KATHOLIEKE
UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN

HIW First Annual Graduate Student Conference Program

1 April 2011

08:30 - Welcoming Coffee *(Raadzaal)*

09:00-09:10 – Opening Words of Prof. A. Vandevelde, Dean of the Institute of Philosophy, and Prof. R. Friedman, Director of International Program *(Mercierzaal)*

09:15-10:55

SESSION 1 - Contemporary Political Thought I *(Mercierzaal)*

Chair: Prof. B. Raymaekers

Joseph Lacey (PhD), "John Rawls' Phenomenology of the Human Person"

John Rawls' later work is largely concerned with understanding how his theory of justice, justice as fairness, can be neutral towards the plurality of opinions and doctrines concerning the good life that characterize modern constitutional democracies. His account is based on what he calls the "political conception of person", which, by his definition, is a non-metaphysical understanding of the democratic citizen. By formulating a political idea of personhood that is detached from any religious, moral, or philosophic doctrine, he believes that his theory of justice can remain fair to individuals pursuing their distinct conceptions of the good life. My central proposal is that Rawls fails in his attempt to expunge significant metaphysical baggage from his account of the democratic citizen and, therefore, advocates a political arrangement that is essentially unfair.

Michaël Bauwens (MPhil), "Argumentation Ethics and the Justification of Private Property"

The ongoing economic crisis is often perceived as a crisis of capitalism and the political philosophy of liberalism. In this contribution we will investigate the philosophical solidity of one of the cornerstones of liberalism, namely the institution of private property. We will offer a constructive approach by trying to justify private property based on the normative characteristics that are present in any context of a sincere dialogue. In the first part we will single out the normative primordiality of truth, and the fundamental equality between the participants, in a sincere dialogue. In the second part we will look at the aspects of rationality and normativity present in human action. In the third part we will investigate how the normative characteristics of the first part can be connected with the elements of human action discussed in the second part.

Liesbeth Schoonheim (MPhil), "Injustice Without Revolt: Honneth's Theory of Recognition in the Face of Consent with Suppression"

In political liberalism, an important feature of the neutrality of the state is the absence of a conception of the good life in its theoretical justification. The state has to be concerned with questions of fairness and justice which are, according to liberal authors and most prominently John Rawls, merely *political* and do not involve any conception of what a good life consists in. But is this distinction between the political and the ethical legitimate? Or does justice necessarily require a conception of the good life? In this paper I will address this question by means of Axel Honneth's theory of *recognition*, which functions as the normative ground of claims of justice and injustice. His thesis is that no conception of justice can do without a conception of the good life, which he formulates in terms of self-realization in relations of mutual recognition.

Isabelle Deridder (MPhil), "Biopolitics: What Foucault and Agamben Have to Say"

The topic of my talk during the conference will be the concept of biopolitics as introduced by Foucault and Agamben. Foucault was the first to speak about it: he launched the whole debate. To go further, I will discuss Agamben's own interpretation of this notion. Foucault started to speak about this when he discussed the origin of sexuality. In his opinion, human sexuality has become an object of knowledge under the influence of the human sciences. When he starts to investigate this, he sees that this comes essentially down to power. This, however, is not all: we care about our sexuality as well. This started a whole range of investigations, for instance those by Deleuze, Negri & Hardt, Virno, but also Agamben. The position of Agamben is very specific; he makes use of the terms *zoè* and *bios*. With the concept of *zoè*, Agamben denotes life as "naked" life, whereas *bios* is the qualified life of the civilian. As Agamben shows, our lives are at stake. We are subjected to power at every moment. To prove his point, he focuses on extreme situations: *homo sacer*, the death camps, *une biopolitique mineure*. So in my presentation I want to explain the origin of biopolitics (Foucault) on the one hand, and a specific position (Agamben) on the other hand.

Moderators: Ivan Penkov, Dave Tracey

<u>*SESSION 2 - Language & Logic*</u> *(Room N)*

Chair: Dr. J. Chandler

***Eli Nomes (MA)**, "Outline of a Game Theoretical Approach of Semantic Normativity"*

Saul Kripke's famous but controversial interpretation of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations ignited an ongoing debate on the normativity of meaning. The idea that meaning has a normative, action-guiding component, i.e. that the *meaning* of a word tells us how we *should* use it, is a central part of Kripke's anti-reductionist argument. In the aftermath of Kripke's work, philosophy of language went through a "normative turn." Many defended some form of normativity, not only limited to the notion of meaning, but also often inextricably bound up with notions such as mental content and belief. Others, especially in recent years, have tried vigorously and in my opinion quite convincingly to refute (semantic) normativity. It is my intention to nonetheless confront these anti-normativist arguments with a game theoretic perspective based on David Lewis' classical work on the emergence of (language) conventions, that seems to be overlooked by many (anti-)normativists but is a booming philosophical branch itself. I will argue that an approach grounded in so-called coordination games can give new and helpful insights in what it can mean for meaning to be normative. Normativity, it turns out, can and must be partially rehabilitated by reconciling an individual, internalist and possibly reductionist account of meaning with its social, externalist and 'Wittgensteinian' counterpart. Lewis' "signaling games" can show us how such reconciliation is not only possible but also very plausible.

***Lorenz Demey (PhD)**, "The Dynamic Turn in Epistemic Logic: A Philosophical Perspective"*

Epistemic logic studies notions such as knowledge and belief. Although it has firm philosophical origins, it is now mainly used by computer scientists. Much recent work focuses on epistemic dynamics: how knowledge changes over time. This work has important technical applications. The aim of this presentation, however, is to show that even after this 'dynamic turn,' epistemic logic is still relevant for contemporary epistemological discussions. For the sake of concreteness, I will focus on one much-debated topic: the relationship between the qualitative notion of belief and the quantitative notion of degrees of belief (often formalized as probabilities). The Lockean thesis says that belief is definable as 'sufficiently high degree of belief.' Although this thesis is problematic from the static perspective, I will argue that it is much more plausible from the dynamic perspective – thus illustrating the immediate philosophical relevance of the dynamic turn in epistemic logic.

***Wai Chun Leong (PhD)**, "The Semantic Concept of Truth in Pre-Qin Chinese Philosophy"*

In this paper I argue, contrary to Chad Hansen's view, that pre-Qin Chinese philosophy has the semantic concept of truth. Hansen argues that pre-Qin Chinese philosophers do

not have motivations to introduce the concept of truth in their philosophy of language, and that the concept does not fit well with the interpretations of the philosophical text at that time, in particular, the Mohist three standards of doctrine. However, I argue that his interpretation of the Mohist three standards does not make sense of the texts in which the standards are applied to concrete cases. Finally I argue that the term "*ran*然" is sometimes used as a truth predicate in ancient Chinese, because it performs several functions identical to that of the truth predicate "is true" performs in English.

Jeremiah A. Reyes (MPhil), "William of Ockham and a New Theory of Metaphor"

"Juliet is the sun" gives a lot of trouble to contemporary philosophers. In this paper I will begin by enumerating three influential but conflicting theories of metaphor in the 20th Century. And then I will suggest that these three theories of metaphor can be reconciled using the philosophical framework of an unlikely candidate, the 14th Century Medieval Philosopher William of Ockham, thus paving the way for a more comprehensive theory of metaphor. Though Ockham is most famous for his "razor," what is less known is that he had a well-developed theory of "Mental Language," and used it in conjunction with the terminist logic of the late medieval philosophers. There are many elements in Ockham which do not have direct counterparts in contemporary logic, such as his unique understanding of the "concept," the distinction between absolute and connotative terms, and his theory of supposition. These can all be innovative tools for building a new theory of metaphor.

Moderators: Robyn Penney, Miguel Paley

11:10-12:50

SESSION 1 - Contemporary Political Thought II (Mercierzaal)

Chair: Prof. T. Heysse, Prof. H. De Schutter

Dave (David) Tracey (MA), "The Great-Below: The Ambiguous Economy in Bataille's 'Theory of Religion'"

There is a constant problem posed by being a human being without being an object. While many thinkers attempt to distinguish the two, drawing, for example, lines of authenticity and subjectivity, Bataille understands the human being in his full ambiguity: as the subject/ object. It is within, through, and as, the economy of reason, that the subject/object is able to come to its full value. The economy of reason is the ultimate objectifier and it is here that the value of ambiguity screams forth. Within the economy the human runs the risk of being lost entirely in objectification, yet, he cannot exist any other way. It therefore becomes of the greatest importance that we are able to exist within this economy without allowing our individuality to entirely disintegrate. This is

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the importance of ambiguity. In coming to understanding Bataille's economy of reason and the object self which exists within it, we will see the importance of searching for instances of the sacred, both around and within, the self.

James Luke McInnis (MA), "Strauss and Skinner"

Many commentators understand Leo Strauss's doctrine of esoteric writing as being something that can help to advance a hidden—usually unpalatable—political agenda. A closer consideration of what esoteric writing entails, however, reveals that it might not be as politically expedient a tool as so many people have made it out to be. With respect to this, I will suggest that at best, esoteric writing can be useful for expressing some political programme. For Strauss, this programme is a natural right doctrine. This doctrine is a concept that Quentin Skinner rejects in favor of a form of historicism. At work in Skinner's historicism are 'innovating ideologists,' or thinkers who change how various ideas are accepted. In this talk, I will examine the esoteric writer and the innovating ideologist, and suggest that these concepts might not be mutually exclusive. Ultimately, I want to consider what this might mean for the greater 'Strauss-Skinner' debate.

Daniel Burnfin (MPhil), "There is No Political Meta-Language"

In this paper I offer a critique of Carl Schmitt's theory of 'the political' from a Marxian vantage point. After distinguishing Schmitt's account of singularity and the political from Antonio Gramsci's, it will be evident that Schmitt relies on a faulty supposition: that with regard to political phenomena, one can take the position of a global or universal theoretical perspective, from a third-person or 'external' viewpoint of the second-degree. Schmitt offers a theory of theories, or concept of concepts, so as to judge whether a given theory or concept meets the criteria (conflict) he sets for the status 'political.' Though Schmitt himself knows a total politics to be impossible in practice, he is guilty of totalizing *theoretically*, *as though* such a perspective were possible. This means *excepting* his own concept or activity from the focus of theoretical scrutiny, attempting to render political language reducible to the same theoretical index, or 'meta-language.' For Gramsci, the singularity of the political is precisely the irreducibility of political discourses to a common index, or political events to their agents. The political is the resistance of perspectives to total perspectival integration, an occasionally explosive, irreducible blind-spot of political discourse. The specificity of the political lies precisely in this essential discrepancy of perspective. As one cannot examine society without being a part of it, my thesis is that there is no political meta-language or meta-theory, because there is no meta-perspective from which to articulate it. There is no theory of 'the political,' but only political theories.

Conor B. Murphy (MA), "For a Departure from Marx: Marx's Failure to Break with Political Economy"

Classical Marxism remains intimately bound up with the very political economy that it seeks to transcend. Throughout Marx's oeuvre—from his definition of wealth to his

understanding of revolutionary practice—the same problematic axiom of production that we find in political economy consistently corrupts Marx's metaphysics. This paper will demonstrate and engender the omnipresence of production within Marx's project and look to a theory of archaic forms of gift-giving in order to theorize how we might break with models of production and thereby push Marx further to the left.

Moderators: Miguel Paley, Stephen Hall

SESSION 2 - Hegelian Freedom and Determination in Subjectivity *(Room N)*

Chair: Prof. W. Desmond

Elise Frketich (MPhil), "The Freedom of Hegel's Concept"

How is the "I think" as Hegel's concept the ground of practical movement? This question is central to Hegelian thought and shows his indebtedness to certain Kantian concepts of freedom. My discussion will focus on the introduction to Book three of Hegel's Science of Logic, titled "The Concept in General." I will first introduce my discussion with a brief analysis of Hegel's movement from substance to the concept. Second, I will approach the question: why is the concept the reflection of the "I"? In order to do this, I will analyze the relation of freedom within the concept itself. Third, I will ask, how the pure "I think" can claim not to be strictly theoretical. This final exploration will delineate the meanings that the resolution of the universal and particular into their singular can have.

Andrew Morris (MA), "The Opening Movement of Hegel's Science of Logic: from 'Being' to 'a Being'"

My paper will examine the opening moves of Hegel's Science of Logic: from being to nothing, then to becoming and on to determinate being. I shall first explain how the progression is intended to work, an account which I will go on to critique. The transition from being to nothing is incorrectly thematized by Hegel, I shall argue. Further, this thematization, or 'metalogic,' is needed for the passage from becoming to determinate being. I will show that this critique is immanent, adhering to Hegel's own methodological principles (above all, presuppositionlessness), and is thus neither transcendent - with the imposition of external materials onto the progression of logic - nor transcendental - where the conditions of possibility of the logical enterprise are called into question. To support my reading, I will look at Hegel's use of the philosophies of Parmenides and Heraclitus, as well as his alternative rendering of the being-nothing-becoming movement in the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences. I will conclude with a possible Hegelian line of defense: a reading of the Logic where it is claimed that the logical science progresses as a result of a failure at each stage (for example, Pippin reads the opening of the Logic - where the concepts are very abstract or empty - as a failed

attempt to think objects, and progression arises as these concepts determine themselves as richer and more concrete).

Stephen Hudson (MPhil), "The Inter-Subjectivity of Mutual Recognition and the I-Thou: a Comparative Analysis of Hegel"

Hegel and Buber are very different thinkers yet both acknowledge that human beings must relate to one another intersubjectively. Hegel presents mutual recognition as an account of intersubjectivity. Buber's account of intersubjectivity in his book "I and Thou" involves a dialogical encounter between 'I' and 'Thou'. This essay explores the relation of these two views. It is argued that Buber's presentation of intersubjectivity shares much in common with Hegel's. It is further argued that both of these theories involve converging conceptions of incomplete and asymmetrical intersubjectivity.

Lydia Azadpour (MPhil), "Hegel on Phrenology"

In the course of his *Phenomenology*, Hegel offers a critique of his contemporary science, phrenology. This paper aims to demonstrate the significance of Hegel's critique of the methodology and object of phrenology, in particular, with respect to the understanding of human agency and freedom. It addresses in turn the nature of the claims of phrenology, secondly, Hegel' s engagement with phrenology, and finally develops the consequences of these in terms of the possibility of parallels with contemporary science and social phenomena. The paper will be accordingly divided into three sections. First we shall give an account of the structure of phrenology. In the second section of the paper, we shall see precisely why Hegel takes issue with this science. We will follow Hegel in suggesting that the freedom of the individual may not be determined by osseous forms. We shall see that Hegel' s account gives us the resources to understand subjects as more than fixed realities – as living, dynamic entities, formed and revealed through action. The final section of the paper will attempt to draw out some of the most important consequences of Hegel' s engagement with phrenology with respect to two fields – the relevance to contemporary science and to certain other historically situated socio-political uses of the logic of phrenology. We will thus explore whether, as McIntyre has argued, we may uncover here a principle in Hegel's polemic, which still holds fast and reveals something important to us about how we think of the freedom of the human agent.

Moderators: Ivan Penkov, Dave Tracey

12:50 – 13:25 - Lunch (Raadzaal)

13:30-14:40

SESSION 1 - Phenomenology: From Classical to Contemporary Approaches I (Mercierzaal)

Chair: Prof. A. Cloots, Dr. F. Mattens

Ben Schewel (MPhil), "Whitehead's Narration of the Crisis"

This paper examines Alfred North Whitehead's treatment of the "crisis of the European sciences," in contradistinction to Edmund Husserl's analysis. For this task, I rely primarily on Whitehead's Science and the Modern World. Whitehead's analysis of the crisis of Western science and civilization is in many ways similar to Husserl, focusing as he does on the overextension of the mathematical instruments of scientific analysis. Yet, Whitehead differs from Husserl in that he attempts to repair and revitalize the scientific conception of reality according to his account of organic event, while Husserl argues instead for the need to ground all knowledge in transcendental subjectivity. While most scholarly attention has focused on Whitehead's positive philosophical doctrines, I hope in this paper to suggest the vital relevance of his treatment of the same social problems that motivated the late Husserl.

Kristyn Brown (MPhil), "Trust as a Matter of Truth"

Many philosophical accounts investigating the issue of trust, despite their differences, tend to convene on one broad claim: that trust acts as the bedrock for so many of our human activities; it stands at the core of interpersonal relationships, of community cohesion, and without trust society and governments would unravel. Though various philosophers have examined trust, attempting to elucidate the nature of this element basic to human life, a comprehensive understanding of the nature and the role of trust remains elusive. Thus, the activity of trust calls for greater philosophical attention. I approach this debate from a phenomenological perspective, posing the question, is trust a matter of truth? While it was not Robert Sokolowski's stated project to elaborate the role of trust, I show that his phenomenology, nonetheless, contains two implicit accounts of trust ('elementary trust' and 'discursive trust'). As Sokolowski unfolds the essential relationship between rational thought and language, trust appears in relation to the human inclination towards truth. In this way, Sokolowski provides a unique framework with which to reconsider, via the movement of truth, the origin and role of trust in human life.

Juan Gabriel Osorio Gil (MA), "An Approach to the Concept of the Manifold in Husserl's Transcendental and Formal Logic"

The duty of philosophy, under Husserl's early logic approach, seems to be the finding of the conditions of possibility for every (formal) component of a system to exist within a coherent whole called science: a concept from mathematics, the *Manifold*, will be the

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core issue within a wide effort of grounding science upon the possible formal complete systems in which laws, and relations according to these laws, are revealed. How is then understood this theory of theories? What place does this theory of theories holds within the whole of Husserl's philosophy? The proposal is to properly approach the main concepts of the theory to gain critical understanding of its place and function on early phenomenology.

Moderators: Robyn Penney, Miguel Paley

SESSION 2 - Literature, Interpretation & Character *(Room N)*

Chair: Dr. S. Symons

Adele-France Jourdan (MPhil), "Monstrosity as Evil in Simone de Beauvoir's Ethics of Ambiguity: An Exploration of the Sympathetic Monster Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's Lolita"

The focus of this paper is a phenomenological investigation into the monstrous nature of the pedophilic protagonist of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. While some read him as a charming and seductive character, Humbert Humbert is always also labeled as monstrous. After limiting his young neighbor, Dolly, to the imaginative construct that exists only in his mind—namely the nymphetic temptress, Lolita—Humbert proceeds to abduct and rape her. While there is certainly no question that Humbert is morally suspect, what characterizes him as a monster? Using Nabokov's deviant character as a literary trial case, I argue that monstrosity is characterized by the failure to engage with others in such a way that respects their ambiguous role as both subjects that create meaning in the world and objects that take part in others' creative endeavors. Simone de Beauvoir writes in *Ethics of Ambiguity* that the greatest evil is the denial of another's freedom, or the ability to be other than what one currently is. What differentiates subjects—or human beings— from objects is the formers' creative ability for self-generated meaning and potential for future possibilities of being. By denying Dolly the potential to become something other than his "nymphet," Humbert renders her a being-in-the-present, or an object. If the human condition is characterized by its ambiguous state as subject and object, the denial of one's subjectivity may be equated with the death of one's humanity. Humbert is certainly an immoral and mentally disturbed individual, but his monstrosity is rooted in his denial of Dolly's humanity.

Louis Schreel (MPhil), "Transcendental Perspectivism: Gilles Deleuze's Topological Reading of Leibniz"

As Michel Foucault puts it in 'Les Mots et les Choses,' the threshold of modernity was definitively crossed (at the beginning of the nineteenth century) with the withdrawal of Being from representation: language was at that point forced to withdraw from the sphere of representation to which it had hitherto – by means of its transparency – assured the

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order. This withdrawal was prototypically manifested in Kant's critical philosophy, when he indicated the limits of representation and thus re-established metaphysics. However, while Kant's dissection of representation made possible the rebirth of an objective – though scattered – human language (and the subsequent appearance of the subject as an epistemological field of inquiry), language would never again recover its homogeneous transparency: its semiological circularity and unity with things seemed to be irretrievably lost. It is, then, only with Nietzsche that the question of the *subject* of language takes its true form: for Nietzsche, as for Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, the question is not so much that of clear *communication*, but rather that of *interpretation*. The question Nietzsche's French disciples raise is exactly that of the Speaker/Thinker: the subject of philosophical discourse. For Foucault and Deleuze, it is only Nietzsche's opening of the philosophical-philological space of the question of the Speaker that makes possible a radical inquiry of the *unity* of the to-be-mastered *multiplicity*. In my presentation, I will focus on Deleuze's reading of Leibniz as 'a cryptographer of experience,' offering us a dynamical perspective of intensive singularities which overcomes the aporias of both subject and object.

Sean Winkler (MPhil), "Deleuze and the Metaphysics of Literature"

The least important question in Deleuze's philosophy of literature is: "What is writing?" This is not so important as to ask, "How does writing become possible?" What if it isn't an extension of an organism, "Man," as rational animal, social animal, and the possessor of signitive language? Consider Deleuze's proposition that, "…*writing does not have its end in itself,*" because, "*life is not something personal;*" how *then*, does writing come about? After all, is good literature not just too sensitive to noise, too keen in its sense of taste, touch and smell to fall under this anthropological category? Drawing from unlikely subjects like Stoicism, Spinoza, and Empiricism I will illustrate Deleuze's interpretation of what happens to literature and writing if we re-imagine the umbrella under which they fall. What happens when we stop looking at the novel on the shelf as a product and start looking to it as a factory?

Moderators: Ivan Penkov, Dave Tracey

14:50-16:30

SESSION 1 - Phenomenology: From Classical to Contemporary Approaches II *(Mercierzaal)*

Chair: Prof. R. Breeur

Brian Robertson (PhD), "Anxiety is Not Without an Object"

Anxiety raises serious questions in regards to the phenomenological conception of perceptual awareness: what is the particular mode of 'givenness' proper to the experience

in anxiety? Are we right to understand it as a sort of object-less fear? And if so, where does the experience stem from? The existentialist tradition responds to these problems by means of a deep metaphysical reflection on human freedom; the conclusion drawn by Heidegger and others is that anxiety is the disclosure – not of another 'mundane object,' such as an object of fear –, but the disclosure of the Being of *Da-sein*. The work of Jacques Lacan offers a novel way of addressing the perplexing philosophical problem of anxiety's hazy 'object-relation.' The formula that he puts forward, and which I shall explore in the presentation is: 'anxiety is *not without* an object.' In order to come to terms with Lacan's idea, I will show how he breaks free from two common conceptions regarding the experience of anxiety: the phenomenological understanding of *objects* as 'intentional correlates;' and the conception of authentic existential *subjectivity*. From here, I shall demonstrate how Lacan conceives of anxiety in relation to our experience, not as free human subjects, but as *subjects of desire*. I will show how the 'object' at work in anxiety concerns our *identity* as subjects for the desire of the Other. This is not an identity that we choose or which we can assume in existential authenticity – it is an identity which escapes us and troubles us, an identity which seizes us with a frightful sense of certainty.

Ian Coleman (PhD), "From Pathos to Pathology: Jean-Paul Sartre's Imaginative Consciousness and its Implications for Michel Henry's Pure Immanence"

It is the purpose of this paper to contribute to an ongoing debate concerning the relationship between the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Henry, and to offer a new reading that challenges the status quo. It is claimed here that any attempt to make allies of Sartre and Henry, or indeed to go so far as to maintain that Sartre is always already Henryan, is fundamentally mistaken, and that a right-minded and suitably thorough investigation will reveal not only significant differences, but also the prospect of a strong critique of Henry from a Sartrean perspective. Ultimately, this paper will unearth a critique of Henry from Sartre, whereby the former's account of subjectivity – entirely immanent to itself, individualized by way of its self-feeling, with no appeal to or need of anything outside itself – becomes pure imaginary; a pathological *reaction to* exteriority rather than the *ground of* it. From a Sartrean perspective, Henry's subject is imaginative, thus derived, and this compromises his entire ontological project (a project that seeks to ground intentional analyses by articulating an originary revelation, the immanence of subjective life). More than this, by questioning such an influential recent articulation of the phenomenological enterprise, this paper engages critically with the very course of contemporary phenomenology, and makes a problem of the effort (common to 'second generation' phenomenologists, including Jean-Luc Marion) to think an absolute and originary mode of receptivity; that is to say, one that is wholly unconditioned and absolved of any horizontality, visibility, and worldliness.

Erica Harris (PhD), "The Pre-Subjective Origin of Fascination: Grounding Roger Caillois' 'Diagonal Science' in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Ego-Constitution"

In his essay, *Méduse et Compagnie*, Roger Caillois develops a proposal for what he calls 'Diagonal science': he suggests that human artwork, superstition, and folklore ought to be

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understood, not as radically unique human contributions, but rather, in a continuum of a type of animal behavior that he broadly designates by the term 'mimetism.' Caillois' hypothesis is, however, a contentious one in the history of philosophy. His justification thereof is, moreover, far from satisfactory; he presents his position as merely one of the possible ways of interpreting the apparent similarities between animal and human mimetic behavior, which might otherwise simply be understood as anthropomorphic projections onto an indifferent reality. If Caillois' proposal were found to be sound, however, it could shed light on how and why it is the case that human subjects are endlessly fascinated by certain, seemingly 'primitive' themes such as disguise, invisibility, and the 'evil eye.' In this paper, I will attempt to ground diagonal science in Merleau-Ponty's *Les relations avec autrui chez l'enfant*. I will focus on the latter's discussion, no doubt inspired by Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of pre-egoic lived-unity as the primordial ground for subject-constitution. I suggest that this harmony can serve as a possible, non-anthropomorphic basis for Caillois' hypothesis about the continuity between animal and human behavior. It, moreover, establishes a mechanism for explaining 'primitive' fascinations as the correlates of failures to adequately differentiate between self and other in the process of subject-constitution.

Corry Shores (PhD), "Figure and Phenomena: Deleuze's Anti-Gestaltist Perceptions"

Deleuze is often considered an anti-phenomenologist. Yet, he generated an original theory of phenomena. So rather than determining whether Deleuze was a phenomenologist or an anti-phenomenologist, we might instead wonder what it would be like to do phenomenology in a Deleuzean style. We will contrast it with Merleau-Ponty's conceptions, particularly his Gestaltist formulations and examples. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenal parts integrate, because every part in our focus has all the rest on its phenomenal horizon, including the background surrounding a figure. But for Deleuze, our phenomena are not the parts of our perception, neither figure nor ground, but rather the shocks of difference between them. Is a Deleuzean phenomenology possible? And would it better account for the *phenomenality* of phenomena?

Moderators: Ivan Penkov, Miguel Paley

SESSION 2 - Transversing Philosophy and Theology (Room N)

Chair: Prof. M. Moors, Prof. A. Robiglio

Daniel Minch (MA), "The Composition of the Soul in Relation to its First Principles: Origen and Rational Essences"

Origen of Alexandria maintained novel and complex theories about cosmology and ontology at a time of emerging orthodoxy in the history of the Church. His speculative work on God as well as the nature of being and beings laid a foundation for future

Christian reflection. His work even precipitated the Arian controversy of the fourth century, with both sides of the conflict acting on two interpretations of Origen's theology and Christology. Often labeled a Platonist, Origen's work was certainly a product of its environment, but as a metaphysical system it is not strictly Middle-Platonic, but primarily Christian in nature. This paper seeks to enumerate and clarify Origen's theories on the soul and the "rational natures/essences" that compose the basic units of all rational existence. The metaphysical system of Origen encompasses all being grounded in the two "first principles" of God and *Logos*. The soul is an important element of the system in that its composition and relationship as creature to Creator reveals a great deal about Origen's fundamental ontology and his Trinitarian theology. This theology was considered controversial only fifty years after his death, and in 553 CE, elements of Origen's work were officially anathematized by the Second Council of Constantinople. Specifically examined elements of Origen's psychology include the participation of the soul in the *Logos* as well as the particular primacy of the will in the rational soul as radically free.

Christopher Schwartz (MA), "Averroes the Muslim: Countering the Ernst Renan Depiction"

Ernst Renan's groundbreaking study, "Averroès et l'averroïsme," had a profound impact not only upon academic discourse concerning the thought and life of Averroes (1126-1198) and his impact upon the Western intellectual tradition, but also upon the political discourse surrounding the meaning and role of inquiry in religious and national identity throughout the West and the Muslim world. Unfortunately, Renan articulated a version of Averroes that was for all intensive purposes an arch-rationalist and veiled atheist, a depiction that has arguably catalyzed several serious problems in our historiography of Averroes' influence upon the West and in our era's debates over secularism. I shall endeavor to provide a more accurate account of Averroes by demonstrating in an analytical fashion how a very robust theism, albeit one that would have been considered unorthodox by his peers due to its rigorous Aristotelianism, is at the structural core of Averroes' system.

Dustin Zielke (MA), "The Death of the Lover and Tranquilizing Religion: Working Towards Hope Against Hope with Gianni Vattimo"

Because of the pain of his lost loved ones, Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo confesses in his recent autobiography *Not Being God* that he lives his religion like a "tranquilizer." Vattimo's Christianity helps him numb the pain of lost loved ones with its ultimate hope of life-after-death. In this paper, I will be arguing that this confession is problematic as Vattimo has stated it. Foremost, it is misleading, because it seems to suggest that Vattimo's Christianity conforms to the type of religiosity that he has been arguing against since his relatively recent return to Christianity: "natural religion." One of the primary characteristics of natural religion is its tranquilizing quality. In order to help Vattimo avoid this inconsistency, I will work with Vattimo to point to a conception of hope that is not tranquilizing, which I will call a hope against hope.

Tyler J. W. Dickinson (MA), "The Icon of the Invisible God: Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenology of Givenness and the Eucharist as the Archetypal Icon of the Invisible God"

Followers of the Roman Catholic tradition believe the Eucharist— blessed and consecrated bread and wine—to be the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. In this exposé, I intend two goals, each presenting its own challenges. First, I will present Jean-Luc Marion's train of thought spanning the development of his project of the phenomenology of givenness, which culminates with the saturated phenomenon. Of the four "types" of saturated phenomena, the "icon" is considered *par excellence*; however, a challenge of continuity arises between Marion's elaboration on the icon in *God without Being*—based on a theological equivocation—and his discussion of the icon in later works. Difficult though it may be, this connection will serve as the ground of my second goal: bringing the theology of the Eucharist under phenomenological examination. In doing so, I hope to present, from Marion's foundation, the possibility of understanding the Eucharist as the archetypal icon of the invisible God (cf. Col. 1:15)—an understanding which he holds to be an impossibility. Hence, my aim is to allow for an iconic experience of God in the consecrated Host by presenting the Eucharist in light of the phenomenology of givenness and saturated phenomenon.

Moderators: Carol Linnitt, Dave Tracey

16:30-16:45 – Coffee Break (Raadzaal)

16:50-18:10

SESSION 1 - Philosophy of History: Interruption, Continuity, and Modernity (Room N)

Chair: Prof. A. Cloots

Gregory Costello (MA), "To Scatter, to Distract, and to Entertain"

This paper is a meditation on the German word *zerstreuen* taken from the writings of Walter Benjamin. *Zerstreuen* is a verb which carries a particularly interesting multiplicity of connotations including the verbs: to scatter, to distract, and to entertain. By elucidating the nuances of this word, I will attempt to give the audience a glimpse into, what may be called, Walter Benjamin's attitudes towards "our coming to terms with modernity." But for the sake of brevity and interest I wish to limit this analysis to the realm of art: the art of the storyteller, the art of the novel, and the art of Surrealism. These reflections, however, move beyond the mere realm of art, and certainly cannot be reduced to a philosophy of art. In fact, they have their strongest holds in what may be called the political, the ontological, and the historical. At any rate I will give a brief

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historical narration of different, that is, at least distinguishable epochs of art. In fact what distinguishes them as distinct, has a raw-historical, that is, factual component; it seems to me, that there is no better place to look then our recent history. And thus we can grasp these distinctions most vividly by following the recent history of technology. In doing so, I will attempt to illustrate how "technological innovations" are in fact intrinsically bound up, caught, and fragmented into the specificity of these distinct epochs of art and how these distinct epochs comportment themselves towards being, i.e. attain an ontological character, within this frame of technological history. In short, I will be outlining Benjamin's story of the destruction and dissemination of what he calls the "aura" (cult-values or forms of communal intoxication) and the dangers and hopes that may follow suit.

Eva Boodman (MPhil), "Interruption as Critique: Walter Benjamin and the Ruins of History"

In this paper, my first aim is to take seriously Benjamin's claim to a "critical" philosophy of history by linking a range of concepts in the Benjaminian constellation and notions drawn from his philosophy of experience: image, reading, myth, progress, rescue. If this first aim is descriptive and interpretive, the second is to engage critically with the images Benjamin puts forward, in light of Habermas' critique. Benjamin's history—which he sees as incomplete, interruptive—seems to appeal to us to be continually attentive to its demands. But what is this injunction, and how is it to be carried out?

Willem Styfhals (MPhil), "The Role of Gnosticism in the Contemporary Modernity Debate"

What is the nature of modernity? What are its roots and what is its future? These are omnipresent and central questions today, in philosophy as well as in several other domains. Some twentieth century philosophers have argued that we can only understand modernity by referring to a specific, ancient religious movement called Gnosticism. This paper focuses on two philosophers who have developed the relation between Gnosticism and modernity, albeit in different directions, namely Eric Voegelin and Hans Blumenberg. The main purpose of my paper is to understand on a philosophical level why the notion of Gnosticism plays a significant role in the contemporary debate about modernity and why Blumenberg's and Voegelin's evaluations of modernity and Gnosticism are so different. I argue that the reference to Gnosticism in this debate has something to do with an essential ambiguity or instability in Christianity. Modernity as well as Gnosticism can in this sense be interpreted as reactions to this instability, as a kind of collapse of the inner Christian tension. This insight may open up the contemporary modernity debate from an unexplored point of view.

Moderators: Luke McInnis, Dave Tracey

<u>*SESSION 2 - Performance and Cinema*</u> *(Room A)*

Chair: Prof. P. Cortois

Janhavi Dhamankar (MPhil), "Dynamics of a Performance"

Should the dancer merge with the dance or be different from it? In the philosophy of dance, pertaining to the context of Indian Classical dances, I would like to focus on the dancer-audience relation and the dancer's relation to what she produces by way of performing. Most dancers today, claim that their body is a mere medium, that movement merely flows through them. The 'medium' can be understood in a spiritual sense when dance was closely linked with God(s) and the temple. But considering dance as a performing art, this claim, which is also aimed at as the ideal state of a dancer, raises interesting philosophical questions. Moreover, I suspect that, in the teaching process such beliefs produce only awe in the students rather than help them better their performance and ensure aesthetic experience for the audience.

Ruihua Fu (MPhil), "'A Little Time in its Pure States'—Gilles Deleuze's Time-Image and Bergsonian Cinema"

"I see it as my professional task then, to create my own, distinctive flow of time, and convey in the shot a sense of its movement…and to one person it will seem one way, to another, another," as Andrey Tarkovsky writes in his *Sculpting in Time*. Cinema, as a particular form of art, sets images in movement; editing a movie, according to Tarkovsky, is sculpting in time. In cinema, time can manifest itself through the connection of sequence shots and through montage, yet can time have its own pure image? Is time based on montage, which subordinates to movement, or can time be free from movement and have a direct time-image? In his two books, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Gilles Deleuze tries to provide an answer for these questions. In his analysis of cinema, Deleuze is deeply marked with the theme of time. According to Deleuze, the greatest revolution of cinema is the emergence of the time-image, which occurs in the postwar period. By placing a variety of irrational cuts and incommensurable relations between images, cinema offers complex ways of linking together past, present and future. Furthermore, time-image in cinema is deeply connected with Bergson's time theory. Cinema is Bergsonian, as Deleuze notes. This paper aims at bringing out the particularity of time-image of cinema and engaging with Deleuze's new accounts of movement and time.

Lina Nasser (MPhil), "Cinema: A Violation of Reality or a Sincere Representation?"

In the 21st century we are confronted on a more regular basis with several and new forms of media. Thanks to the digital age, the invention of the Internet and virtualization, media are becoming more prominent and present. We can consult several forms of media on every single event that has happened now and over the past centuries, which provide the user with a never-ending and up to date source of information on reality. Therefore, we could say that media represent reality or provide us with a representation of reality.

Within the framework of news broadcasting, documentary films, commentary blogs, or (journalistic) photography, media try to show us what is happening in the world – they try to show a record of reality. However the process of accepting a representation as (a part of) reality is not as simple as we tend to think. The image represented can be violated, as Jean Baudrillard says. The original representation of reality can be reformed or manipulated in order to affect the idea of the events in reality. Therefore, we must not value every representation in media as a true record of the real. This misinterpretation arose through history several times and became again more recent due to the current presupposition that cinema provides us with the possibility for true full representation. Through the work of several contemporary filmmakers and philosophers (Rancière and Badiou) we will discuss the status of the representation of reality through images in cinema.

Moderators: Ivan Penkov, Miguel Paley

SESSION 3 - Between Ontology and Ethics (Mercierzaal)

Chair: Prof. W. Desmond

Simon Truwant (PhD), "Post-Ontological Thinking in Kant and Levinas"

Both Kant and Levinas criticize (traditional) ontology's imperialistic nature and agree about the primacy of ethics over theory. Despite this concurrence, Levinas nevertheless criticizes all aspects of Kant's turn towards ethics. Although his critique is directed at all of western philosophy, and, therefore, rarely names Kant directly, it implies a rejection of Kant's reason for turning towards ethics, the kind of critique that he applies to this domain, and the outcome thereof. One can understand these three points in light of his more general critique that Kant did not succeed in overcoming ontological discourse, as Levinas understands it. The goal of this paper is to present Levinas's three, superficially convincing, critiques, and, ultimately, show how Kant can reply to, and overcome, them. In this way, I intend to reveal the commonalities between these two thinker's approaches that contemporary commentators often overlook.

Dennis Vanden Auweele (PhD), "The Evil of Being"

In the 19th century, German philosophy seems to be, at least in part, dominated by something which I term 'the evil of being' which I define as "a covert tendency to regard being in general, and fleshed being in particular, as 'no good' ushering in the rational demand to abstain from emerging into it as well as overcoming it through the powers of autonomy in favor of a higher aspiration of sorts." My doctoral research investigates three different reactions to this hidden premise: Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. In my presentation, I would like to delve deeper into Kant's specific response to the evil of being with regard to moral motivation. I investigate the objective and subjective elements so to motivate a natural and a priori evil, human agent to incorporate the moral

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law into his maxim and in which way this can be taken as a response to 'the evil of being.'

Carol Linnitt (MA), "Ethos and Environmental Dwelling"

This paper focuses on one central question: would the environment be better served by an eco-phenomenological approach that cultivates a sense of dwelling in the ethos, rather than from a traditional ethical approach? In other words, when considering the environment, should we be thinking *ethos* instead of *ethics*? The field of eco-phenomenology looks to emphasize one's experience of the phenomenal earth to accomplish two tasks: first, to undo the inherently environmentally destructive ethical and metaphysical presumptions of modern philosophy that mischaracterize our experience and to secondly replace these with the phenomenological method. By these means, eco-phenomenologists contend, we discover not the true value of natural objects, but the true value of one's *relation* to nature. However, value, which in traditional ethics is closely associated with fact, is here based instead upon what cannot be reduced to fact. The difficult of grounding an environmental ethics by way of eco-phenomenology has led to the increasing interest in the philosophy of Heidegger, which arms the environmental philosopher with concepts such as *dwelling*, *presencing*, and *ethos*. These concepts, I suggest, overcome some of the most significant challenges to environmental ethics, precisely by not being ethics.

Moderators: Dustin Zielke, Jillian Dobson

18:15 - Guest Speaker (Mercierzaal)

Prof. B. Nanay, "Aesthetics as Philosophy of Perception"

19:30 - Closing Reception (Raadzaal)

<u>Notes</u>