

Western Canadian Philosophy Conference
March 30th, 2019
Campus View Room, Cadboro Commons, UVic

Schedule:

10:30 am: Bianca Verjee (SFU)

“A Defence of Defeating the Closure-based Radical Skeptical Argument with the Sensitivity Principle”

According to the closure-based radical skeptical argument, it is impossible for us to have knowledge of the majority of everyday propositions because we can't have knowledge of the denials of the skeptical hypotheses they entail. Duncan Pritchard describes a response to this argument which uses the sensitivity principle to deny the closure principle, thereby defeating the radical skeptic's argument. Despite Pritchard's concerns with this solution, denying the closure principle using the sensitivity principle is a plausible method of defeating the skeptic. First, I will argue that the reason the closure principle seems so intuitively plausible (despite being false) is that we tend to consider obvious entailments, rather than skeptical hypotheses, when considering the closure principle. Unlike the skeptical hypotheses, we can know the denial of the obvious entailments because those beliefs are sensitive. Second, I will explain why not allowing for inductive knowledge is no reason to reject the sensitivity principle, as true belief gained by induction can be considered rational belief, rather than knowledge. Finally, I will argue that the sensitivity principle can, indeed, provide the necessary counterexamples to the closure principle— something Pritchard denies because he thinks the sensitivity principle demands an evaluation process that cannot be applied when considering skeptical scenarios. This paper will show that Pritchard's concerns are not sufficient reason to reject the sensitivity principle as a solution to closure-based radical skepticism.

11:15 am: Danat Kukolj (UVic)

“Anger in Actualizing Accusations: A Role for Anger in Countering Recognition-based Injustices”

I argue that expressions of anger are usually and can be the only fitting way to deal with systematic recognition-based injustices. I will argue this point principally by appealing to examples taken from First Nations' movements in Canada. Firstly, I will deal with what effective responses to recognition-based injustices would require. I will identify three requirements: that it handle the functional inability of our institutions to recognize more freedom for the marginalized social group, that it handle how the general public's perception is governed by misrepresented categories of identification of the social group, and that it address the inherently urgent nature of issues of redress of injustices. Second, I will show that these requirements are best met by expressions of anger. These will be analyzed fundamentally as expressions of urgency and of the presence of epistemic barriers on the side of the listener that keep the listener from making sense of what the speaker is trying to communicate.

12:00 pm: Eddie Cai (Carleton)

“Deflating Meta-ethical Explanation: Considerations from Minimalist Foundations”

This paper concerns Crispin Wright’s theory of minimalism about truth and its relation to certain moral realist arguments in meta-ethics that concern the indispensability of reference to moral or normative facts or properties as evidence for the existence of those facts or properties. I argue that accepting minimalism allows for these indispensability-considerations to be consistent with deflationary interpretations of their consequences. Meta-ethical realists will want to reject this minimalist framework; though I suggest that doing so comes with a set of meta-philosophical challenges for realists to face. First, I will lay down the foundations of minimalism and construe the moral realist/anti-realist debate from the minimalist reference point. Next, I discuss what Neil Sinclair has called “explanationist strategies” and their relation to general indispensability arguments and also companions-in-guilt strategies in meta-ethics. I will then develop the minimalist theory of reference and emphasize its deflationary implications for indispensability arguments. Finally I will turn to general meta-philosophical consequences of rejecting minimalism.

1:00 pm: Adham El Shazly (Carleton)

“Practical Identities and Normative Reasons”

It is an inescapable feature of our lives that we need to make choices, evaluate situations, and act in certain ways. That is, our lives are densely normative from cradle to grave. Within this normative terrain, we are perpetually faced with normative problems. Faced with these, we ask two important questions: ‘what reasons do I have for acting?’; and ‘are these reasons justifiable reasons for acting in this way?’ The first of these questions is concerned with the sources of normative practical reasons; that is, what generates practical normative reasons for action (I will call this the ‘source question’). In contrast, the second question is concerned with what makes reasons for actions normative reasons proper; that is, reasons that justify actions such as to make them right or good and consequently have genuine (normative) force over the agent (I will call this the ‘normative question’). I will discuss one approach to answering these questions, put forward by Christine Korsgaard, which introduces the concept of practical identities. While I ultimately reject Korsgaard’s account, I will argue that practical identities do have a leading role to play in answering the meta-ethical questions raised above.

2:00 pm: Dr. Shen-Yi Liao (Puget Sound)

“Oppressive Things”

Minds can be biased. Practices can be biased. Things can be biased too. Oppressive things are parts of the physical world that are biased in congruence with systems of oppression—such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism. Oppressive things structure and normalize patterns of associations, imaginings, and behaviors. And oppressive things sustain and reinforce problematic epistemological, moral, and aesthetic norms.