



PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM SERIES

FALL 2024

1. Thursday, September 5, 2024, 7:00pm, Barrick Museum Auditorium [\[Note the day, time, and place\]](#)

“What are Latin[a/o/x/e]s Anyway?” [\[University Forum Lecture\]](#)

Manuel Vargas, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

A variety of philosophers and social theorists have thought that Latinxs don’t fit the usual identity categories in the United States. The category doesn’t seem like a racial category, because its members can be members of any racial group. It also doesn’t seem especially promising as an ethnic category, because it is unclear that there is sufficient cultural overlap amongst its members to constitute an ethnic group. Various other proposals—ethnorace, historical families, affordances, and so on—all seem to face their own problems. There is a way to sidestep many of the familiar challenges to the category, but it comes at the cost of doing both more and less than we might hope for a social identity category. Even so, this shows us something important about the limits and significance of such categories.

2. Friday, September 6, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB [\[formerly CBC\] C133](#)

“Echoes of Agency: Mexican Existentialism and Ecological Agency.”

Manuel Vargas, Dept. of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

Contemporary approaches to agency and responsibility have tended to be individualistic in two ways, that is, in focusing on individual agents and in prioritizing the psychological states of those agents. Such pictures have tended to say comparatively little about, for example, the enculturation of agents, the significance of institutions for stabilizing the social meanings of actions, and in taking account of how existing patterns of social meanings alter the scope of agency. In contrast, the accounts of mid-20th century Mexican existentialists, tended to place a special emphasis on the cultural specificity of agency, and to emphasize the way in which agency could be both constrained and sustained by the arrangements of institutions and operative social norms. I argue for a reconciliation of these approaches. As a case study, I focus on Harry Frankfurt’s approach to culpability and coercion, and contrasting Mexican accounts of an action’s “echo,” in the work of Jorge Portilla and Rosario Castellanos. I argue that the latter accounts provide important supplementary tools for illuminating complex cases of culpability.

3. Friday, September 20, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB C133

“Normativity and Arbitrariness.”

Lisa Cassell, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

It's a widely held idea that logic is normative. But defending this idea is complicated. On a particularly strong view, to say that logic is normative is to claim that it can be analyzed in normative terms. MacFarlane (2004) famously argues, along such lines, that we can gain insight into the nature of logical consequence by exploring its relation to coherence constraints. However, skepticism about the normativity of coherence makes this strategy less promising than it might first have appeared. This discussion appeals to the idea that we can understand formal systems as modeling epistemic situations---by analogy with the way models are used in the sciences---to provide the sort of account of the normativity of logic described above. My analysis highlights a form of arbitrariness our logics share with our coherence constraints. In so doing, it secures their epistemic credentials by establishing the legitimacy of normative modeling.

4. Friday, October 11, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB C133

“Compositional Abduction and Mental Representation.”

Ken Aizawa, Dept. of Philosophy, Rutgers University

My talk will introduce a theory of compositional abduction as an account of some instances of scientific confirmation. I will then show how this theory is relevant to philosophical discussions of mental representation. More specifically, I will relate the theory to the familiar idea that one reason to postulate mental representations to explain behavior. Compositional abduction is a theory of that reasoning.

5. Friday, October 18, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB C133

“Delusions, Experience, Rationality, and Non-Literal Thought.”

Quinn Hiroshi Gibson, Dept. of Philosophy, Clemson University

Subjects with monothematic delusions believe apparently incredible things, e.g., that they are dead or that their spouses have been replaced by impostors or aliens. The cognitive science of these delusions is highly developed and yields convincing models of delusional belief formation, many of which are grounded in altered experiences delusional subjects are thought to have. But the science leaves a number of central philosophical questions unanswered, in particular: Is the delusional subject's belief formation process rational? What is the relation between the altered experience and the content of the delusion? Are such altered experiences necessary for delusional belief? Are they sufficient? In this talk, I explore these questions with reference to the recent philosophical literature on delusions. I suggest that theorists have over-rationalized delusions because they have overlooked the forms of non-rational but intelligible thought to which we can appeal in order to make sense of delusional cognition.

6. Friday, November 1, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB C133

“Later Wittgenstein on the Analysis of Experience: A Problem for Early Modern Empiricism?”

Philip Bold, Dept. of Philosophy, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Philosophical Investigations 47 offers a compelling critique of the metaphysical notion of ‘absolute simples’ – either of language, reality, or of (visual) experience. In short: since any distinction between ‘simple’ and ‘composite’ is relative to how we (inter-)define those terms, and many such definitions are available to us in any given case, there is no ‘absolute’ notion of ‘simple’ or ‘composite’. To what extent does this critique of philosophical atomism bear on the common distinction between ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ elements of experience in early modern empiricism? I investigate this question with a particular focus on Hume's proposed “science of human nature”. The bearing of *Investigations* 47 on Hume largely depends on our understanding of his project – an interpretive question that has received

relatively little attention. Namely: is Hume's distinction between 'simple' and 'complex' ideas/impressions intended to follow from the *phenomenology of our experience* or is it instead a *theoretical stipulation with specific explanatory or pragmatic aims*? If the former, then the critique found in *Investigations* 47 is devastating for Hume's theory, as 'experience itself' is compatible with many such ways of distinguishing 'simple' and 'complex' elements; but if the latter, then Hume may have anticipated the problem raised by Wittgenstein and would (perhaps) justify his theoretical stipulations on pragmatic grounds.

7. Friday, November 15, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB C133

"Logic is Not Logic."

Jean-Yves Beziau, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian Research Council and Brazilian Academy of Philosophy

In this talk I will examine the very nature of logic by distinguishing between *Logic* as reasoning and *logic* as the science of reasoning. I will discuss the evolution of modern logic, the appearance of many different systems of logic, classical and non-classical, the distinction between logic and metalogic, and the development of universal logic as a general theory of logical systems.

References

- [1] J.-Y. Beziau, "Logic is not logic", *Abstracta* 6 (2010), pp. 73-102.
<https://www.jyb-logic.org/papers/LINL.pdf>
- [2] J.-Y. Beziau, "Universal Logic: Evolution of a Project", *Logica Universalis*, vol.12 (2018), pp. 1-8.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11787-018-0194-7>
- [3] J.-Y. Beziau, "Metalogic, Schopenhauer and Universal Logic" in J. Lemanski (ed), *Language, Logic, and Mathematics in Schopenhauer*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 2020, pp. 207-257.
<https://www.jyb-logic.org/METALOGIC-SCHOPENHAUER>
- [4] J.-Y. Beziau, "Is Logic Exceptional?", in J.-Y. Beziau, J.-P. Desclés, A. Mokteki and A. Pascu (eds), *Logic in Question - Talks from the Annual Sorbonne Logic Workshop (2011- 2019)*, Birkhäuser, Cham, 2022, pp. 261-279
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-94452-0_14
- [5] J.-Y. Beziau, "Why Logics?", *Logics*, Volume 1/3 (2023), pp. 148-156.
<https://www.mdpi.com/2813-0405/1/3/7>

8. Friday, December 6, 2024, 3:00pm in CHB C133

"Simplicity and the Underintellectualization of Everyday Life."

Eric Mandelbaum, Dept. of Philosophy, City University of New York

Maximally simple models of the mind have dominated both empiricist and rationalist theorizing. From behaviorism to associationism to Chomskian Minimalism to resource rational Bayesianism, simplicity assumptions have reigned. As a consequence, philosophers and cognitive scientists have used simplicity as a guide to mental ontology, especially those regarding mental structure and animal cognition. I offer a different perspective, in which the importance of a task is linked to the multiplicity of ways of accomplishing that task: the more important the problem, the more types of solutions evolution has created to solve it. Sometimes this is due to multiple mental mechanisms aimed at similar contents, and at others it's through redundant representations of the same contents. This type of importance/redundancy view leads to a much different picture of the mind, one that casts light on the underintellectualization of everyday life. From low-level perception to insect cognition, we should be inverting Morgan's canon, and the default assumption should be that even seemingly rote or foolish behavior is backed by interesting complex computational/intentional machinery.

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