

**Third Annual
Undergraduate Philosophy
Conference
at San Diego State University**

Feminist Philosophy

**Conrad Prebys Student Union Building, SDSU
Saturday & Sunday, 18-19 October 2014**

PROGRAM

Sponsored by the Institute for Ethics and Public Affairs, the Charles Wei-hsun Fu Foundation,
and the SDSU Philosophy Club

Undergraduate Schedule

Saturday

18 October 2014

- 01** 0800 / Metzli
The Pleasure of Pain: Why We Choose to Engage with Tragic Works of Fiction
Cheryl Frazier (Barry U)
Moderator: Geovanni Gomez
- 02** 0800 / Templo Mayor
Teresa de Avila's Introvertive Mystical Union With God
Garry Soronio (UCLA)
Moderator: Zack Stout
- 03** 0900 / Metzli
Phenomenal Empathic Touch: An Alternative to the Primacy of Rationalist Sight
Betty Stoneman (Utah Valley U)
Moderator: Karina Espino
- 04** 0900 / Templo Mayor
On Perception and Autonomy Considered through the Phenomenological Understanding of Emotion Described in Kym Maclaren's "Emotional Metamorphoses: The Role of Others in Becoming a Subject"
Erika Grimm (CSU Fullerton)
Moderator: Matthew Williams
- 05** 1000 / Metzli
A Verdict Approach to Environmental Injustice: An Exploration Into the Nature of the Ganga and Interconnected Consciousness
Carly Corritore (U San Francisco)
Moderator: Ian Byrd
- 06** 1000 / Templo Mayor
Detecting Sexism in Spinoza's State
Courtney White (SDSU)
Moderator: Sayid Bnefsi
- 07** 1100 / Metzli
Gender Trouble, Butler's Theory of Subversion, and its Lacanian Silences
Ian Byrd (Grinnell College)
Moderator: S. Pamela Quintana
- 08** 1100 / Templo Mayor
A Pragmatist Response to the Scarcity of Latina Voices in Philosophy: One Idea for Cultivating Greater Diversity
Margaret Newton (U Texas Pan-American)
Moderator: Sayid Bnefsi
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- KEYNOTE ADDRESS**
Undergraduate Conference
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- 09** 1200 / Theatre
Feminism, Ethics and the Underrepresentation of Women in Philosophy
Alice Crary (The New School, NY)
-
- 10** 1400 / Metzli
The Formation of the Subject and the Politics of Discomfort
S. Pamela Quintana (De Paul U)
Moderator: Betty Stoneman
- 11** 1400 / Templo Mayor
Internal Justification for Individual and Communal Beliefs: Applied to Women's Suffrage in Switzerland
Karina Espino (Syracuse U)
Moderator: Courtney White

- 12** 1500 / Metzli
Personal Problems with Simplicity? Simply Look to Stump
 James Johnson (UCLA)
 Moderator: Colten Steele

- 13** 1500 / Templo Mayor
Exploring Virtue Ethics: Crossing Hume's Gap
 Zack Stout (Reed College)
 Moderator: Camille Charette

- 14** 1600 / Metzli
Rational Or Embodied? A Critical Comparison of Rawls' and Kittay's Theories of Justice
 Matthew Williams (U Hawaii)
 Moderator: Margaret Newton

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
SoCal Conference

- 15** 1700 / Theatre
Selfhood as Self-Representation
 Kenneth Taylor (Stanford)
-

Sunday

19 October 2014

- 16** 0900 / Metzli
Sexual Self-Objectification
 Sayid Bnefsi (Berea College)
 Moderator: Cristina Checa

- 17** 1000 / Metzli
Finding friends in Western Places: Ecofeminism Sizes Up Spinoza
 Colten Steele (U Hawaii)
 Moderator: Erika Grimm

- 18** 1000 / Templo Mayor
Critical Negotiation and the Hermeneutics of Feminist Labor Politics
 Camille Charette (UC Santa Cruz)
 Moderator: Carly Corritore

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
Graduate Conference

- 19** 1100 / Theatre
Testing Theories of Reference
 Michael Devitt (CUNY)
-

- 20** 1300 / Metzli
Gender, Legibility, and Resistance
 Geovanni Gomez (Grinnell College)
 Moderator: James Johnson

- 21** 1300 / Templo Mayor
Sustainable and Ethical Development Mechanism Through the Capabilities Approach
 Cristina Checa (Occidental College)
 Moderator: Gary Soronio

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
SoCal Conference

- 22** 1500 / Theatre
Libertarianism and the Problem of Metaphysical Flipflopping
 John Fischer (UC Riverside)
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Undergraduate Abstracts

01 Cheryl Frazier (Barry U)

The Pleasure of Pain: Why We Choose to Engage with Tragic Works of Fiction

For years, philosophers have attempted to explain why we consume works of fiction, especially those which elicit extremely negative emotions. Why is it that we actively seek out movies, books, paintings, and music that bring us to tears? What about the agony of the Titanic makes the film worth visiting, especially when we otherwise shy from similar scenarios? In her essay, "A Strange Kind of Sadness," Marcia Eaton attempts to explain this phenomena, arguing that we engage with tragic works because of the control we have over them. In this paper I will argue that her solution is inadequate, instead claiming that our attraction to these works stems from a desire for a safe, detached experience which results in emotional catharsis. I will also argue that these works provide the opportunity to further connections in the global community, as they allow for exposure to new experiences and ways of life.

02 Garry Soronio (UCLA)

Teresa de Avila on Introvertive Mystical Union With God

The paper will explain that for Teresa de Ávila, mystical experience contains three major elements. A Teresian Mystical Experience (TME) is (1) an experience of union with God (2) which occurs in the interior of the soul, and (3) in which the subject has intuitive cognition of the divine union. In clarifying (1), I will discuss the nature of union with God, and that this is different only from the Beatific Vision by degree. Then I will contrast the features of TME from other mystical experiences: theistic, introvertive, apophatic, kataphatic, and constructivist. Then I will present a contemporary challenge from perennialist Walter Stace, and provide responses from doxastic approach and perceptual argument, origin of mystical signal graces, and the nature of human experience to salvage TME. Afterwards, I will elaborate (2), and explain how TME can bring self-integration. Finally I will discuss (3) that cognition is intuitive.

03 Betty Stoneman (Utah Valley U)

Phenomenal Empathic Touch: An Alternative to the Primacy of Rationalist Sight

For this paper, I investigate the sensory aspects of the oppositional dichotomy of "man" versus "woman." I add to the traditional discussion regarding this dichotomy by demonstrating how, ideologically and linguistically, sight has been given primacy over touch. I argue the primacy of sight has contributed to the objectification of woman and non-humans and to a lack of empathy for others. The primacy of sight contributes to objectification and lack of empathy due to its propensity to differentiate, individuate, separate and fragment phenomenal experiences of the subject and (or from) others. I conclude by offering the concept of phenomenal empathic touch as a balanced alternative to the primacy of rationalist sight.

04 Erika Grimm (CSU Fullerton)

On Perception and Autonomy Considered through the Phenomenological Understanding of Emotion Described in Kym Maclaren's "Emotional Metamorphoses: The Role of Others in Becoming a Subject"

Female philosopher Kym Maclaren, in her article, "Emotional Metamorphoses: The Role of Others in Becoming a Subject," explores a phenomenological view on emotion as being-in-the-world as well as the ethical implications of understanding emotion in opposition to the moralistic view. In the first part of this paper, I provide an exegetical assessment of Maclaren's thesis; in the second I introduce a critique of Maclaren's argument and argue a claim of my own which explores perception and autonomy in the human body along with its implications in the context of Maclaren's phenomenological account of emotion. I discuss the necessity of both emotion and reason in morality and argue that the traditional definition of autonomy is not plausible when considered through Maclaren's phenomenological view of emotion, and work to creatively explore a new definition of autonomy that does cohere with this view.

05 Carly Corritore (U San Francisco)

A Verdict Approach to Environmental Injustice: An Exploration Into the Nature of the Ganga and Interconnected Consciousness

Nature has traditionally been a vital complement of human life in Indian tradition. The sacred river Ganges holds deep spiritual and mythological symbolism and has earned the reverence and worship of Indians for centuries. Now there is a mentality developing in India in which new hierarchies of values are being created and traditional teachings and core ethics are compromised. The current scenario in India speaks of a disconnection from ancient intrinsic values of the interconnected roles of humans and nature. By using the Ganges as a case study this study will explore the shift and renewal of the spiritual essence of the interconnection. In an attempt to understand the shift of values, this study will examine the human-nature relationship given in Vedic philosophy and core values and ethics existing in this interconnectedness. The study will investigate how and why the relationship between human beings and nature has changed, what ethics and values have been undermined, and how the ethics necessary for coexistence can be rediscovered and renewed today.

06 Courtney White (SDSU)

Detecting Sexism in Spinoza's State

07 Ian Byrd (Grinnell College)

Gender Trouble, Butler's Theory of Subversion, and its Lacanian Silences

Since its publication in 1990, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* has become the foundational reference point for understandings of psychoanalysis within feminist and queer theory. Yet, despite Butler's use of Lacanian terminology, Butler's theory of gender performativity is not overtly Lacanian. Drawing from Tim Dean and Lee Edelman's queer interventions into Lacanian theory, I show the way in which an appreciation of the alterity of the unconscious and Lacan's notion of the Real hold great value for feminist theory. Although Butler admittedly expresses no desire to offer a theory of subversion that goes beyond the immanent critique of identity politics, Dean and Edelman's accounts allow for a theory of subversion that goes beyond the proliferation of imaginary identifications.

08 Margaret Newton (U Texas Pan-American)

A Pragmatist Response to the Scarcity of Latina Voices in Philosophy: One Idea for Cultivating Greater Diversity

In this essay, I expand upon a particular interpretation of John Dewey's notion of metaphysics, in order to examine how Dewey's work can help cultivate greater diversity in philosophy. Dewey argues the role of the philosopher is to examine how everyday people perceive the world, in order to evaluate the unquestioned, and problem causing, beliefs underlying culture. In a concrete application of his work, I show how our everyday understanding of language creates problems for those who actively mix languages. After outlining what I argue to be the widely held belief that makes mixing languages problematic, I critique this belief and propose that some people's inclination to mix languages is practically and philosophically useful. Ultimately, working to legitimize the mixing of languages has the potential for broadening the scope of voices philosophy currently has access to.

09 Alice Crary (New School, NYC)

Keynote Address for SDSU Undergraduate Feminist Conference

Feminism, Ethics and the Underrepresentation of Women in Philosophy

This talk is about demands of feminist thought, and it is also about the notable underrepresentation of women in philosophy. I start by arguing that two prominent strands of feminist theorizing – strands associated, respectively, with poststructuralist thought and analytic moral philosophy – deprive us of resources for doing justice to feminist thinking insofar as it places certain demands on the imagination. I then claim that one place to find resources for a more satisfactory conception of feminist thinking is in Wittgenstein's and Austin's observations about the workings of language. My goal in turning to the writings of these figures is to show that their work equips us to arrive at an understanding of feminist thought that sheds helpful light on feminist praxis. One of my specific ambitions is to show that this new understanding equips us to take a step toward accounting for the underrepresentation of women in philosophy.

10 S. Pamela Quintana (De Paul U)

The Formation of the Subject and the Politics of Discomfort

In the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, *A Thousand Plateaus (ATP)*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue for their concept of becomings. This concept comes out of philosophies of immanence. These orientations are meant to work against notions of transcendentalism. The problem with transcendentalism, for Deleuze and Guattari is its rigid, pregiven notions of the self and morality. This creates taxonomic categories. Deleuze and Guattari argue that taxonomic categorizations provide an inadequate way to characterize because they do not differentiate enough, they cannot capture the subtle differences of an haecceity. This leads to different forms or marginalization and oppression. By applying an immanentist orientation to the self, we can move away from such fettered states. In this essay, I acknowledge the usefulness of Deleuze and Guattari's approach and analyze a problematic aspect of their concept of becoming. In addition, I offer a solution and a more productive way of becoming, which emphasizes the creative aspect of immanence and stresses recognizing one positionality. This concept is influenced by the politics of discomfort found in works of Gloria Anzaldúa and Sara Ahmed.

11 Karina Espino (Syracuse)

Internal Justification for Individual and Communal Beliefs: Applied to Women's Suffrage in Switzerland

Upon initially thinking about beliefs, I thought of my personal beliefs as having the potential to be solely possessed by me. Then I considered other people and wondered if their beliefs were the same as mine; which lead me to wonder whether a communal belief, or one that multiple individuals share, was possible. These considerations developed while leading towards an answer to the following: can an individual believer's belief be internally justified by a communal belief? The inquiry will be divided into the following sections: (1) Relevant Definitions; (2) How can an Individual Belief be Internally Justified?; (3) Can an Individual Believer's Belief be Internally Justified by a Communal Belief?; and (4) In Practice: Example Demonstrating Results.

12 James Johnson (UCLA)

Personal Problems with Simplicity? Simply Look to Stump

This paper attempts to look to the work of the reputable philosopher of religion, Eleonore Stump. Her work has contributed greatly to debate over the problem of evil, God's relationship to time, philosophical theories of love, and much more. This paper discusses Stump's approach to the doctrine of divine simplicity which says, among other things, that God has no parts. Prima facie this doctrine appears incoherent for reasons Alvin Plantinga has famously raised; namely, it appears to entail that a property can be a person. Informed by Stump, I begin by detailing the claims of divine simplicity. I, then, provide the motivation for the view's tenability. From here I sketch Plantinga's argument against divine simplicity with an eye toward putting forth a Stumpian response that meets his challenge. I claim that Stump has the resources to absolve the doctrine from Plantinga's critique based primarily on her commitment to the unknowability of God's quid est.

13 Zack Stout (Reed College)

Exploring Virtue Ethics: Crossing Hume's Gap

The ethical non-cognitivist (or the Humean) asserts that our moral claims are not about reality, in the sense that they are neither true nor false. Through an examination of the views of the Elizabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot, I develop on the virtue theorist's behalf an error theory for the Humean view of morality. Hume claimed to see a gap between fact and value, or between "is" and "ought" claims, but what he really noticed is better expressed as a gap between two kinds of moral claims, those grounded in facts that are sensitive to changes in the way we describe the case, and those grounded in facts about human nature which are not sensitive in this way. The virtue theorist can accommodate this distinction by insisting on the primacy of naturally-grounded claims without banishing other moral claims entirely. Seeing this lets us pick out the principal advantage of the virtue ethics view, that it offers us more specific descriptors than its competitors.

14 Matthew Williams (U Hawaii-Manoa)

Rational or Embodied? A Critical Comparison of Rawls' and Kittay's Theories of Justice

Justice by its very definition is a societal notion, the aim of which is to give equal and fair representation to all people. Justice is supposed to hold us all to the same level playing field—no one man or woman different from any other. However, it is precisely this idealization of equality as non-difference that does injustice to all whom fall under its unseeing gaze. In this paper I seek to examine, through critical comparison, both how Rawl's theory of justice leads towards this idealization of equality and how Eva Kittay's doulia-based justice resolves some of these issues by centering itself on inherently unequal dependency relations. Finally, I will argue that, while a better model than the Rawlsian theory of justice, a doulia-based justice has its own problems that are revealed by an analysis of the nature of disability.

15 Kenneth Taylor (Stanford)

Keynote Address for SoCal Conference

Selfhood as Self-Representation

Abstract

16 Sayid Bnefsi (Berea College)

Sexual Self-Objectification

In feminist work, the ethical status of sex and sexual objectification is not unanimous. Some argue that sex and sexual objectification perpetuate gender inequality. On the contrary, some feminists have illuminated that sexual objectification is not necessarily a necessary condition of gender inequality, and that ethical nature of sexual objectification is more contextually and circumstantially sensitive than previously assumed.

Despite this image of disagreement, each view sketches an extent to which sex and sexual objectification engender people to internalize objectification and include it in their conception of the sexually gratifying life, which may or may not be contributing to an oppressive (sexist) environment. As for the argument of this paper, sexual self-objectification is benign when it takes place in sexually gratifying contexts that respect the fictitious

conditions of one's own sexual preferences. To that end, conceptions of sex and sexual objectification in feminist research are reviewed and narrowed, and what distinctions are found there are then connected to my conclusion regarding the ethical status of sexual self-objectification.

17 Colten Steele (U Hawaii)

Finding Friends in Western Places: Ecofeminism Sizes Up Spinoza

In this paper, I argue that the Western philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, does not posit a philosophical system that employs a "logic of domination" as laid out by Karen J. Warren in her 1990 article entitled "The Power and Promise of Ecological Feminism." I do not seek to concretely prove that Spinoza passes her test, as that analysis requires more than the brevity of this paper can offer, but I show how, according to Warren's own framework for evaluating philosophical systems, there is strong evidence to suggest that Spinoza will pass such a test. Furthermore, at the end of the paper, I suggest that not only will Spinoza pass this test but also that ecofeminism would benefit by befriending his philosophy. At first glance, as a Western philosopher and a proponent of reason, which are two big red flags for any feminist, Spinoza may be seen as a philosopher that ecofeminism should oppose or critique. This paper seeks to show how the opposite of this is in fact the case.

18 Camille Charette (UC Santa Cruz)

Critical Negotiation and the Hermeneutics of Feminist Labor Politics

The interaction between race, gender, and labor is highly politicized and controversial. The ideal democracy in which all individuals possess an equal degree of autonomy and freedom to determine their socioeconomic position does not exist, and neoliberal programs promoting this vision of U.S. society conceal the social and legal inequalities that disproportionately affect women of color. The growing gap in material resources and power is predicated upon the assumption that an overly determining Euro-American, heteronormative viewpoint speaks to a 'common' experience of all people. Situating my discussion of this totalizing political ontology within the context of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling on organized labor in *Harris v Quinn*, I intend to demonstrate why a hermeneutics of the politics of

labor, and more generally, why the critical methodology of feminist philosophy constitute prerequisites of egalitarian social policy and attitudes that promote liberty in a political and material sense.

19 Michael Devitt (CUNY)

Keynote Address for SDSU Weber Conference

Testing Theories of Reference

How should we test theories of reference? The accepted practice is to test them against the referential intuitions of philosophers. Machery *et al* (2004) wonder why it is appropriate to rely on the intuitions of philosophers rather than those of the folk. I wonder why it is appropriate to rely on referential intuitions at all. We should not go along with the common philosophical view that these intuitions are a priori. Philosophers might follow linguists in thinking that linguistic intuitions are “the voice” of our linguistic competence. But this view is false. Rather than relying solely on the indirect evidence of intuitions, theories of reference need direct evidence from linguistic usage. The talk briefly considers the problems of doing this.

20 Christina Checa (Occidental College)

Sustainable and Ethical Development Mechanism Through the Capabilities Approach

The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), part of the Kyoto Protocol, is a market-based scheme in which developing countries host sustainable projects that reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG's) to generate Certified Emission Reduction units (CER's). These CER's are bought by industrialized nations in order to offset their total GHG's and meet their Kyoto caps. The CDM is meant to include developing nations in the global carbon abatement project in a non-exploitative way, by financially incentivizing sustainable development. However, the CDM has only very minimal criteria for whether a project is 'sustainable,' namely it reduces GHG emissions. Failure to give a robust account of sustainable development leaves developing nations open to the same kind of exploitation the CDM was designed to avoid. I develop a capabilities account of sustainability rooted in Martha Nussbaum's conception of essential capabilities and argue that the CDM should adopt it to address this problem.

21 Geovanni Gomez (Grinnell College)

Gender, Legibility, and Resistance

In this paper, I discuss the ontological significance of gender according to Judith Butler's work *Gender Trouble* and Felix Guttari's work in *Soft Subversions*. Legibility within the discursive system of gender, as Butler describes it, is determined by hegemonic norms, a legibility mistaken as corporeality. On the other hand, illegibility provides a site for disruption and resistance, but Butler forecloses any possibility for this illegibility by adhering to a strict description of the discursive regime of gender norms. Extending beyond Butler's crucial contribution to gender women's/queer/ studies, Felix Guttari's concept of “becoming woman” allows for a subversive notion of subjectivity that rejects Butler's rigid description in doing so capitalizes on “illegibility” as a form of resistance.

22 John Martin Fischer (UC Riverside)

Keynote Address for SoCal Conference

Libertarianism and the Problem of Metaphysical Flipflopping

I argue that libertarianism faces a daunting problem of metaphysical flipflopping, according to which one gives up a basic metaphysical principle on the basis of unrelated empirical data. Given the unacceptability of metaphysical flipflopping, libertarianism renders our moral responsibility unacceptably fragile (our personhood would “hang on a thread”).
