

## Indiana Philosophical Association

Spring Meeting 2011

Friday and Saturday

29 and 30 April 2011

*L.A. Pittenger Student Center*

*Ball State University*

*Muncie, Indiana*

### Meeting Program

“S” stands for “Speaker” and “C” for “Commentator”

*Friday afternoon, 29 April*

Room 310A	Room 310B
1 - 1:50pm S: Briana Toole (Sheffield) “Fictional Entities: A Case for Neo-Meinongism” C: Michael Koss (Indiana)	1 - 1:50pm S: Justin Remhof (Illinois) “Nietzsche’s Perfectionism and the Ethics of Care” C: Sean Meseroll (Kansas)
2 - 2:50pm S: Michael Koss (Indiana) “Wittgenstein on Meaning and Dummett’s Antirealism” C: Charles McCarty (Motel 6 Institute)	2 - 2:50pm S: Sean Meseroll (Kansas) “Pessimism and Optimism in the Later Nietzsche” C: Justin Remhof (Illinois)
3 - 3:30pm BREAK 3 - 3:30pm BREAK	
3:30 - 4:20pm S: Ioan Muntean (IP Fort Wayne) “The Genetic Numerical Simulations” C: Robert Fisher (UI Chicago)	3:30 - 4:20pm S: Joshua Skorburg (Toledo) “The Ethical Dimension of Plato’s <i>Theaetetus</i> ” C: Mike Koss (Indiana)
4:30 - 5:20pm S: Matthew Carlson (Indiana) “Inferential Dependence” C: Ioan Muntean (IP Fort Wayne)	4:30 - 5:20pm S: Indriani Bhattacharjee (Bridgewater State) “Wittgenstein on Epistemic Norms” C: Liane Stillwell (Illinois State)

*Friday evening, 29 April*

Informal Dinner and Drinks

*Saturday Morning, 30 April*

Room 310A	Room 310B
9:00 - 9:50am S: Brian Besong (Purdue) “The Equal Weight Conditional and Moral Disagreement” C: Alex Silk (Michigan)	9 - 9:50am S: Robert Fisher (UI Chicago) “The Theory Theory” C: Joshua Heter (St. Louis U)
10 - 10:50am S: Billy Dunaway (Michigan) “The ‘Quasi’ in Quasirealism” C: Matthew Braddock (Duke)	10 - 10:50am S: Joshua Heter (St. Louis U) “Epistemic Possibility, Affordability, and Let’s Go Check Cases” C: Matthew Carlson (Indiana)
11 - 11:50am S: Matthew Braddock (Duke) “From No Explanation of Reliability to Moral Skepticism” C: Billy Dunaway (Michigan)	11 - 11:50am S: Daniel Cheung (Indiana) “Toward an Epistemic Compatibilism” C: Phil Osborne (Purdue)

*Saturday, 30 April, cont'd*

12:00 - 1:00pm LUNCH

1:00 - 1:30pm BUSINESS MEETING

*Saturday Afternoon, 30 April*

PLENARY SESSION: GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER AWARD

1:30 - 2:20pm

Room 310A and B

S: Alex Silk (Michigan) "Why 'Ought' Detaches"

C: Daniel Cheung (Indiana)

*Saturday Afternoon, 30 April (cont.)*

Room 310A	Room 310B
2:30 - 3:20pm	2:30 - 3:20pm
S: Jessica Gordon-Roth (UI Chicago) "The Problem of Personal Identity in Locke"	S: David Taylor, "Physical Intentionality and the Open Future"
C: Matthew Jehl (Toledo)	C: Charles McCarty (Motel 6 Institute)

**Abstracts of Papers Presented**

**IPA Meeting**

**Spring 2011**

**Brian Besong**

*The Equal Weight Conditional and Moral Disagreement*

In this paper, I will propose the "Equal Weight Conditional," a modest principle regarding when the disclosure of disagreement results in defeat. After proposing this principle, I will argue that it is superior to a rival view of disagreement, known as the "justificationist" view. Finally, I will consider a particular case of moral disagreement and argue, by the Equal Weight Conditional, that if standard accounts of moral intuitionism are correct, then widespread fundamental moral disagreement leads to a certain sort of moral skepticism.

**Indrani Bhattacharjee**

*Wittgenstein on Epistemic Norms: Naturalism and Pyrrhonism in **On Certainty***

This paper argues that Wittgenstein's meta-epistemological remarks in *On Certainty* are aimed at drawing attention to the transcendental conditions of knowing any proposition. These conditions are (i) a psychological apparatus for engaging in norm-governed phenomena such as filing knowledge claims and doubts, asking for reasons and adducing them, etc.; (ii) immersion in the social practices listed above. *On Certainty* reveals that Wittgenstein is an externalist about epistemic norms: Wittgenstein explains the ways in which our epistemic agency is a product of social norms that determine whether or not we in fact know or can reasonably doubt a given proposition. Epistemic norms are grounded in social conventions which are in turn grounded in human nature. I argue that this aspect of Wittgenstein's view combined with his criticism of the dogmatic views presented by Moore and the radical skeptic or epistemic nihilist, gives his epistemological view a Pyrrhonian orientation.

**Daniel Cheung**

*Toward an epistemic compatibilism between doxastic involuntarism and epistemic responsibility*

Since 1973 when Bernard Williams argued in a paper that we cannot decide to believe at will and the subsequent attack on doxastic voluntarism (roughly the thesis that beliefs are under our voluntary control) by William P. Alston in the 1980s, doxastic involuntarism has gained a lot of popularity. Many implications are drawn from it, including the denial of responsibility for one's

own beliefs and the denial of epistemic agency. Prominent advocates of these denials are respectively William P. Alston and Alvin Plantinga, and Pascal Engel. It is not until 2000 that dissidents of these popular views like Mattias Steup, Sharon Ryan and Christoph Jäger started harnessing the language and concepts of compatibilism in the metaphysical debates about freewill and determinism. However, if we count only the two towering figures, namely Harry Frankfurt and John Martin Fischer, those ideas from the metaphysical compatibilism have been around for ten to thirty years. Yet none of the above incorporation of the compatibilist ideas is drawing insight from the state-of-the-art compatibilism. Eventually, up to now, there is still no clear outline of what an epistemic counterpart of metaphysical compatibilism would look like. The aim of this paper is to outline such an epistemic counterpart.

### **Billy Dunaway**

#### *The 'Quasi' in 'Quasi-realism'*

Quasi-realists” are sophisticated ethical expressivists who accept claims about the meaning of words like 'true' and 'property' which allows them to accept many of the sentences that are commonly taken to be characteristic of ethical realism. Jamie Dreier labels this the “problem of creeping minimalism” as it is notoriously difficult to say why quasi-realists are not full-stop realists about ethics. This paper argues that our intuitive classificatory scheme, which labels quasi-realists as irrealists about ethics, is correct. First I sketch what I take to be the correct characterization of ethical realism. I then consider several attempts to show that only intuitively realist theories, but not expressivism, satisfy this characterization. After settling on my favored solution to the problem, I argue that my understanding of realism gives the resources to say why the label “quasirealism” might be apt for sophisticated expressivists—so long as we do not conflate quasirealism with full-stop realism.

### **Robert Fisher**

#### *The Theory Theory: A Neglected Modal Epistemology*

Some people think that we can form justified beliefs about  $p$ 's modal status even if we have no theory that says that it has such-and-such a status. So, for example, they think that we can justifiably believe that there could be naturally purple elephants even if we lack (*inter alia*) a theory about the factors that are germane to elephant pigmentation. In this paper I outline a modal epistemology that rejects this assumption: I suppose that we are *not* justified in believing (say) that  $p$  is possible unless we have a theory according to which  $p$  is possible. My proposal marries the semantic view of theories with the thesis that we justifiably believe our best theories to be true.

### **Jessica Gordon-Roth**

#### *The Problem of Personal Identity in Locke: Getting Clear on An Apparent Tension in the Text and the Path to the Best Possible Solution*

In this paper, I draw out the apparent tension that exists between Locke's definition of “person” and what Locke says about the persistence conditions of persons by outlining how other commentators have described it. I then give an account of the three most popular resolutions to this textual puzzle: what I call the “Relative Identity Approach” the “Mode Approach” and the “Substance Approach.” I give arguments against the Relative Identity Approach and then claim that in order to determine whether the Mode or Substance Approaches are viable options, we must first understand what Locke's commitments are when it comes to substance and mode. (Something I myself take up in the next stage of my larger project.)

### **Joshua Heter**

#### *Epistemic Possibility, Affordability, and Let's Go Check Cases*

Some time ago, Keith DeRose offered an account for epistemic possibility or 'might' claims according to which 'It might be that  $p$ ' will be true just in case not- $p$  is not known by some relevant group, and if there is no relevant means by which a member of the group can come to

learn not-p. What determines relevancy? In each case, context decides. DeRose's account allows us to explain our intuitions in a vast number of cases, but as DeRose himself admits, relevance is imprecise, leaving us with a “wimpy” account of 'might' claims. Some have suggested that such imprecision should lead us to abandon DeRose's and similar enough projects (in favor of, for instance, a relativist account). However, in this essay I argue that we can understand relevancy in terms of affordability. Roughly, if using a subject S as a source of information is worth the practical cost of doing so given our practical aims, then their knowledge counts as that of the relevant group. The relevant 'ways of coming to know' are the ones that are worth employing (again, given our practical aims). In view of this affordability account, I consider a particularly troublesome type of case: what has been called “Let's Go Check” cases.

### **Ioan Muntean**

#### *The Genetic Numerical Simulations: An Upward Epistemology?*

Recent work on numerical simulations has given us reason to believe that they have interesting epistemological aspects for scientific knowledge. Philosophers emphasized the “downward epistemology” of numerical simulations: computer models start from a theory and justify inferences from it: typically predictions or application of a theory or a mathematical model (E. Winsberg, M. Morrison). The present paper argues that a specific type of numerical simulation, called “genetic numerical simulations” (GNS), has a novel, particular status in the scientific knowledge. First, GNS goes beyond what is called the “analytic models” in science. Second, the GNS illustrates an “upward epistemology” from data to theories and is relevant in the context of scientific discovery. Genetic simulations are philosophically attractive, I conclude, because they shed light on debates in philosophy of science related to scientific discovery: laws of nature, role of mathematics, chance and ultimately, adaptation of new discovered laws to data. I briefly consider some consequences of the upward epistemology of the GNS in a more normative and prospective manner.

### **Justin Remhof**

#### *Nietzsche's Perfectionism and the Ethics of Care*

Many feminists criticize Nietzsche for being unabashedly phallogocentric. His ethical views seem opposed to feminist interests voiced in the care tradition because he arguably neglects the reality of human dependency and is critical of the value of compassion. This potential challenge from care theory is important in light of recent attempts to characterize Nietzsche's positive ethical position as perfectionist. This paper uses central tenets of the ethics of care to criticize three current versions of Nietzsche's perfectionism. An argument is then made that an alternative variation of one version might be able to respond properly to the care challenge. This paper argues that Nietzsche's perfectionism might be able to account for the relational element of human life despite some of his trenchant criticisms.

### **Alex Silk**

#### *Why 'Ought' Detaches or Why You Ought to Get with my Friends (if You Want to Be My Lover)*

This paper argues that a (suitably revised) standard analysis of modals from formal semantics suggests a solution to the detaching problem – that is, the problem of whether (certain objectionable) unembedded 'ought' claims can “detach” (be derived) from hypothetical imperatives and their antecedent conditions. On this analysis, modals have a skeletal conventional meaning and only receive a particular reading (e.g., deontic, epistemic, teleological) relative to certain forms of contextual supplementation. Accordingly, 'ought' claims *can* detach, but only as long as the 'oughts' in the conditional premise and conclusion are interpreted relative to the same ordering sources. Detached 'ought' claims play a crucial role in practical reasoning: they serve as lemmas, which, in conjunction with additional normative assumptions, can figure in larger practical arguments. Rival wide-scoping accounts are shown to be deficient on the grounds that they are without a response to certain quantificational variants of the detaching problem.

**Joshua Skorburg**

*The Ethical Dimension of Plato's **Theaetetus**: Flying Philosopher and Scampering Sophist*

In this paper I consider the ethical issues involved in Plato's greatest epistemological work, the *Theaetetus*. I argue that the ethical dimension largely shapes the dramatic structure of the dialogue, and poses a fundamental ethical question: How ought we engage with others in discourse? I contend that this question is most clearly manifest in the context of Socrates and Protagoras discussing the thesis that "knowledge is nothing other than perception." The tensions therein point beyond the dialogue itself, and toward questions about the practice of philosophy in general. Is it necessary for philosophers to engage with others? If so, why? And how should they go about it? My paper sets out to more fully elaborate the meaning of these questions, and asks the further question of what the answers to them might look like.

**David Taylor**

*Physical Intentionality and the Open Future*

I present a problem for the Growing Block Theory of time that arises from a conflict between the view and standard accounts of the laws of nature (regularity theories and relations-amonguniversals theories). The problem arises from the fact that the GBT hold that the future is "open", that is, that there are no determinate truths about the future, which conflicts with the idea that the laws of nature involve universal generalizations which require truths about the future. I suggest that an account of laws grounds them in irreducible causal powers, possessing "physical intentionality", might solve this problem for the GBT.

**Briana Toole**

*Fictional Entities: A Case for Neo-Meinongism*

Fictional characters are unusual entities whose nature provides an interesting, and troublesome, puzzle for metaphysicians. Some working in metaphysics have sought to dismiss these mysterious entities, while others have sought to accommodate such entities into their pre-existing views. Van Inwagen takes the latter approach, and in his essay, "Existence, Ontological Commitment, and Fictional Entities", he asserts and carefully explains the existence of fictional entities. Using Quine's criterion of commitment, van Inwagen argues that we are committed to the existence of fictional characters, as they cannot be eliminated. Though van Inwagen's argument that we are ontologically committed to fictional entities is convincing, he fails to adequately capture the nature of fictional entities, and what is meant in asserting the existence of such entities. In this essay, I attempt to remedy this issue by postulating a distinction between existence and being. Using Meinongism as my starting point, I attempt to craft a view that better enables us to understand the nature of fictional entities. I begin with a brief exegesis of van Inwagen's theory, in an effort to understand why, in employing Quine's criterion, we are committed to fictional entities. I then proceed with an outline of my account. I next consider an alternative approach to the account that I have proffered, before concluding with the advantages that my view offers.