



SAN DIEGO STATE  
UNIVERSITY



**5<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Graduate and Undergraduate  
Student Conference in Philosophy**

**Theme: Continental Philosophy**

**Aztec Student Union  
17 October 2015**

Sponsored by the Aztec Student Union Board, SDSU Associated Students,  
the Philosophy Club, and the SDSU Department of Philosophy

# **Graduate and Undergraduate Student Philosophy Conference**

**at San Diego State University**

## **Continental Philosophy**

**Aztec Student Union, SDSU**

**Saturday, 17 October 2015**

## **PROGRAM**

Sponsored by the Aztec Student Union Board,  
SDSU Associated Students, the Philosophy Club,  
and the SDSU Department of Philosophy

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# Schedule

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**8:30 am – 9:00 am REGISTRATION**

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**Presentations are 10min.  
followed by 5min. of Q&A**

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9:00 am – 9:45 am **THE GOOD LIFE AND THE MEANINGFUL LIFE PANEL** / Aztlan

9:00 am – 9:15 am “Autonomy and Authenticity: Why Did the Butler Do It?”  
Justin White (Grad)  
UC Riverside

9:15 am – 9:30 am “Jane Rubin and Hubert Dreyfus on Kierkegaard’s Present Age”  
David Hoff (Undergrad)  
UC Berkeley

9:30 am – 9:45 am “Self-Interest, Morality and the Good Life”  
Jake Borchert (Grad)  
SDSU

9:30 am – 10:00 am **EPISTEMOLOGY PANEL** / Metzli

9:30 am – 9:45 am “The End of Philosophy: Habermas’ Stand-in and Interpreter”  
Ryan McCoy (Undergrad)  
Belmont University

9:45 am – 10:00 am “Thoughts Towards an Immanent Science”  
Jonas Weaver  
Calvin College

10:00 am – 10:15 am “Spurious Interest, Bonding Light, and Divine Offspring: Unpacking the Sun Analogy of Plato’s Republic”  
Todd Clark  
SDSU

10:00 am – 10:45 am **NIETZSCHE PANEL** / Aztlan

10:00 am – 10:15 am “(Un)Masking the Self in Nietzsche”  
Ken-Terika Zellner (Undergrad)  
Northwestern University

10:15 am – 10:30 am “Understanding Nietzsche’s Subject”  
John Jalovec Paul (Undergrad)  
DePaul University

10:30 am – 10:45 am “Genealogy as Counter Propaganda”  
Vasfi Onur Ozen (PhD)  
University of Kansas

11:00 am – 11:30 am **HEGEL PANEL** / Aztlan

11:00 am – 11:15 am “Rationalism In and For Itself: Hegelian Dialectic and the role of the Empirical”  
Graham Bounds (PhD)  
University of New Mexico

11:15 am – 11:30 am “God is the Eternal, Not the Absolute as Subject”  
MC Cunningham (Undergrad)  
Belmont University

11:00 am – 11:55 am **HEIDEGGER PANEL** / Metzli

11:00 am – 11:15 am “What the Nothing is Not: Heidegger’s Holistic Philosophy”  
Michael Lasso (Undergrad)  
University of South Florida

11:15 am – 11:30 am “Indifferenz and the Binary Model of Modes of Being”  
John Preston (Grad)  
University of New Mexico

11:30 am – 11:55 am “The Place of Ordinary Language in Heidegger’s View of Language”  
Suraj Chaudhary (Grad)  
University of Kentucky

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12:00 pm – 1:00 pm / Theatre

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**“Trivial tasks that consume a lifetime:  
Kierkegaard on Immortality and  
Becoming Subjective”**

Dr. Mark Adam Wrathall  
UC Riverside

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**1:00 pm – 2:00 pm BREAK**

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3:00 pm – 3:30 pm **ETHICS AND RELIGION PANEL**  
/ Metzli

3:00 pm – 3:15 pm “The Epiphany of the  
Face: Levinas and the Ethico-Religious  
Attitude”

Bernardo P. Andrade (Undergrad)  
Middlebury College

3:15 pm – 3:30 pm “Christianity and the  
Failure of thought: Hegel’s Trinity and the  
Problem of Subjectivism”

Scott J. Cowan  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm **ETHICS AND  
PHENOMENOLOGY PANEL** / Metzli

3:30 pm – 3:45 pm “The Riss of the  
Eucharist—On Heidegger’s Philosophical  
Relationship to Christian Experience”

Casey Spinks (Undergrad)  
Louisiana State University

3:45 pm – 4:00 pm “The Ethics of Self-  
Realization: A Radical Subjectivism,  
Bounded by Realism”

Kevin Mager (Grad)  
Eastern Michigan University

4:00 pm – 4:30 pm **POSTMODERNISM**

**UNDERGRAD PANEL** / Aztlan

4:00 pm – 4:15 pm “A Comparative  
Analysis of Simon Springer’s  
Postneoliberalism and its Foucauldian  
Interpretations”

Jaycob Izsó (Undergrad)  
Portland State University

4:15 pm – 4:30 pm “Finding Value After  
Post-Modernism”

Benjamin Price (Undergrad)  
Trinity College Dublin

4:30 pm – 5:00 pm **POSTMODERNISM**

**GRADUATE PANEL** / Aztlan

4:30 pm – 4:45 pm “Postmodernist  
Feminist Approaches to Philosophy of  
History”

Camille Charette (Grad)  
Columbia University

4:45 pm – 5:00 pm “You Kant Have  
Perpetual Peace and Handelsgeist: Post-  
Modernism”

Brandon Edwards-Schuth (Grad)  
SDSU

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# Abstracts

(alphabetized)

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**Bernardo P. Andrade** (Middlebury College)

“The Epiphany of the Face: Levinas and the Ethico-Religious Attitude”

Emmanuel Levinas was often perplexed by accounts of people who, despite their immersion in the cruelest dehumanization, felt a sudden and unforeseen urge to perform acts of goodness. These occurrences, which Levinas witnessed both in the battlefield and in works of fiction, led him to develop a radically innovative account of the promptings that lead one to act ethically. This paper attempts to answer, in light of Levinas’ philosophy, two questions regarding this ethical prompting: how it is caused, and why we should lend an ear to it. This leads us to the central objective of this paper, namely, to defend, by drawing on John Hick’s philosophy of religion and Paul Tillich’s definition of symbolic language, that a religious foundation resides at the bottom of Levinas’ answer to both of these questions. In his philosophy, the ethical is founded in a religious attitude.

**Jake Borchert** (SDSU)

“Self-Interest, Morality and the Good Life”

In moral philosophy there have been many attempts to reconcile the apparently conflicting claims of morality and of self-interest. One particularly ambitious attempt is given by Paul Bloomfield in his 2014 book *The Virtues of Happiness*. He argues that being happy requires being moral, since having self-respect is necessary for happiness and morality is necessary for self-respect. In my presentation I argue that Bloomfield does not succeed in convincing the moral skeptic (who is the main target) that he always has self-interested reasons to be moral. However, I think that a more Kantian reconstruction of his position (adapted largely from the works of Christine Korsgaard) would fare better. This kind of reconstruction, I will argue, shows how far such arguments can be taken, but also explains why they will always come up against limits such that they will not lead to a full resolution between morality and self-interest. For that we would need a more robust theory of the Good Life, but it is unlikely that a skeptic could be forced to agree with such a theory without begging the question.

**Graham Bounds** (University of New Mexico)

“Rationalism In and For Itself: Hegelian Dialectic and the role of the Empirical”

The accusation is often made that Hegel is a rationalist or has rationalist commitments, and thus simply returns to pre-Critical dogmatic metaphysics. However, such evaluations typically take for granted a standard conception of what rationalism is. In this paper, I defend the claim that Hegelian dialectic is indeed a form of rationalism, but do so by disputing the standard conception of it. In particular, I contend that rationalist dialectic is not a method employing pure reason as its sole organon at all, but one which is constitutively reliant on empirical input, and that Hegel explicitly conceived his own methodology in these terms. Accordingly, though Hegel is a rationalist, he can be seen as taking seriously Kant’s Critical challenge to dogmatic metaphysics.

**Camille Charette** (Columbia University)

“Postmodernist Feminist Approaches to Philosophy of History”

The assumption that the historian represents an instrument for uncovering the truth about a distant past is one of many prejudices that prevent us from viewing our historical knowledge claims as perspectival. It is for this reason that we must consciously seek to amplify the voices that have been silenced by a dominant, naturalized narrative. Through the course of this paper, I shall react to the opaque historical discourse that relies on rigid binaries to demarcate the voices of authoritative narrator and ‘other’. Through an engagement with contemporary discussions of (continental) philosophy of history and postmodern feminist critiques of identity formation, I will problematize the categories of ‘otherness’ and ‘history’, demonstrating how we can learn to see ourselves as ‘other’ and reevaluate our assumptions, identities, and politics in an authentic and productive way.

**Suraj Chaudhary** (University of Kentucky)

“The Place of Ordinary Language in Heidegger’s View of Language”

One way to save Heidegger from the charge of linguistic idealism, when he says that language is the house of Being, is to show that he understands language in two related ways: the originary language which, as the Saying of Being, is the unconcealment of beings in a particular age; and language in the ordinary sense of human speech. Though the ontological understanding of language avoids the charge that language constitutes the essence of entities in the world, it seems to detach itself from the ordinary sense of language as words and speech. I will argue that the ontological sense of language is not a substratum on top of which ordinary language is arranged, as is usually implied in the distinction between the two senses of language in Heidegger’s works. I conclude that the two senses of language are equally essential in Heidegger’s view of language.

**Todd Clark** (SDSU)

“Spurious Interest, Bonding Light, and Divine Offspring: Unpacking the Sun Analogy of Plato’s *Republic*”

In *Spurious Interest, Bonding Light, and Divine Offspring*, I will defend and further develop a line of exegesis of Plato’s *Republic* that is rooted on a proposed distinction between the good and the idea of the good. I will argue that this distinction explains Socrates’ treatment of the good as both beyond and within the scope of the intellect, and is a central definitive feature of the metaphysical/epistemological scheme in the *Republic*. The focus of my presentation will be a careful analysis of the sun analogy in which I argue that Socrates distinguishes between the good and the idea of the good, and also covertly identifies the latter as the offspring of the former (in contrast to the consensus view that the offspring of the good is the sun).

**Scott Cowan** (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

“Christianity and the Failure of thought: Hegel’s Trinity and the Problem of Subjectivism”

The point of this presentation is to focus on a single issue within Hegel’s religio-theological thought: his conception and use of the Christian Trinity. Most historians and philosophers have tradition interpreted Hegel’s understanding of the Trinity as bearing

primarily, or even solely, on his thoughts about the philosophy of religion; moreover, that his philosophy of religion can be neatly separated from both his epistemological project and his understanding of subjectivity. In contrast, I argue that in order for Hegel to overcome the problems in post-Kantian philosophy—moving beyond subjectivism, gaining absolute knowledge, articulating the dynamic unity within the subject-object division—he found it necessary to utilize the logic of the Trinity in order to formulate his account of self-consciousness, the “I”. Yet, in order to do, Hegel had to critique classical Christian metaphysics, and purported to provide the thought of Christianity’s feeling. Thus, my aim is to demonstrate that (a) Hegel’s unorthodox religious positions involved a critique of traditional Christian metaphysics, and (b) that understanding this critique is central to understanding Hegel’s epistemology, his solution to subjectivism.

**MC Cunningham** (Belmont University)

“God is the Eternal, Not the Absolute as Subject”

In his commentary on the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Yirmiyahu Yovel calls this “the single most important sentence in the Preface:” “In my view ... everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as Subject.” In this essay, I plan to investigate why “God is the eternal” is insufficient for Hegel as the representation of Absolute as Subject by directly examining textual evidence from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (specifically paragraph twenty-three of the preface), and Yirmiyahu Yovel’s commentary on it. Since the *Phenomenology* can be rather dense and difficult to understand, it is in the best interest of those who read this essay (along with my own) to keep as narrow a focus as possible in interpreting the text; I will look only to paragraph twenty-three because it is virtually self-contained in discussing the issue of Absolute as Subject.

**Brandon Edwards-Schuth** (SDSU)

“You Kant Have Perpetual Peace and *Handelsgeist*: *Post-Modernism*”

In his *Perpetual Peace*, Immanuel Kant proposes what he thinks are the fundamentals for the world to attain a permanent peace. To achieve this, Kant focuses mainly on the political aspects, and only briefly discusses some aspects of the role of commerce. In this paper, I will recreate Kant’s economic argument

(restricted solely to Kant's *Perpetual Peace*) in order to show how it lacks full depth in its role towards peace, i.e. the socio-political and socio-economic aspects, as well as introduce secondary sources in order to justify my interpretation of Kant. I will then try to resolve some of the proposed issues through a Post-Modernist perspective, which will incorporate critiques of globalization and neoliberalism -- the future of the economics of Kant's time, as well as our current situation.

**David Hoff** (UC Berkeley)

"Jane Rubin and Hubert Dreyfus on Kierkegaard's Present Age"

This paper is an analysis of Søren Kierkegaard's writings, as interpreted by Jane Rubin and Hubert Dreyfus, on the problem of meaning in Western culture. In particular, I will focus on Rubin and Dreyfus's interpretation of Kierkegaard as claiming that a cultural attitude of detached reflection, in conjunction with the activities of the press (or media), has produced a culture of undifferentiated, risk-averse spectators who are unwilling to make involved commitments. For Kierkegaard, this detachment has undermined the possibility of a meaningful life. I will further consider what they see as Kierkegaard's proposed solution to this problem, which involves making an involved commitment to something specific in one's life. In bringing together Rubin and Dreyfus's interpretation of these themes in Kierkegaard's writing, and by considering them in light of examples from modern media, I hope to show the coherence of their interpretation and the plausibility and prescience of Kierkegaard's critique.

**Jaycob Izsó** (Portland State University)

"A Comparative Analysis of Simon Springer's Postneoliberalism and its Foucauldian Interpretations"  
With the publication of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France over the past decade, scholarship in Foucauldian governmentality has reemerged as a critical area of contemporary political and philosophical discourse. These lectures have had an even more pronounced effect in their treatment of neoliberalism and the development of postneoliberal research in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. One of the most versatile neoliberal scholars and postneoliberal critics to come about is Simon Springer, who recently has taken to offering dynamic accounts of neoliberalism and its potential ends. While

Springer's research is certainly novel and compelling it seems to fall short of a rigorous Foucauldian analysis of neoliberalism and its future.

**Michael Lasso** (University of South Florida)

"What the Nothing is Not: Heidegger's Holistic Philosophy"

In *What is Metaphysics?* Heidegger explores the criteria that constitute practicing metaphysics. He argues that metaphysical questions place the questioner in the question (Basic Writings p. 93), and, to prove this, he spends the bulk of his work discussing how "the nothing" does just that. For this essay, we will attempt to explain the nothing with "that which lacks context", and use this interpretation to expose some of the epistemological limitations Heidegger addresses with his holistic philosophy. This will be separated into two parts. In part one, we will focus on Heidegger's descriptions and his arguments regarding the nothing in *What is Metaphysics?* followed by an interpretation of beings as a whole as "that which lacks context". In part two, we will discuss how "that which lacks context" immediately complicates our understanding of the nothing, and propose another possible interpretation.

**Kevin Mager** (Eastern Michigan University)

"The Ethics of Self Realization: A Radical Subjectivism, Bounded by Realism"

This paper presents a phenomenological metaethic. It is a metaethic because it makes a statement about value judgments in general, and it is phenomenological because it states that all moral values are structures of consciousness, and commits human beings to being value creators, as Nietzsche suggests. Although it seems to some that if moral values are only structures of consciousness, then there would be a commitment to a type of relativism or subjectivism, I state that there is a universal value of self-realization that is necessarily created by all self-conscious beings, which makes this value universal. Using Hegel's understanding of self-consciousness as a model, I explore how values are created by individuals and groups and how the value of self-realization must arise in all moral frameworks.

**Ryan McCoy** (Belmont University)

“The End of Philosophy: Habermas’ Stand-in and Interpreter”

In his essay “Philosophy as Stand-in and Interpreter” from *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Jurgen Habermas proclaims the end of philosophy’s role, envisioned by philosophical master-thinkers like Kant and Hegel, as the “Guardian of Rationality.” Habermas contends that philosophy can no longer unify a reason divided into specialized science, ethics, and aesthetics. Because of this philosophy must drop its previous role of “usher and judge” to the more manageable role of “stand-in and interpreter.” In the following essay, I examine Habermas’ appropriations of philosophy and reason, and philosophy’s need to engage with other forms of knowing. Lastly, I conclude by arguing that Habermas’ view of philosophy as stand-in and interpreter implies the end of philosophy proper. Furthermore, the dissolution of philosophical reason points to the beginning of a task abandoned by Habermas and his contemporaries alike: thinking.

**Vasfi Onur Ozen** (University of Kansas)

“Genealogy as Counter Propaganda”

In this paper, I will try to examine the Nietzschean genealogy. The paper aims to arrive at a particular understanding of what the genealogy is (about) and what Nietzsche wants to achieve by it. My argument proceeds from a close analysis of a *Nachlass* fragment which gives us a brief characterization of genealogy. In Section 1, I will introduce the basic features of Nietzsche’s philosophical genealogy, and exploit the connections between the *Nachlass* fragment and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM). In Section 2, I will consider and take issue with Brian Leiter’s reading of genealogy as a kind of naturalistic method. Finally, in Section 3, I will propose to read Nietzsche’s philosophical genealogy as a kind of counterpropaganda device.

**John Paul** (DePaul University)

“Understanding Nietzsche’s Subject”

Nietzsche’s subject is often misrepresented as an atomistic inversion of the platonic subject. This I propose is a product of a half formed reading symptomatic of an incomplete exegesis. The appropriate exegesis, which is multifaceted in nature, I explicate through a metaphorical narrative of Nietzsche’s subversive method. It is through the

explication of this narrative that we come to understand why Nietzsche’s subject is not mere atomism, but a dynamic new paradigm by which we can come to understand the subject, well beyond the tired Platonism of traditional subjectivity. In framing my analysis I utilize Will McNeill’s essay *The Poverty of the Regent*.

**John Preston** (University of New Mexico)

“Indifferenz and the Binary Model of Modes of Being”

How does Heidegger believe we exist in everydayness? While *Being and Time* offers a insightful account of such existing, there are some points which, despite lots of hard work, remain obscure. While Heidegger’s account of authenticity and inauthenticity serve as the bulk of his discussion of everyday existence, he also occasionally mentions a third mode of being: *Indifferenz*. This third mode has been the cause of much confusion and debate among Heidegger scholars. In this paper I will present the most compelling accounts of *Indifferenz* by splitting them into two models: the *binary* model and the *tertiary* model. I will eventually show that the *binary* model, which argues that authenticity and inauthenticity serve as exhaustive modes of being offers a more accurate account. I will do this by showing that *Indifferenz* is not a concrete mode of existence but rather a formal term meant to launch Heidegger into the Analytic of Dasein without assuming a definite starting point.

**Benjamin Price** (Trinity College Dublin)

“Finding Value After Post-Modernism”

Contemporary aesthetic theory lives in the shadow of post-modernism. Despite their age, essays and books announcing the end of humanism still gather an immense number of citations in contemporary critical discourse. Like relativism in ethics, or skepticism in epistemology, it seems that modern critical theory is haunted by its own spectre – deconstruction. Yet, while the philosophy of late capitalism has announced the end of history and declared the vanity of human individualism, it is becoming clearer that it does not spell the end of culture. In the aesthetic of contemporary art in particular, there is the emergence of a new optimism; we are beginning to find, I argue, an interest in affirmation not subversion. With this shifting attitude comes a need to develop a new method of evaluation. In this paper, I have attempted to string together some common trends from recent literature that point towards a new critical mode

## 2015 Student Philosophy Conference

settled between the modernist fulfilment and post-modern emptiness. In doing so, I hope to have taken some tentative steps towards a new mode of aesthetic evaluation.

### **Casey Spinks** (Louisiana State University)

“The Riss of the Eucharist—On Heidegger’s Philosophical Relationship to Christian Experience”  
The purpose of this paper is to apply Heidegger’s notion of truth as it occurs in art (the structure of the *Riss*, as put forth in his *essay The Origin of the Work of Art*) to religious experience, specifically the Christian ritual of the Eucharist. This paper includes discussion of Heidegger’s uneasy philosophy of religion, as well as how we might still examine religion using Heideggerian phenomenology. First, I provide an analysis of Heidegger’s *Riss* as it traditionally occurs in art. Then, I relate this analysis to the abstract concept of religious experience. Finally, I use a specific religious experience, the Christian Eucharist, as an application for this analysis in order to provide a clearer, more concrete demonstration of how Heidegger’s aesthetic phenomenology applies to religious phenomenology.

### **Jonas Weaver** (Calvin College)

“Thoughts Towards an Immanent Science”  
In this paper I discuss Imre Lakatos’ model of scientific research programs and suggest that, though his is the best model of scientific progress to my mind, it still is centered on using science as a mediation between our knowledge and nature. Following a discussion of his model I discuss an essay by Isabelle Stengers and begin an attempt to synthesize Lakatos and Stengers to offer a more immanent and immediate understanding of science, a science that works *from* nature rather than to nature with a goal in mind.

### **Justin White** (UC Riverside)

“Autonomy and Authenticity: Why Did the Butler Do It?”

In this paper, I examine autonomy and authenticity as two ways our actions and our lives can (or can fail to) be our own. To examine the distinct aspects of human agency these concepts highlight, I draw from the reflections of Mr. Stevens, the butler-narrator of Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Remains of the Day*. I argue that living a life of one’s own involves (at least autonomy and authenticity) and in Mr. Stevens’ life, we see how these can come apart in potentially problematic ways. I argue that understanding what it means to live a life of one’s own requires both notions. With Mr. Stevens, a sort of hyper-autonomy seems to threaten his ability to live an authentic life. This suggests we can autonomously live lives that detract from our broader interests in and judgments about the good life, including our interest in living an authentic life.

### **Ken-Terika Zellner** (Northwestern University)

“(Un)Masking the Self in Nietzsche”

Nietzsche is opposed to anything resembling a hard, substantial subject. In its place, he posits a multiplicity of contrary drives or selves. According to Nietzsche, a ranking of those selves is necessary for the individual’s survival. Therefore, there is always a dominant drive or self that “rules over” the others. This ruler, however, constantly shift and changes. This paper proposes a mask-multiplicity model for Nietzsche’s thesis that the body is a site of multiple warring selves and/or drives--instead of the extension of a substance that is the self or soul, à la Descartes. On this model, the shifting “ruling” self functions like a mask the individual wears, while the multiplicity of selves is like a collection of masks. This paper also maintains the possibility for some sort of unified, consistent identity that constitutes the individual’s “true self” is not precluded by Nietzsche’s warring selves model.