



MA Student Conference

Spring 2015

Program with abstracts

Tuesday, May 26, Building 1455, room 127:

9:15-9:20 Welcome

9:20-9:50 TOR BRANDT

Scary Ghosts

9:55-10:25 Victoria Barnas

How are actions to be explained?

Coffee Break

10:45-11:15 Jorn Janssen

The Hermeneutic Method

11:20-11:50 Dunja Begovic

Global health responsibilities

Lunch

12:45-13:15 Sebastian Plauborg Larsen

The Compatibilist Road to Doxastic Voluntarism

13:20-13:50 Andreas Birch Olsen

The nature of disagreement

14:00-14:30 Martin Clement Bentdsen

What justifies self-defensive war?

Coffee Break

14:50-15:20 Anne-Cathrine Wackerhausen

What is Dehumanization?

15:30-16:00 Radivoj Stupar

Logical omniscience and vagueness

Wednesday, May 27, Building 1455, room 127:

9:15-9:45 Thomas Skovmand

The Experience of Truth in Art

9:55-10:25 Henrik Simoni

History and the Other Side of Understanding

Coffee Break

10:45-11:15 Jon Birkir Bergthorsson

Dirty Hands in warfare – can some lines never be crossed?

11:20-11:50 Lasse Jensen

Relational Identities

12:00-12:30 Morten Rødgaard-Hansen

Can a DREAM become true?

Lunch

13:15-13:45 Anne Engedal

Laughing at the edge of Reason – on the truth experience of laughter

13:50-14:20 Alexander Heape

What is Physical Gunk?

14:30-15:00 Martin R. R. Pedersen

Aiding the worse off - How much do we 'owe' the poor?

Coffee Break

15:20-16:35 Keynote

Rasmus Grønfeldt Winther, Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of California, Santa Cruz

When Maps Become the World

Abstracts

Keynote

Rasmus Grønfeldt Winther

Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of California, Santa Cruz

When Maps Become the World

A street map guides you in your wanderings, but it also raises a series of questions. Who designed, produced, and paid for it? According to which techniques, conventions, and assumptions? In my forthcoming book, *When Maps Become the World*, I explore the map analogy: *scientific theory is a map of the world*. This pervasive analogy turns our attention to similarities between maps and scientific theories: both guide intelligent action and belief; both emerge out of representational practices involving abstraction and partitioning; and neither can fully capture the world it simultaneously mirrors and constructs. Imagining scientific theory as mapping permits us to develop tools such as “assumption archaeology” and “integration platforms” that help us overcome entrenched dichotomies: subjectivity vs. objectivity, technology vs. science, constructivism vs. realism, culture vs. nature, synthetic vs. analytic, and art vs. science. These tools also allow us to eschew the “pernicious reification” of single, unjustifiably powerful cartographic (e.g., Mercator’s projection) or scientific (e.g., Selfish Gene Theory) abstractions that are universalized (such that all phenomena are encompassed), narrowed (such that internal theoretical heterogeneity is diminished), and ontologized (such that abstraction and world are conflated). More mundanely, literal maps of the very small and the very large, via the middle scale, are ubiquitous across the sciences, from genetics to astrophysics, from psychology to economics. By turning to maps and to the cartography of science in a sustained manner, our image of science can be redrawn as a human practice that is humble, always situated, and ever-growing.

VICTORIA BARNAS (Track A)

How are actions to be explained?

Throughout philosophy and parts of neuroscience, it is often taken for granted what an action is. We often debate what the consequences of an action are, but rarely focus on what constitutes as an action. Using the illustrious debate between Davidson and Frankfurt as a foundation, this presentation will evaluate the key concerns that are raised about what makes ‘signaling for a bus by raising your hand’ an action. I shall conclude that against the many accounts to the contrary, we are unable to define an action without using a causal account.

DUNJA BEGOVIC (Track C)

Global health responsibilities

Vast health inequalities among the world's population, like other global injustices, bring us to the issue of assigning responsibility: something must be done, but how do we determine who ought to do it? In this presentation I will discuss some proposed models for understanding global health responsibilities. Specifically, I will try to investigate whether models that rely on causal contribution are more useful than so-called social connection models that emphasize global interdependence, and I will discuss which kind of approach(es) could be considered most promising for the case of global health.

MARTIN CLEMENT BENTDSEN (Track C)

What justifies self-defensive war?

Two classical positions, individualist and collectivist, have two very different answers. In this presentation I will look into these, and ask whether or not they will be sufficient today, together or separate, to make self-defensive war justified or right. I will conclude that they are not, especially because our societies have changed radically since the classical positions were developed. Finally, I will give a cautious proposal of how to think about collective self-defense onwards.

JON BIRKIR BERGTHORSSON (Track C)

Dirty Hands in warfare – can some lines never be crossed?

History is filled with examples of difficult decisions that had to be made during wartime. Sometimes, civilian casualties and severe property damages are the consequences of such decisions. Does the end always justify the means? Or are there some lines which can never be crossed?

In this talk, I will examine some of the many difficult ethical dilemmas that can present themselves during wartime. I do so with two different perspectives; absolutism and consequentialism.

TOR BRANDT (Track A)

Scary Ghosts

A zombie is a physical duplicate of a human, but lacking phenomenal consciousness. The possibility of zombies is held by David Chalmers to counter physicalism. According to Philip Goff however the zombie argument leaves out a certain kind of physicalism, funny physicalism, which is why Goff in his paper "Ghosts and Sparse Properties" presents his notion of ghosts. A ghost is a duplicate of a human in terms of phenomenal consciousness, but lacking all physical properties. Goff argues that the possibility of ghosts counters all kinds of physicalism, including the funny one. I will give a presentation of his argument, and have a brief look at some possible challenges and objections.

ANNE ENGEDAL (Track B)

Laughing at the edge of Reason – on the truth experience of laughter

The importance of laughter in our daily lives seems to be growing. In a poll from 2010 80 % of Americans between 18 and 49 said they use comedy shows like ‘The Daily Show’ as a news source. Only 67 % of the group said the same of the New York Times, the highest scoring traditional media representative. Far from being limited to mere entertainment, laughter has made its way into traditionally serious arenas. But what does it say about us, as human beings, that we are so apt to laugh? And can a silly phenomenon such as laughing really teach us something true about the world? Following Joachim Ritter, I will make a case for both the philosophical anthropological and ontological significance of laughter

ALEXANDER HEAPE (Track A)

What is Physical Gunk?

Intuitively, it seems possible that everything could be infinitely divisible. But what would it mean for physical objects, as opposed to, say, numbers and lengths of time, to have this feature? This talk is an answer to that question. Infinitely divisible objects are compatible with many of our spatial intuitions, and even theoretical physics. Unfortunately, not at the same time. I will also argue why this is less of a problem than it seems.

JORN JANSSEN (Track B)

The Hermeneutic Method

Hans-George Gadamer claimed that the scientific method is not suitable for social sciences, since human beings aren't driven by laws in the same way as the natural world. Rather, we should adopt a hermeneutic approach towards the humanities. But is the scientific method really that rigid and systematic? Gadamer's contemporary Paul Feyerabend claimed that a scientific method never existed at all, but that 'anything goes'. Science has advanced in a hermeneutic way all along. From that perspective, the scientific method is not a bad approach to the humanities at all.

LASSE JENSEN (Track C)

Relational Identities

This presentation will examine how to strengthen the idea of stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory tries to give local people a say in decisions that big corporations make that affect their environment or communities. In order to secure those rights, the concept of ‘Relational Identities’ is brought into view. It focuses on the identity-creating bond between people and their surroundings, and it is argued that this identity cannot be completely ignored, despite opposing demands for economic gain.

SEBASTIAN PLAUBORG LARSEN (Track A)

The Compatibilist Road to Doxastic Voluntarism

Doxastic voluntarism claims that we have freedom in forming and regulating our beliefs. This position has been under considerable fire: It has been argued that one cannot choose to believe something because it would make one happy, or because of a large bribe. In this presentation, I go over some of the motivations and challenges the doxastic voluntarist faces, and argue that a defender of compatibilism should in fact look favourably on doxastic voluntarism.

ANDREAS BIRCH OLSEN (Track A)

The nature of disagreement

What should we do when we encounter disagreement? Should we doubt our own belief or the belief of our opponent? Following David Christensen, I propose that disagreement points to the fact that we might be mistaken. Accordingly, we ought to lower our confidence in our initial belief when facing disagreement. I suggest that this approach elucidates features of dispute-relevant information, reliability of methods and public controversies.

MARTIN R. R. PEDERSEN (Track C)

Aiding the worse off - How much do we 'owe' the poor?

What do we owe the poor? Do we have a positive duty to better their situation or do we in fact have a negative duty to refrain from some of our activities that may lead to the situation the poor find themselves in? Should we compensate the poor for the effect of these activities? In this talk I will be looking at these questions from a very specific argument by Thomas Pogge which holds that societies that are well off impose 'supranational' institutions on societies that are not. One implication of this, on his account, is that citizens of well off societies are complicit in creating these supranational institutions. This complicity then implicates citizens of well off societies in human rights violations. If this argument is sound, we would have a negative duty.

MORTEN RØDGAARD-HANSEN (Track D)

Can a DREAM become true?

Neoclassical economics has been widely criticized for misrepresenting the economy. However, if Michel Callon is right about *the performativity of economics* the critique misses its mark. It buys into the premise that economics is supposed to describe the economy. The presentation will elaborate on this discussion using a concrete example – the neoclassical model DREAM (Danish Rational Economic Agent Model) used in the Ministry of Finance.

HENRIK SIMONI (Track B)

History and the Other Side of Understanding

In his book *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer tries to understand the phenomenon of understanding and its historicity, both as our historical situation and our ability to understand historical texts. I will try to show how Gadamer overlooks the non-meaning behind every understood meaning, which is an important aspect of our historicity. With Maurice Blanchot and Georges Bataille I will try to show how literature can be a way of giving voice to this non-meaning.

THOMAS SKOVMAND (Track B)

The Experience of Truth in Art

Contemporary aesthetics has to a great extent left behind the idea of art having any philosophical relevance on its own. By looking at the structure of artworks, Gadamer and Adorno have both tried to show that art has a relation to truth. I will look into and discuss what they mean by truth in relation to art and thereby try to suggest that art still might have philosophical relevance on its own.

RADIVOJ STUPAR (Track A)

Logical omniscience and vagueness

In a standard epistemic logic, it is said that an agent knows some proposition p iff p is true at all possible worlds that are compatible with what the agent knows. This analysis of knowledge suffers from the problem of logical omniscience. Since all worlds that are compatible with what an agent knows are possible worlds, it follows that any logical consequence of the agent's knowledge is true at all those worlds. As such, the agent knows all logical consequences of what she knows (including all logical truths). A standard move to get out of this problem is to introduce impossible worlds into the analysis. If we have an impossible world at which " $A \vee \neg A$ " is not true, then an agent doesn't know " $A \vee \neg A$ " anymore, because there is at least one world at which " $A \vee \neg A$ " is not true. I discuss a solution of this sort proposed by Mark Jago, which relies on the notion of vagueness.

ANNE-CATHRINE WACKERHAUSEN (Track D)

What is Dehumanization?

The term dehumanization is used within many differing contexts: We talk of dehumanization in relation to genocides and war, but also in contexts of technological systems, bureaucracy, professions, and relationships like the doctor-patient relation. But what is dehumanization actually? This presentation will attempt to deliver a preliminary ordering of the dehumanization-landscape by clarifying the intension and the extension of dehumanization - by clarifying what is and what is not dehumanization.