Grue Bag Conference

September 5, 2015

Third Bi-Annual

Morning

Green Session: Oak Hall 108

10:00 Andrew Parisi
  "A Defense of Contingentism"

11:00 Madiha Hamdi
  "Concept, Object and BLV"

Blue Session: Oak Hall 109

10:00 Jordan Ochs
  "A Modest Improvement of Kant's Argument Against Realism"

11:00 Dana Miranda
  "'Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes': The Loss on Bunker Hill"

Lunch!

Midday

Green Session: Oak Hall 108

1:00 Ken Ito
  "A Game of Saying Only Falsehoods"

2:00 Junyeol Kim
  "On Primitivism of the Concept Truth"

Blue Session: Oak Hall 109

1:00 Nate Sheff
  "Berkeley's Dilemma for Temporal Absolutists"

2:00 Andrew Tedder
  "A Note Regarding Descartes' Theory of Modality"

Abstracts

Madiha Hamdi

Concept, Object and BLV
Area: Philosophy of Mathematics

In this paper I will argue in favour of sense-preservation across the logical equivalence in Frege's Basic Law Five, abbreviated BLV. I will begin by explaining Frege's fundamentally distinct notions of concept and object. BLV fits into this concept/object framework. Frege claims that a single thought (i.e. sense) can be decomposed in terms of either concept or object. I argue that it follows that the sides of BLV express the same thought.

Ken Ito

A game of saying only falsehoods
Area: Truth

I will consider a game in which players aim to make only false statements. In this game, then, to say "snow is black" is accepted as a proper speech act, while it counts as lying in our ordinary conversation. I will draw from this thought experiment two consequences. (1) Logical connectives remain the same in the game, while inference rules totally change. For example, players must follow false-preserving rules instead of modus ponens. (2) Simply because the T-schema obtains also in the game, the concept of truth in the deflationist sense cannot be used for the explanation of endorsement or assertion, that are usually distinguished from other speech acts in terms of truth.

Junyeol Kim

On Primitivism of the Concept Truth
Area: Truth

Asay defends conceptual primitivism of the concept truth, the view that truth is primitive. He argues that this primitivism can be combined with the deflationist metaphysics of the entity truth. In the deflationist metaphysics, truth is an abundant and explanatorily impotent property. Asay claims that the combination of conceptual primitivism and the deflationist metaphysics constitutes an attractive position, because it can preserve the usefulness of truth while keeping the ontological burden light. In this paper, I argue that conceptual primitivism cannot be wedded to the deflationist metaphysics of truth. However, there is an alternative metaphysics of truth that can buy conceptual primitivism ontological economy. I will sketch this alternative metaphysics.

Jordan Ochs

A Modest Improvement of Kant's Argument Against Realism
Area: History of Philosophy

In "The Antimony of Pure Reason", (a chapter in the Transcendental Dialectic in his book *Critique of Pure Reason*), Kant offers an argument against Realism in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum*. In this paper, I raise two objections to this argument. First, the argument relies on the fallacy of composition and second, the support Kant provides in order to establish the truth of the premises are question begging with respect to Idealism. After explaining these objections, I offer a revision to Kant's main argument against Realism that seeks to address both criticisms and remain in keeping with the dialectic in "The Antinomy of Pure Reason".

Dana Miranda

"Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes": The Loss on Bunker Hill
Area: Political Philosophy

In recognition of the first great battle of the American Revolution I will examine the ways in which the Bunker Hill Monument is implicated in making sense of what is left behind by war. My project works with the philosophical concepts of history, monumentalization, and narrative to approach a cities' response to tragedy. I seek to show how monuments can be understood within the framework of Pierre Noras lieux de mémoir–constructions that function to keep alive the past by protecting against the erasure of history. In drawing this comparison, I aim to reveal how tragedies demand the construction of a narrative and that monuments, as sites of memory (lieux de memoire), articulate this narrative. These monumental narratives are not, however, fixed or permanent; rather they are, and must necessarily be, constantly re-written. Similar to a musical call and response, monuments allow for political statements to be punctuated with expressions by their viewers. In particular, the historical usages of Bunker Hill from its construction to Krzysztof Wodiczko's artistic projections allow a critical revisiting of a national monument to its local deconstruction into a commentary on the violence done to the community of Charlestown. Through an examination of the public use of narratives surrounding the Bunker Hill Monument we are able to make a greater case that monuments are in fact subject to constant renegotiation by its relation to the public and city.

Andrew Parisi

A Defense of Contingentism
Area: Logic

Contingentism is the denial of that "Necessarily everything is necessarily something" is logically valid. It is most commonly also paired with the denial that "Something is possibly F if and only if possibly something is F" is a logical truth. The metaphysical picture that accompanies a contingentist logic is one where there are actual objects which might not have existed, and where there might be objects which do not actually exist. Williamson (2013) has argued that contingentism ought to be rejected. One of the main points grounding his conclusion is that there does not appear to be a non-baroque theory of logical consequence that denies the validity of the above claims. This talk presents an independent account of the meaning of quantifiers, and the meaning of alethic modal operators that meet the necessary conditions for a theory of meaning. It is shown that combining these two theories yields a coherent contingentist account of logical consequence and therefore a coherent defense of contingentist metaphysics.

Nate Sheff

Berkeley's Dilemma for Temporal Absolutists
Area: History of Philosophy

In §98 of the Principles, Berkeley presents an argument against temporal absolutism, which is the view that time is both infinitely divisible and passes independently of the mind. According to Berkeley, the temporal absolutist faces a dilemma: either he "passes away innumerable ages without a thought, or . . . he is annihilated every moment of his life." Since both options are absurd, temporal absolutism is false, and we must conclude that time does not exist independently of the mind after all, but is instead nothing but the succession of ideas in our minds.

Berkeley's conclusion is radical and faces serious difficulties (noted by Berkeley scholars and Berkeley himself in correspondence), but little attention has been paid to the workings of the argument itself. It is not obvious, after all, how temporal absolutists commit themselves to either horn of his dilemma, or even what it is to pass times "without a thought". This paper aims to explain these apparent commitments. I argue that Berkeley's dilemma arises from how temporal absolutists think that particular ideas relate to the objective passage of time. For Locke, we measure the passage of time by the succession of ideas in our own minds. Ideas in a succession can be temporally related in one of two ways. Either ideas can follow one another immediately, so that no time passes between ideas in the succession and the ideas abut, or time can pass between ideas in the succession. If the absolutist goes with the first horn, then even though our successions of ideas seem to represent finite lengths of time, such lengths of time are really infinitely long. Hence, we pass innumerable ages without a thought – we pass through eternity

without noticing it. This can be explained by looking to Berkeley's criticisms of the infinite divisibility of matter, where he argues that infinitely divisible matter leads to infinitely extended bodies. His reasoning there can be applied to time, so that infinitely divisible time leads to infinitely long durations.

The absolutist fares no better with the second horn. Suppose that some time passes between successive ideas, so that there are lengths of objective time with no ideas in them. In this case, there are times at which I do not think – namely, those times between my successive ideas. This means that I pop in and out of existence, assuming that I am an essentially thinking thing. This option leads to absurdity, as does the last one, so temporal absolutism is false.

Andrew Tedder

A Note Regarding Descartes' Theory of Modality
Area: History of Philosophy

In the literature on Descartes' Creation Doctrine and his theory of modality, a standard argument form has been used to justify many diverse positions (including Limited Possibilism (the view that every proposition is possibly possible) and Universal Possibilism (that every proposition is possible)), and also as the grounds for criticism of such positions. We seek to clarify some elements of the proof structure, in particular whether the primary conditional, that in terms of which the premises are stated, ought to be material or strict, and show that under the available options, a premise of this argument implies that every necessary truth must be necessarily willed by God. This consequence directly contradicts some comments in Descartes' correspondence, rendering the proof inadmissible as it has been stated. However, an upshot appears to be some (weak) justification for limited possibilism.