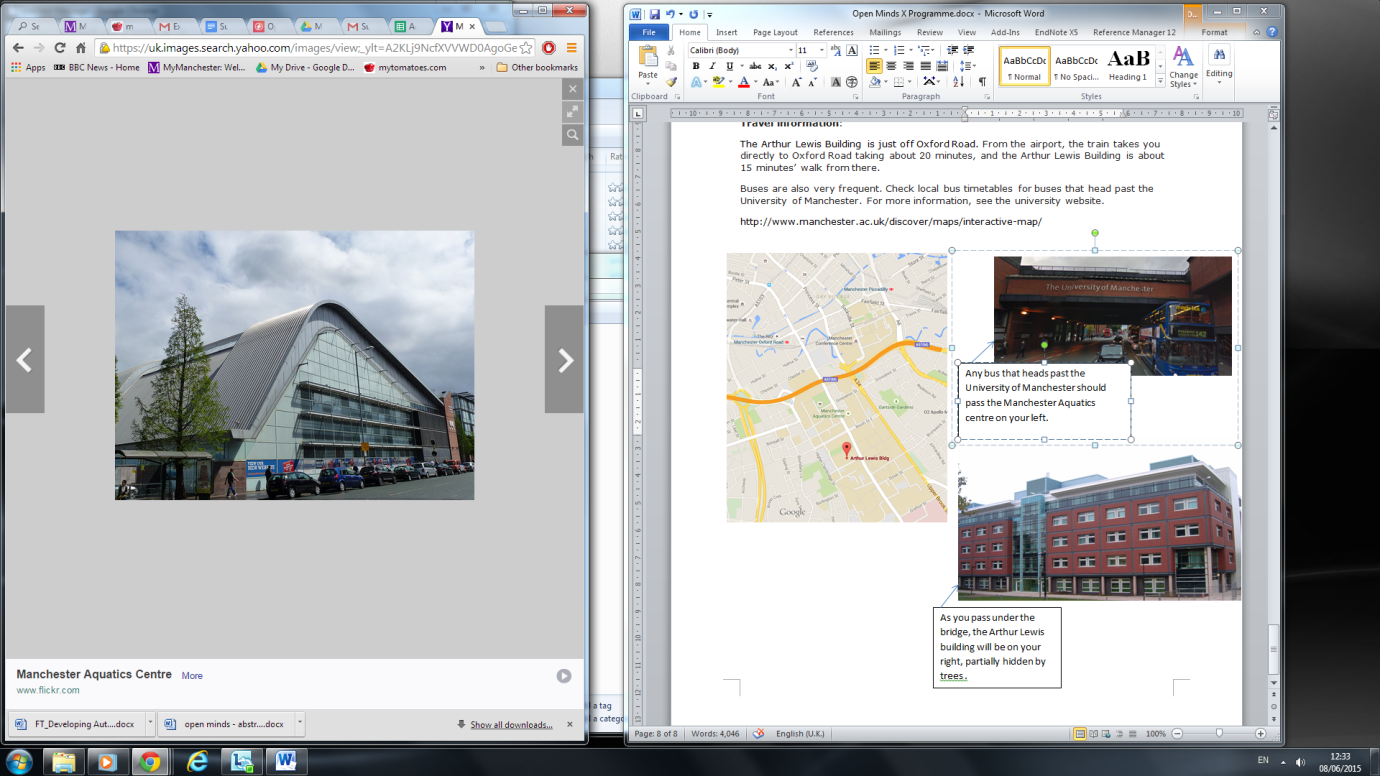
www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/maps/

interactive-map/



If you get off the bus at the aquatics centre, walk ahead (south) for a couple of minutes. The Arthur Lewis building (pictured) will be on the right hand side of the road, partially hidden by trees.

Any bus that heads past the University of Manchester should pass the Manchester Aquatics centre (pictured) on your left.



**Session Information:** (in alphabetical order)

**Consequentializing and Underdetermination**

Marius Baumann at the University of Bern (Switzerland)

On the textbook view of normative moral theories, alternative traditions, say act utilitarianism and Kantian deontology, do not only provide us with rival theoretical frameworks but they also lead to different deontic verdicts, i.e. jud-gements as to which acts are right or wrong, permissible, obligatory, forbidden, and the like. Lately, this view has been forcefully challenged by a research pro-

ject that goes by the name of “consequentializing moral theories". Consequentializers claim that they can come up with a deontically equivalent consequentialist counterpart theory for every plausible nonconsequentialist theory. I will argue that we should draw a clear distinction between two sides of this project. Consequentializers have made considerable progress on what might be called the technical side, i.e. identifying the characteristic features of nonconsequentialist theories and showing how, working within a consequentialist framework, one can make room for them. However, the same can not be said about the interpretive side, which addresses what consequentializing, were it then to succeed, would tell us about the nature of and relations between moral theories. Instead, several strongly diverging accounts have been given so far. I survey three of them and reject them all on the grounds that they rely on an impoverished understanding of the functions of moral theory.

**A Problem for Modest Identity Theories of Truth**

Daniel Brigham at the University of Cambridge

According to the modest identity theory of truth, the fact that p is identical with the true Fregean thought that p. Taking inspiration from Frege (1918), this view has been recently defended by Julian Dodd (2000), Jennifer Hornsby (1997), and John McDowell (1994, 2005) among others. My paper presents a problem for this view. The thrust of my argument is this: if you accept that (i) facts are true thoughts and (ii) some true thoughts are object-dependent, then you must also accept that (iii) some apparently contingent existents necessarily exist. I take it that modest identity theorists of truth are already committed to (i) and have good reason to accept (ii), but will find (iii) unacceptable. And this, I take it, is a serious internal problem for their view. Along the way, I explain how my argument is different from Timothy Williamson's (2002) argument that necessarily, everything necessarily exists: Williamson's argument relies on apparently generally acceptable principles about propositions, truth, and existence; mine exploits the identity theorist's identification of facts and thoughts. And I defend each step of my argument against potential replies from identity theorists.

**First too narrow, now too broad**

Vanessa Carr at University College London (UCL)

Helen Steward, in A Metaphysics for Freedom (2012; hereafter *MFF*), presents an account of action at least partly motivated by the desire to avoid over-mentalising action. The overmentalisation of action is presented (*MFF*, 2009) as a problem for the standard Davidsonianv account of action, which considers action to necessarily be caused by rationalizing mental states (cf. Davidson, 2001). I here present the putative problem for the Davidsonian, which is taken to be a matter of adopting an overly narrow definition of action, which fails to capture all intuitive cases of action. Steward proposes that there are cases of action that do not causally implicate any rationalizing mental states.

I then indicate how in her efforts to avoid over-mentalising action, Stewards adopts a form of agent-causationism where agent-causation is not only irreducible to event-causation, but, in the case of basic action, also need not operate via any *mode of operation*. I argue that, as a result, and despite intentions to the contrary, Steward is committed to a peculiar divide in nature between agent-causation and other kinds of causation. Moreover, I suggest that in endorsing a picture of basic action as agent-causation that can operate without any mode of operation, one loses a basis for distinguishing between genuine basic action and unintentional nervous movement, blinking, or breathing, none of which we intuitively take to count as action. Ultimately it seems that having rejected the Davidsonian account of action as too narrow, Steward presents an account that might just be too broad. It may be that we should reconsider the proposal that action is necessarily caused by rationalizing mental states – perhaps this did not make for too narrow a definition of action after all.

**To What Extent does the Demand for Objectivity in Knowledge Practices Contribute to Epistemic and Social Injustice?**

Fidaa Chehayeb at the American University of Beirut

In this paper I will explore whether and to what extent the demand for objectivity in our knowledge practices contributes to epistemic and social injustice. I will investigate how objectivity is understood, how it is used, and when it can become oppressive on the basis that discovering and analyzing the complex meanings that the term captures is absolutely essential for any feminist philosophical critique of science. My argument draws upon Haslanger’s social constructionist analysis of concepts (Haslanger, 2000, 2005). She distinguishes between three different approaches to concept analyses: the conceptual, the descriptive and the ameliorative. I will discuss the conceptual approach by tracking the explicit or manifest meaning of objectivity in scientific discourse. I will then explore the descriptive approach; here I will show that ‘objectivity’ as it is practiced is not a stable, distinct, and univocal concept but a complex conflation of different ideals. Finally, I will argue that there is a gap between our manifest and our operative conceptions of objectivity because our manifest concept is unattainable and undesirable; as a result, the strict demand for objectivity in our current knowledge practices contributes to epistemic and social injustice. I conclude that as a result of this gap ameliorative efforts must take on a complete revisionary and normative analysis of how we should rethink objectivity to serve the only legitimate purpose it is meant to serve: epistemic and social justice.

**Are thoughts ever experiences?**

Peter Forrest at the University of Oxford

The recent debate in philosophy of mind over whether thought has its own distinctive phenomenology, so-called cognitive phenomenology (CP), has led to a sharp division between proponents and skeptics of CP.  This paper critically examines an ambitious argument against the very possibility of CP, which is based on a particular view of the temporal structure of thought endorsed by Peter Geach, Matthew Soteriou, and Michael Tye.  The argument, roughly, is that experiences, those mental entities that have phenomenology, persist as processes, while thoughts, on the other hand, are non-processive states or events.  So no thoughts are experiences.  The present paper attacks the claim that thoughts never temporally unfold as processes.  I argue that if this claim is understood as an a priori thesis, it is in conflict with a computational, language-of-thought view of cognition, and if it is understood as an a posteriori thesis, it lacks convincing support.

**Is Ludlow’s Metalinguistic Move Plausible?**

Jumbly Grindrod at the University of Reading

Peter Ludlow has recently argued that much of our discourse is metalinguistic, despite not obviously being so. More specifically, many utterances are actually attempts to establish the meaning of word for a given conversation. This paper examines that claim. It is argued that in order to plausibly claim that an utterance is metalinguistic, there should be one or more criteria for metalinguistic discourse that the utterance meets. With this in mind, a number of plausible criteria for metalinguistic discourse are examined, and it is argued that none of the criteria obviously support Ludlow’s claim. As such, it is argued that Ludlow’s claim is ad hoc and in fact damages the prospects for an otherwise plausible theory of metalinguistic discourse.

**The Generality Problem for Intellectualism**

Joshua Habgood-Coote at the University of St. Andrews

Intellectualists claim that knowing how to do something is a species of propositional knowledge. The most popular version of this theory, which has its origin in (Stanley and Williamson’s 2001), claims that for S to know how to V just is for S to know that some way w is a way in which she herself can V.

In this paper, I show that the appeal to ways of acting in this account gives rise to a Generality problem, analogous that faced by Reliabilist accounts of justification or knowledge. A given activity of V-ing is associated with an open-ended set of ways of acting. Although some of these ways seem to suffice for knowing how to V, others are clearly insufficient. This problem shows that Intellectualists need an account of how ways of acting relate to pieces of know-how.

I begin by sketching the structure of a generality problem by considering the generality problem for Reliabilism. I go on to show that Stanley and Williamson’s Intellectualism provides us with all the ingredients for a generality problem. In the final section I consider some responses to this problem, which involve introducing supplementary accounts of ways of acting or tweaks to the Intellectualist account and argue that they either do not address the problem, or implicitly introduce Anti-Intellectualist concepts.

**Striving as Suffering: Schopenhauer's A Priori Argument for Pessimism**

Patrick Hassan at the University of Reading

Among a variety of his influential contributions to philosophy, Schopenhauer is perhaps best known as a philosopher of pessimism. He presents a number of different and interesting arguments to support this position. In this paper, I wish to consider one I take to be the most central to his approach: the a priori argument from the 'will to life'. According to this argument, the human condition is such that we are perpetually driven by an irrational 'will' that causes us to strive for goals which never fully satisfy us. Because we are constantly unsatisfied in our continual striving, we constantly suffer and thus: life "as a business does not cover its costs" (*WWR*, II, p. 574). This paper consists of three sections. In section 1 I clarify what is meant by pessimism, and distinguish the form that I will be considering here from other forms which may also be attributed to Schopenhauer. In section 2 I present the a priori argument for pessimism. In section 3 I review a number of objections to the argument and consider various qualifications to its most problematic components. I make the case  that the argument as presented by Schopenhauer is ultimately unsuccessful because it turns upon an untenable principle: that desire implies pain. Moreover, that the qualifications to this view I consider here do not have the force to motivate the pessimistic conclusion intended. A second argument against Schopenhauer's position I consider is his undefended assumption that hedonism, the view that pleasure and pain are the sole measure of well-being, is true. While Schopenhauer's a priori argument is open to these objections, this discussion is aimed at drawing out a wider interest in understanding the nature of suffering and its role in the human experience.

**Why Intuitions Are Not Reasons**

David Jenkins at Kings College London

I will argue that a priori intuitions are a subset of our beliefs and inclinations to believe: those for which the epistemic status of the belief or potential belief can be explained without an appeal to experience. On this account an intuition that p cannot be a reason to believe that p because it either already amounts to a belief that p or lacks content. Either way the intuition cannot stand in the appropriate rational relation to the proposition that p. Reasons have a conceptual structure, that is, have content. But inclinations to believe only have content in the inadequate derivative sense that if followed the resultant belief would have a content. My crucial claim is that an intuition that p itself is never a reason to believe that p. Many see a priori intuitions as playing just such a role. As inclinations to believe cannot they say that intuitions are a sui generis sort of contentful mental state. I will argue that this cannot be correct. If it were we would be epistemically responsible for our intuitions. That would prevent sui generis intuitions from playing the very rational role that they are posited to play. Instead I motivate an account on which an intuition can constitute a knowledgeable belief without providing a reason for the belief in question. Intuition is the way that we know in such cases – it does not provide reasons in light of which we know.

**‘Making Room for Reality’: Intersectionality and the Double Bind in Feminist Philosophy.**

Amy Kings at the University of Keele

This paper will explore the ways in which feminist research in philosophy is subject to marginalisation as a result of systematic exlusionary practises typical of the dominant *culture of justification* within traditional philosophy. I will argue that the notion of the ‘double bind’ offers a unique method of interpreting the justifying norms of philosophy; which lead to the continued exclusion of research via *exceptionalism* and a sense of *incongruence*. I will explore certain positive responses to the ‘double bind’ including; Jenkins's call to solidarity and Dotson’s vision of a c*ulture of praxis.* I will investigate these theories and their relation to Graham Priest’s interpretation of the natureof philosophy. Finally, I will illustrate how Priest’s understanding of the subversive nature of philosophy can help to successfully provide a challenging method of overcoming limiting academic boundaries, in both an intellectually stimulating and unorthodox way.

**An Ordinary Definition of a Boundary: Bringing Finiteness in to the World**

Gonzalo G. Nunez at the University of Sheffield

Material objects of everyday seem to have boundaries. Looking around me I can see boundaries everywhere: my desk where I work, the laptop that I am using now, the bed where I sleep, books, glasses, pens, and everything in my room now have boundaries. It may be said that all those objects have a surface that skirts them; and that surface is the outer physical layer of the material constitution of each ordinary object. Indeed, I experience a limit in my own body: my skin seems to be the limit between my own physical constitution and the rest of things around me.

However, what common sense may tell us about boundaries? This paper is a work in progress that tries to offer an ordinary definition of a boundary (ODB) or what everyday speech meant by ‘boundary’. It is not a metaphysical approach to specify the kind of entity that a boundary is in some philosophical or theoretical sense. This work rather attempts to describe how boundaries are understood in everyday life. From this ordinary description, an ontologist may decide if that entity that common sense calls as ‘boundary’ should be included or not to the ontology that is proposed. Thus, I suggest that there are four concepts with which daily speech defines boundaries: separation, demarcation, restriction and dichotomy. I will propose, in base on those provisional definitions, an ordinary definition of a boundary (ODB) which is related to the finiteness of things.

**Committed Agency: Incompatibilism for Compatibilists**

Chris Ovenden at the University of Manchester

I present an incompatibilist account of agency according to which an agent must be both i) able to settle matters of fact that were not already settled by the laws of nature in combination with previous states of the world, and ii) be committed to acting in an intelligible manner. I argue that this account can make good on the intuitions held by both incompatibilists and compatibilists about the nature of agency and action explanation.

**What the temporal content of consciousness tells us about the future of neuroscience**

Andrew Routledge at the University of Manchester

One of the most familiar features of our experience is the apparent temporal order of different events. What we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste typically appears to be interconnected within a single temporal framework. We represent the different events as standing in a certain sequence, tied together by B-series relations of *succession* or *simultaneity*. Our thoughts, memories, and emotional feelings also appear to unfold within this unified B-series.... *Localism* claims that our experience can be wholly accounted for in terms of a collection of distinct modality-specific neural systems that *individually* generate conscious states (O’Brien and Opie 1998, 2000)…Modern lesion studies are increasingly thought to provide support for Localism. … [However,] I conclude by showing that if our overall conscious awareness at a given time consists in only a single representational state, then Localism is false.

**Externalism about Mental Content, Slow-Switching and Epistemic Reasons**

Ben Sorgiovanni at the University of Oxford

Externalism about mental content is the view that the content of a subject’s mental states depends in part on the relations which the subject bears to an external environment. Slow-switching objections are common complaints against the view. These objections purport to show that if externalism is true, then switching a subject slowly between two relevantly dissimilar environments in such a way that the subject cannot tell that she is being slowly-switched can have consequences which are strongly counter-intuitive. Typically, the consequences have to do with the knowledgeability of the subject’s mental states. It is argued that if externalism is true, then slow-switching can bring it about that a subject cannot know groundlessly certain of her occurrent, conscious attitudes. Since it is considered a datum that changes in one’s environment cannot undermine the knowledgeability of one’s mental states in this way, this consequence is counted as evidence that externalism about mental content is false.

In this paper, I develop a different sort of slow-switching objection to the views of one particularly prominent externalist, Tyler Burge. I argue that given Burge’s views about the individuation of mental content, slow-switching can undermine knowledgeability of one’s epistemic reasons, the reasons one has for believing a proposition (or propositions).

Why should such a result trouble Burge? According to Burge, only mental states can be reasons. On this view, being knowledgeable about one’s epistemic reasons is a matter of being knowledgeable about the rational relations between one’s mental states. If, as I argue, slow-switching can undermine knowledgeability of one’s epistemic reasons, then it can undermine knowledgeability of these relations. This result is *prima facie* troubling, for it seems to be part of our intuitive picture of self-knowledge that the knowledgeability of the rational relations between one’s mental states is not sensitive to changes in one’s environment in this way.

**This is not a sentence. Or: Where on Earth are the syntactic units of natural language?**

Nick Tasker at the University of Leeds

As communicators we are in touch with each other through various physical media. In speech a speaker’s phonatory organs – larynx, tongue, lips, etc. – conspire to emit a blast of sound waves which impinge upon a hearer’s auditory organs. We also create and disseminate texts of many kinds. I want to know how to characterise the role such physical phenomena play in human communication and the position they should occupy in our ontology of natural language. According to one traditional view, bits of text and speech are tokens of linguistic expressions such as words and sentences. Recently, however, Georges Rey has argued for a startling form of eliminativism about linguistic expressions, which he calls *Standard Linguistic Entities*, SLEs, and which include things like words, sentences, noun phrases, etc. He argues that insights arising from empirical linguistics reveal that there are no such things as words or sentences. I explicate Rey’s view, point out a lacuna in his argument and propose an alternative view of the metaphysics of linguistic expressions. On my view we can retain the notion that bits of text and speech are tokens of words and sentences but aspects of the traditional picture are genuinely threatened by Rey’s arguments. In particular, we are forced to recognise that linguistic expressions cannot be individuated on the basis of their intrinsic acoustic/orthographical properties. Finally, I speculate about the costs and benefits which Rey’s eliminativism or my relational view might have for other theoretical projects which presuppose some notion of linguistic expressions.

**Brains in Bliss: What Can Neuroscience Tell Us About Pleasure?**

Lucy Tomlinson at the University of Manchester

T.B.D.

**Developing Autonomy and Transitional Paternalism**

Faye Tucker at the University of Lancaster

Adolescents, in many jurisdictions, have the legal power to consent to life saving treatment but not necessarily the power to refuse it.  To many, this asymmetry of consent and refusal has seemed incoherent. A recent defence and justification of the asymmetry is Neil Manson’s theory of ‘transitional paternalism’. Transitional paternalism holds that such asymmetries are a by-product of sharing normative powers. It then seeks to justify the sharing of normative powers in the case of adolescent medical treatment. However, sharing normative powers by itself does not entail an asymmetry of consent and refusal in these cases, as transitional paternalism can be implemented in two ways. Manson's defence of an *asymmetry-generating* transitional paternalism rests upon a relatively weak ‘statistical’ argument – that the asymmetric version offers greater respect to more adolescents. The aim here is to offer a more substantive argument in favour of the asymmetry-generating form of transitional paternalism, one that makes appeal to obligations that individuals have to *develop* autonomy in others. We should share normative powers asymmetrically for three reasons. First, sharing powers in this way respects the young person’s increasing autonomy in the minimal negative sense. Second, it respects her developing autonomy in the stronger positive sense. Third, it is consistent with the kind of arrangements that best foster developing autonomy.

**Natural Properties and Counterparts**

Aaron Wilson at the University of Manchester

I propose that there is a tension between Lewis’ influential semantics for counterfactuals and his theory of natural properties. If overall similarity is limited to the sharing of natural properties then we get incorrect truth values for certain counterfactual statements. This is a consequence of the need for natural properties to be *intrinsic*. There are a number of ways of resolving this tension, however all involve giving up one of the planks of the Lewis’ theory. Either we give up on Lewis’ claim that natural properties are intrinsic, his claim that only natural properties ever make objects overall more similarity, or we propose that the relation by which an object’s counterparts are identified is not similarity. Of these possibilities, I consider that we have good reason to reject the first and third.