

Grue Bag Conference

August 30, 2014

First Bi-Annual

Morning

Green Session: Oak 108

Blue Session: Oak 109

10:00-10:50

[Alycia LaGuardia-LoBianco](#)

“Toward a Concept of Suffering”

[Andrew Parisi](#)

“Modality and Proof Theory”

11:00-11:50

[Morgan Thomas](#)

“Naïve Set Theory via Semi-Formal Reasoning”

[Tom Meagher](#)

“W.E.B. Du Bois, Sylvia Wynter, and the Human Sciences”

Pizza!, 11:50-12:50

Midday

Green Session: Oak 108

Blue Session: Oak 109

1:00-1:50

[Nathan Kellen](#)

“A Puzzle about Promising and Consent”

[Jordan Ochs](#)

“Foundational Cognition”

2:00-2:50

[Junyeol Kim](#)

“Horwichian Minimalism and the Aboutness of Propositions”

[Ralph DiFranco](#)

“Do Racists Speak Truly? On the Truth-Conditional Content of Slurs”

Evening

Green Session: Oak 108

Blue Session: Oak 109

3:10-4:00

[Hanna Gunn](#)

“Rigging the Game: Oppression in Speech”

[Nate Sheff](#)

“Can Pettit Recognize Rights?”

4:10-5:00

[Kathy Fazekas](#)

“The Functional Role of the Passage of Time”

[Mike Robillard](#)

“Bystander, Innocent Threats, and Types of Obstructors”

Abstracts

Ralph DiFranco

Do Racists Speak Truly? On the Truth-Conditional Content of Slurs

Area: Philosophy of Language

Slurs denigrate individuals qua members of certain groups, such as race or sexual orientation. Most theorists hold that each slur has a neutral counterpart, i.e., a term that references the slur's target group without denigrating them (e.g., 'Jewish' for 'kike'). According to a widely accepted view, which I call Neutral Counterpart Theory (NC), the truth-conditional content of a slur is identical to the truth-conditional content of its neutral counterpart. On this view, 'Jewish' and 'kike' both refer to an individual's ethnic background, yet the latter is an objectionable way of doing so. My aim is to challenge NC. I argue that NC fails with respect to slurs that encode literal, truth-conditional content which does more than merely secure reference (such as 'slanty-eyed', 'curry muncher'), and slurs that denigrate by virtue of their iconicity ('ching chong').

Kathy Fazekas

The Functional Role of the Passage of Time

Area: Philosophy of Time

Traditionally, A-theorists and B-theorists have viewed the passage of time as involving a transitory absolute now. Recently, there has been a rise in the number of B-theorists who are proponents of a revisionist view of the passage of time, wherein passage is the successive occurrence of events ordered by temporal relations. A-theorists and B-theorists who view passage in the traditional way might argue that these revisionist B-theorists are merely changing the subject or arguing for something that is not actually passage and, hence, that theirs is not really a view of passage at all. In this paper, I argue that the passage of time plays a functional role in the ontological scheme of A-theorists and B-theorists alike. The purpose of showing that A-theorists and B-theorists agree on the existence of a functional role played by passage is to show that whatever the occupant of that role really is (even if it is a non-traditional, i.e., B-theoretic, concept of passage), it deserves to be called the passage of time.

Hanna Gunn

Rigging the Game: Oppression in Speech

Area: Philosophy of Language

I have been further developing an account of illocutionary oppression by using a Gricean account of speaker meaning and Lewis notion of the conversational scoreboard. A motivating factor for this project is that the major existing accounts can only explain illocutionary oppression by appealing to whether or not an audience 'uptakes' our speech acts. I aim to explain broader instances, for example illocutionary disablement that occurs as a consequence of the internalisation of negative stereotypes. I propose that oppression may cause certain presuppositions to obtain within society that are in the background of day to day interactions. If oppression can make it the case that all members of conversations presuppose that certain individuals cannot make certain moves (perform certain actions) then they will be silenced or inhibited in every conversation they take part in. This can be understood

as changes being made to a shared conversational scoreboard that shapes the acts that persons are able to make in conversational contexts.

Nathan Kellen

A Puzzle about Promising and Consent

Area: Moral Philosophy

In this paper I suggest that there is a tension between standard theories of promising and standard theories of consent, having to do with promises involving future consent. This leads to what I believe is an irreconcilable conflict between the standard accounts, leaving us with very few options on how to continue.

Junyeol Kim

Horwichian Minimalism and the Aboutness of Propositions

Area: Philosophy of Language

Horwich argues that his own version of alethic deflationism, Minimalism, is compatible with any position about propositions as far as the position does not render the notion of proposition to depend on the one of truth. Therefore, if Horwich's liberal view is along the right line, Minimalists can choose any position about propositions in so far as the position keeps propositions not to depend on truth. However, I will argue that there is at least one more restriction Minimalists should observe when they choose their position about propositions. In specific, Minimalists should not choose any position in which aboutness of propositions is considered to be a substantial propositional property.

Alycia LaGuardia-LoBianco

Toward a Concept of Suffering

Area: Philosophy of Value Theory

Where there is current literature on suffering, the phenomenon is identified as a particular sort of negative psychological state. I will argue that while this state is an important component of suffering, it is not sufficient. Rather, a concept of suffering that best captures our intuitions must accommodate both the internal affective state and the external situation of the individual.

Tom Meagher

W.E.B. Du Bois, Sylvia Wynter, and the Human Sciences

Area: Philosophy of Science

This paper will address the relationship between the human sciences and the sciences at large through the work of W.E.B. Du Bois and Sylvia Wynter. It will explore the positions laid out by Du Bois in his early essays, "The Study of the Negro Problems" and "Sociology Hesitant." There, Du Bois suggests that the sciences are hampered by a supposed metaphysical conflict between Chance and Law, which is similar in structure to Kant's antinomy

of freedom and causality. Du Bois proffers the human sciences as a mechanism to advance human understanding of the role of freedom in reality, which would improve not only the human sciences but the natural and physical sciences as well. This paper will then move onto Wynter's contention that a human sciences "after Man" are essential to combat the dangers of environmental destruction, rampant inequality, and nuclear annihilation. The paper will explore the similarity between Du Bois's and Wynter's positions, which each show the indispensability of a rigorous human sciences in any society pursuing natural and physical sciences. It will conclude by offering a criticism of Wynter's defense of a "transcultural" human sciences, arguing that the positions of Wynter and Du Bois suggest instead the importance of a human sciences that is transdisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary, yet intercultural rather than transcultural.

Jordan Ochs

Foundational Cognition

Area: Philosophy of Mind

Historically, philosophers of mind have exhibited a ubiquitous tendency to understand the space of the brain and nervous system as the primary location of thought and intelligence. In recent decades, opposition to this assumption has arisen in many strains. The doctrines of content externalism, the extended mind, and embodied cognition are all examples of ways in which the tradition has attempted to liberate us from a bias toward a purely intracranial locus. The present paper aims to advance this line of thinking further and focuses on the nature of cognitive processing. I reject an intracranial computational perspective on cognition in favor of an alternative understanding of cognition with increased parsimony and explanatory breadth. I individuate my position by clarifying the distinction between the act of cognizing and the content of cognition. I claim that the actual cognitive process at a foundational level necessarily involves elements external to the nervous system and also that the contents of cognition are in part determined by the external world. This perspective is a dynamic systems approach to cognition that necessarily involves the brain, body, environment, and intentionality. I call this "foundational cognition" and ultimately argue for two interrelated theses: 1. That this framework is the primary type of cognition out of which representational and other higher-order cognition is derived, and 2. That this is the more common type of cognition and we are not the generally intracranial beings we originally believed ourselves to be. The conclusions of this paper have implications regarding brains in vats, the notion of an "extended" mind, and continuing research in cognitive science.

Andrew Parisi

Modality and Proof Theory

Area: Logic

In order to avoid tonk-like connectives many inferentialists claim that the rules that determine the meaning of an expression must meet certain requirements. Two important ones of which are the reduction of structural rules to atomic cases. This talk discusses one way for an inferentialist to give such rules for the modal logic System K.

Mike Robillard

Bystander, Innocent Threats, and Types of Obstructors

Area: Moral Philosophy

In *Defensive Killing*, Helen Frowe advances a novel argument challenging the orthodox view regarding the moral distinction between bystanders and innocent threats by introducing a third taxonomic category, one in which she calls *obstructors*. Obstructors, she contends, are agents who are not going to directly kill an innocent person, but whose presence in relation to that agent serves to block certain escape routes from harm that would otherwise be open to that individual. Frowe argues that orthodox ‘moralized’ accounts of threat, like that of Thomson’s, cannot properly accommodate this unique category of obstructors while her ‘non-moralized’ account of threat in fact can. While I largely agree with Frowe’s account of threat, I disagree with the presumption that the category of obstructors is one that is wholly uniform in nature. Rather, I argue in this paper, that obstructors can come in at least three distinct types (causally speaking) and that these types vary considerably both in terms of the degree of threat they pose to a given individual and in terms of that individual’s corresponding set of agent-relative permissible options of self-defense. Accordingly, the upshot of this paper is the understanding that, contrary to what Frowe explicitly claims, obstructors can come in a variety of shapes and forms and can function not only as indirect threats, but as direct threats as well. This understanding will have direct implications for the permissibility of targeting human shields in war.

Nate Sheff

Can Pettit Recognize Rights?

Area: Moral Philosophy

Philip Pettit argues that consequentialists can give good consequentialist-friendly reasons to recognize rights. That is, we can be consequentialists through and through while acting and reasoning like deontologists in the cases where deontological intuitions run deepest. However, without further qualifications, Glaucon-style cases can require the purportedly-rights-respecting consequentialist to violate rights. I provide the required qualifications by distinguishing two kinds of what Pettit calls “elusive and vulnerable goods”; with this distinction in play, the consequentialist can resist the Glaucon cases and recognize rights.

Morgan Thomas

Naïve Set Theory via Semi-Formal Reasoning.

Area: Philosophy of Math

It has previously been argued that under a correct understanding of sets, the unrestricted comprehension axiom scheme of naïve set theory is true. This axiom scheme leads to formal paradoxes. Previous attempts to solve the resulting problems have focused on defining new systems of logic in which the paradoxes are innocuous; but so far, none of these attempts have yielded a naïve set theory in which it is clear that mathematics can successfully be developed. I have previously argued that no system of logic exists which gives this result. If I am right about this, and if we wish to stick with the idea that unrestricted comprehension is true, then we are led to entertain

the idea of a naïve set theory based on informal or semi-formal reasoning, rather than formal reasoning, as this appears to be the only remaining option. I explore the development of such a theory.