

**53RD ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE ALABAMA PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**



October 2-3, 2015
Hilton Pensacola Beach Gulf Front
12 Via Luna Drive
Pensacola, Florida 32561

**53RD ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE ALABAMA PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

Keynote Speaker

Michael Lynch
University of Connecticut

President

Eric Carter
North Carolina State University

Vice President

C. R. Dodsworth
Spring Hill College

Secretary-Treasurer

Daniel Massey
Spring Hill College

Web Site

<http://alphilsoc.org>

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2ND, 8:00 A.M. – 11:40 A.M.**Registration**

The registration fee of \$50 is payable at the registration desk near the Coral Reef room between 8:00 A.M. and 11:40 P.M. The fee is also payable to the Secretary-Treasurer, Daniel Massey. The registration fee is waived for undergraduates.

<i>Session and Time</i>	<i>Coral Reef</i>	<i>Aquamarine 1</i>	<i>Aquamarine 2</i>	<i>Oleander 2</i>
<i>Session 1</i> 8:30 A.M. - 9:10 A.M.	<i>What Psycho-Physics Teaches Us about Dretske's "What Change Blindness Teaches about Consciousness"</i> Steven Todd Henderson State University	<i>Four Arguments against Truthmaker Necessitarianism</i> Bradley Rettler Baylor University		
<i>Session 2</i> 9:20 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.	<i>Laser Lights and Designer Drugs: The New Face of Ruthlessly Reductive Neuroscience</i> John Bickle Mississippi State University	<i>The Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action</i> Zachary Loveless University of Chicago	<i>Epistemic Conservatism and the Problem of Stored Beliefs</i> Matt Frise Baylor University	<i>Creating Fictional Objects</i> Luke Manning Western Michigan University
<i>Session 3</i> 10:10 A.M. - 10:50 A.M.	<i>Physical Intentionality and the Direction of Causation</i> William A. Bauer North Carolina State University	<i>Punishment and Hate Crime: Is the "Extra" Punishment Really Justified?</i> T. Allan Hillman and Tully Borland University of South Alabama; Ouachita Baptist University	<i>Rescuing Reliable Knowledge</i> Kevin Meeker University of South Alabama	<i>Why We Should Reject the Standard Account of Mind Dependence and Moral Reasons</i> Anne Jeffrey University of Notre Dame
<i>Session 4</i> 11:00 A.M. - 11:40 A.M.	<i>Assessing Animalism</i> Alli Krile Thornton Baylor University	<i>Reasonable Moral Expectations</i> Carmen Zinn University of California, Santa Barbara	<i>Issues with Using the Cognitive Ideal of Omniscience to Establish the Value of Pointless Truths</i> Jon Burmeister University of Missouri, Columbia	<i>Pride, Identity, and Moral Responsibility</i> Jeremy Fischer University of Alabama, Huntsville

Lunch Break

Friday, October 2nd, 11:40 A.M.- 1:00 P.M. (Participants are on their own.)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2ND, 1:00 P.M. – 5 P.M.

<i>Session and Time</i>	<i>Coral Reef</i>	<i>Aquamarine 1</i>	<i>Aquamarine 2</i>	<i>Oleander 2</i>
<i>Session 5</i> 1:00 P.M - 1:40 P.M.	<i>Epistemic Responsibility and the Moral-Realist Majority</i> Thomas Metcalf Spring Hill College	<i>Mechanism, Unification, and Explanatory Power in Tuning and Design Strategies</i> Nicholaos Jones University of Alabama, Huntsville	<i>Gendered Slurs</i> Lauren Ashwell Bates College	<i>The Context Principle, Linguistic Intention, and Anscombe's Critique of 'Cartesian Psychology'</i> Silver Bronzo Auburn University
<i>Session 6</i> 1:50 P.M - 2:30 P.M.	<i>Moral Caution and Disagreement: A Case for Vegetarianism</i> John Matheson University of North Florida	<i>Physicalism, Mereology, and the Incarnation</i> Kevin Sharpe St. Cloud State University	<i>Beneficial Oppression and the Harm of Fighting It</i> Chelsea Haramia Spring Hill College	<i>In Defense of Epistemic Blame</i> Lindsay Rettler Ohio State University
<i>Session 7</i> 2:40 P.M - 3:20 P.M.	<i>How to Debunk Moral Beliefs Empirically</i> Josh May and Victor Kumar University of Alabama, Birmingham; University of Toronto	<i>The Silence of God and the Theological Virtue of Hope</i> Aaron D. Cobb Auburn University, Montgomery	<i>The Constitutive Norm Account of Assertion: Explaining Epistemic Harm, but Not Silencing</i> David Spewak Mississippi State University	<i>Explanative Subordination and Explanative Modification</i> Eric Carter North Carolina State University
<i>Session 8</i> 3:30 P.M - 4:10 P.M.	<i>Ethics, Character and Empirical Psychology: A Reply to Machinery</i> Annalisa Paese University of Pittsburgh	<i>Theological Voluntarism and Moral Goodness: Answering Objections</i> Matthew Jordan Auburn University, Montgomery	<i>No Fundamental Determinables</i> Jannai Shields University of Rochester	<i>Explanationist Bayesianism</i> Ted Poston University of South Alabama
<i>Session 9</i> 4:20 P.M – 5:00 P.M.	UNDERGRADUATE ESSAY WINNER <i>Why Possibilism about Fiction Just Isn't Possible</i> Laura Crawford University of South Alabama	<i>The Moral Significance of Pain in Draper's Argument from Evil</i> Megan Fritts and Robert Reed University of Wisconsin, Madison; Texas A&M University	<i>Revamping Traditional Arguments for Internalism</i> Blake McAllister Baylor University	<i>Explanationism, Perceptual Justification, and Defeat</i> Kevin McCain University of Alabama, Birmingham

Reception

Friday, October 2nd, 7:00 P.M. - 10:00 P.M.
Alabama Philosophical Society Suite, Location: TBA

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3RD, 8:30 A.M. – 1:35 P.M.

<i>Session and Time</i>	<i>Coral Reef</i>	<i>Aquamarine 1</i>	<i>Aquamarine 2</i>	<i>Oleander 2</i>
<i>Session 10</i> 8:30 A.M. - 9:10 A.M.	<i>Do Kripke's Thought Experiments Demonstrate the Existence of A Priori Contingencies?</i> Nathan Dahlberg Georgia State University	<i>Are Social Groups Structured Wholes?</i> Wesley D. Cray Grand Valley State University	<i>Monica</i> Sydney Jolley Auburn University	
<i>Session 11</i> 9:15 A.M. – 9:55 A.M.	<i>Not a Matter of Space</i> Cruz Davis Virginia Tech	<i>The Metaphysics of Social Construction: A 'Grounding' Account</i> Aaron Griffith College of William and Mary	<i>What is Kant's Antinomy of Practical Reason?</i> Jennifer Lockhart Auburn University	<i>Why the Self-Defense Argument for Abortion Rights is Unsound</i> Howard Hewitt Auburn University
<i>Session 12</i> 10:00 A.M. - 10:40 A.M.	<i>Plain Truth and the Collapse of Alethic Functionalism to Strong Correspondence Monism</i> Jay Newhard East Carolina State University	<i>Defeasibility and Reasonable Alternatives</i> Joshua Smith Central Michigan University	<i>From the Principle of Sufficient Reason to Intrinsic Property Essentialism</i> Joshua Watson University of Tennessee, Knoxville	<i>Against Static Dispositions</i> Joseph Baltimore West Virginia University
<i>10 minute coffee break</i>				
<i>Session 13</i> 10:50 A.M. - 11:30 A.M.	<i>An Inferentialist Defense of Millianism</i> Adam Podlaskowski Fairmont State University	<i>Are You Sure?</i> William Melanson University of Nebraska, Omaha	<i>The Metaphysics of Goodness in the Ethics of Aristotle</i> Samuel Baker University of South Alabama	<i>The Puzzle of Interminable Blame</i> Matt King University of Alabama, Birmingham
<i>Session 14</i> 11:35 A.M - 12:15 P.M.	<i>Linguistic Understanding and Knowledge of Truth Conditions</i> Chase Wrenn University of Alabama	<i>Are Evidentialism and Permissivism Compatible?</i> Chris Tweedt Baylor University	<i>Epistemological Disjunctivism and Warrant Transfer</i> Tom Lockhart Auburn University	<i>The "Afterlife Conjecture" and Malleability in Meaningful Projects: A Critique of Samuel Scheffler's "Doomsday" and "Infertility" Scenarios</i> Jason Gray University of Alabama, Birmingham
<i>Session 15</i> 12:20 P.M – 1:35 P.M.	KEYNOTE ADDRESS Michael Lynch University of Connecticut			

Business Meeting: Saturday, October 3rd, 2:00 P.M.- 3:15 P.M. | Location: Flounders

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Saturday, October 3rd, 12:20 P.M.- 1:35 P.M.

Location: Coral Reef

Welcome and Introduction

President of the Alabama Philosophical Society

Eric Carter

North Carolina State University

Pluralism and the Problem of Double-counting

Michael Lynch

University of Connecticut

Abstract

Simon Blackburn has recently alleged that truth pluralism “double-counts”: it distinguishes not only between different kinds of propositions; it (unnecessarily) distinguishes between different kinds of truth. In this paper, I respond to this objection, arguing that, given certain explanatory goals that quasi-realists such as Blackburn or Price share with the pluralist, either distinction brings a functionally similar one in its wake.

UNDERGRADUATE ESSAY WINNER

Friday, October 2nd, 4:20 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

Location: Coral Reef

Why Possibilism about Fiction Just Isn't Possible

Laura Crawford

University of South Alabama

Abstract

While David Lewis provides an interesting account of possibilism concerning fiction in his works “Truth in Fiction” and the subsequent “Postscripts,” he does not provide much of an explanation (if any) for what would seem to be an essential component of a theory concerning fiction: authorship. In this paper, I provide an account of Lewis’s theory, followed by speculation concerning what authorship could be in relation to modal realism. I then discuss several issues that arise from Lewis’s theory including the contradicting ways he employs the term ‘author’ as well as the death of fiction itself.

PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

Session 1: Friday, 8:30 A.M. – 9:10 A.M.

“What Psycho-Physics Teaches Us about Dretske’s “What Change Blindness Teaches about Consciousness,” Coral Reef
Steven Todd (Henderson State University)

Dretske (2007) attacks the standard accounts of the phenomenon of change blindness, which allege that subjects are not aware of an obvious visible difference between two otherwise identical scenes viewed sequentially. Dretske argues that we are in fact aware of the difference in the scene after the change but we do not notice it. I argue that findings in other areas of psycho-physics provide reasons to reject fundamental claims on which his view depends, undermining his argument. Although Dretske (2007) is suggestive of an alternative account of the richness of our conscious perception, it does not establish that account.

“Four Arguments against Truthmaker Necessitarianism,” Aquamarine I
Bradley Rettler (Baylor University)

Truthmaker Necessitarianism says that for any proposition p and thing x , x makes p true only if necessarily, if x exists, then p is true. Truthmaker Necessitarianism is widely held among truthmaker theorists; many think it is part of the nature of truthmaking. In this paper, I give four arguments against truthmaker necessitarianism.

Session 2: Friday, 9:20 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.

“Laser Lights and Designer Drugs: The New Face of Ruthlessly Reductive Neuroscience,” Coral Reef

John Bickle (Mississippi State University)

I introduce philosophers to two new experimental tools in neurobiology, optogenetics and DREADDs (Designer Receptors Exclusively Activated by Designer Drugs), which permit unprecedented control over activity in specific neurons in behaving animals. These new tools fill an important methodological gap in the published experimental literature from molecular and cellular neuroscience necessary for full scientific confidence in hypothesized mechanisms for cognitive functions. In the philosophy of neuroscience, experimental results starting to amass from increasing use of optogenetics and DREADDs better fit the ruthless reductionist’s direct “mind-to-cells and molecules” linkages than the new mechanist’s “nested hierarchies of mechanisms within mechanisms” picture, despite the latter’s popularity.

“The Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action,” Aquamarine I

Zachary Loveless (University of Chicago)

In this paper, I argue for an alternative to the standard virtue ethical account of right action, namely: an act is right iff it is what a virtuous person would characteristically do in the circumstances. This account has trouble accounting for the right actions of non-virtuous agents, and the common reply to this objection, which distinguishes right action from what one ought to do, doesn’t help avoid it. I thus propose an alternative that eliminates the appeal to an exemplar and grounds right action in terms of the virtues. Consequently, the above objection fails to gain traction.

“Epistemic Conservatism and the Problem of Stored Beliefs” Aquamarine II

Matt Frise (Baylor University)

A belief is stored if it is in no way before the subject’s mind. The problem of stored beliefs is that of satisfactorily explaining how the stored beliefs which seem justified are indeed justified. In this paper I challenge a leading internalist solution to this problem. Internalism about epistemic justification, at a minimum, states that one’s mental life alone determines what one is justified in believing. The internalist solution I challenge is from epistemic conservatism, the view that believing justifies retaining belief. After clarifying epistemic conservatism, I argue that for three reasons it fails to solve internalism’s problem.

“Creating fictional objects,” Oleander II

Luke Manning (Western Michigan University)

On a popular view called creationism, fictional objects are abstract artifacts, created in fiction-making. Critics challenge creationists to explain how fictional objects are created. I propose that fictional objects are socially constructed, and thus created under certain conditions specified by our shared concepts and practices. To specify those creation conditions, I develop Kendall Walton’s view that works of fiction are “about fictional objects” when they prescribe that we imagine having de re knowledge of something. I solve two problems for this approach, clarifying the problematic scope of ‘something’ and showing how it can give creation conditions specific to each fictional object

Session 3: Friday, 10:10 A.M. – 10:50 A.M.

“Physical Intentionality and the Direction of Causation,” Coral Reef

William A. Bauer (North Carolina State University)

The Physical Intentionality Thesis claims that dispositions share the marks of psychological intentionality; therefore, intentionality is not exclusively a mental phenomenon. Beyond the standard five marks, Alexander Bird introduces two additional marks of intentionality that he argues dispositions do not satisfy, one of which concerns the direction of causation. This paper evaluates this mark, arguing that Bird’s assessment overlooks complexities of dispositionality and intentionality that problematize apparent differences between thoughts and dispositions concerning the direction of causation.

“Punishment and Hate Crime: Is the "Extra" Punishment Really Justified?,” Aquamarine I

T. Allan Hillman (University of South Alabama) and Tully Borland (Ouachita Baptist University)

In his paper, “Two Liberal Fallacies in the Hate Crimes Debate,” Dan M. Kahan argues that hate crime laws are *prima facie* justified insofar as they cause (additional) harms and are, on the whole, more reprehensible than the same crime committed without a biased-motive. As such, additional punishment for hate crime offenders is permissible. Yet, we believe that Kahan pays far too much attention to the “agent side” of morality and far too little attention to the “patient side” of the same. With that in mind, we argue against Kahan’s position here by appeal to a rights-based critique, concluding with a few thoughts on punishment.

“Rescuing Reliable Knowledge,” Aquamarine II

Kevin Meeker (University of South Alabama)

Although the reliabilist thesis that epistemic justification must be truth-conducive is controversial, almost all epistemologists assume that knowledge is truth-conducive. Challenging this deeply entrenched consensus “reliabilist” view about knowledge, John Turri has recently argued that knowledge can be unreliable. That is, he argues that it is possible for knowledge to proceed from processes or abilities that are not truth-conducive. Unwilling to leave the epistemological scene in a chaotic mess after his demolishing attacks, Turri proposes a successor view to guide our future investigations: “ecumenical reliabilism”. On this view knowledge requires either truth-conducive reliability or non-truth-conducive trustworthiness of the processes that produce beliefs. In this paper I show why Turri’s arguments fail. This failure is quite instructive, though, because it points to an area that requires urgent attention.

“Why We Should Reject the Standard Account of Mind Dependence and Moral Reasons,” Oleander II

Anne Jeffrey (University of Notre Dame)

This paper articulates two assumptions about moral reasons and mind dependence that have been adopted by both internalists and externalists alike. The first is the Constitution Assumption—that if moral reasons are mind dependent, then they constitutively depend on motivating mental states as parts. The second is the Mental State Assumption—that if moral reasons are mind dependent, then they depend on motivating mental states like desires. I explain why these assumptions are unwarranted, and so in fact there may be other views that make moral reasons mind dependent, and so practical, without undermining the idea that moral reasons are also objective.

Session 4: Friday, 11:00 A.M. – 11:40 A.M.

“Assessing Animalism,” Coral Reef

Alli Krile Thornton (Baylor University)

Animalism in its basic form is the view that we are animals. Whether it’s a thesis about anything else—like what our persistence conditions are or whether we’re material things—depends on what the facts are about the persistence conditions and metaphysical make-up of animals. Thus, I will argue, there are different versions of animalism, differing with respect to which other theses are taken in conjunction with animalism in its basic form. Nevertheless, the distinctions between versions of animalism have been largely overlooked. Thus, so have the downstream disparities that those distinctions lead to. This has left it unclear what animalism is about, what other theses about human persons it’s compatible with, and what debates about it turn on. Adequately distinguishing between versions of animalism is thus an important preliminary to assessing them. In this paper, I’ll present and argue for a taxonomy of the most important versions of animalism.

“Reasonable Moral Expectations,” Aquamarine I

Carmen Zinn (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Despite the fact that many of our practical and theoretical judgments turn on the claim that an agent could/could not have been reasonably expected to avoid X, no one has offered a well developed account of the general conditions under which a moral expectation is reasonable or unreasonable. I aim to remedy this by offering a general account of reasonable moral expectations that gives us a principled way of judging whether particular agents could have been reasonably expected to avoid their actions or attitudes, and lends clarity and insight to a number of recent debates in the philosophical literature.

“Issues with Using the Cognitive Ideal of Omniscience to Establish the Value of Pointless Truths,” Aquamarine II

Jon Burmeister (University of Missouri, Columbia)

In Kvanvig’s paper “Pointless Truth,” he uses the cognitive ideal of omniscience to establish the claim that all truths always have some prima facie value. In this paper, I show that, when taken as an argument, Kvanvig’s claims are not successful once they are precisely formulated. Additionally, I evaluate a reasonable extension of the original argument and also find it wanting. Finally, I develop an alternative interpretation of Kvanvig’s use of the cognitive ideal as a thought experiment rather than an argument, but ultimately conclude that this, too, fails to establish Kvanvig’s claim that all truths have prima facie value

“Pride, Identity, and Moral Responsibility,” Oleander II

Jeremy Fischer (University of Alabama, Huntsville)

Having the emotion of pride requires viewing oneself as standing in some special relation to the object of pride. According to agency accounts of the pride relation, the self and the object of pride are suitably related just in case one is morally responsible for the existence, or excellence, of the object of one’s pride. I argue in this paper that agency accounts fail. The second aim of this article is to suggest that the pride relation, though distinct from the relation of moral responsibility, is nonetheless a relation of philosophical interest which merits further attention.

Session 5: Friday, 1:00 P.M. – 1:40 P.M.

“Epistemic Responsibility and the Moral-Realist Majority,” Coral Reef

Thomas Metcalf (Spring Hill College)

I present a new argument for moral realism based on the fact that the majority of philosophers are moral realists. While a straightforward majority-based argument would be inconclusive, I argue that the content of moral realism itself, plus plausible considerations about epistemic virtue, give us reason to put more trust in the moral-realist majority than we would in other, analogous philosophical majorities. This produces an argument for moral realism that is stronger than a simple majority-based argument and has advantages over traditional arguments for realism as well.

“Mechanism, Unification, and Explanatory Power in Tuning and Design Strategies,” Aquamarine I

Nicholaos Jones (University of Alabama, Huntsville)

This is a talk about two explanatory strategies in molecular biology. The Tuning Strategy involves constructing a mathematical model for the dynamics of a biological system and making appropriate derivations from the model. The Design Strategy involves ignoring details about dynamics in order to focus on design principles. I contrast these strategies with respect to their level of causal/mechanistic detail and their unificatory power. I argue that the Design Strategy explains more about a certain kind of robustness. I also engage with an argument by Elliot Sober, according to which unified explanations enjoy no explanatory superiority over their disunified counterparts

“Gendered Slurs,” Aquamarine II

Lauren Ashwell (Bates College)

While there is much disagreement in the philosophical literature about how to explain slurs' derogating capabilities, the idea that each slur has or could have a neutral correlate is almost universally accepted. Gendered pejoratives like “slut,” or “bitch,” are sometimes considered in passing in this literature; I argue, however, that these terms lack a neutral correlate. Rather than taking this to exclude these terms as slurs, I argue that we should rethink assumptions made about the semantic structure of slurs in general.

“The Context Principle, Linguistic Intention, and Anscombe’s Critique of ‘Cartesian Psychology’,” Oleander II

Silver Bronzo (Auburn University)

Can’t I utter a word in isolation and mean it in a determinate way? This is a natural objection to Frege’s Context Principle, which says that words have a meaning only in the context of complete propositions. I argue that the objection depends in fact on a misguided conception of linguistic intention. In order to so, I draw on Anscombe’s critique of an analogous, “Cartesian” conception of practical intention. Anscombe maintains that there are conditions for intending to do something: we cannot intend to do whatever comes to our mind, and we don’t have unlimited first-personal authority on the contents of our own intentions. I maintain that linguistic intention has its conditions too, and that Frege’s Context Principle can be taken to articulate one of these conditions.

Session 6: Friday, 1:50 P.M. – 2:30 P.M.

“Moral Caution and Disagreement: A Case for Vegetarianism,” Coral Reef

John Matheson (University of North Florida)

In this paper, I explain, defend, and apply an ethical principle. According to this principle, we should exercise moral caution, at least when we can. The principle claims that if you should suspend judgment that doing action is a serious moral wrong, and you know that not doing that action is not a serious moral wrong, then you should not do that action. Having motivated this principle, I argue that it has application in applied ethics by way of the epistemic significance of disagreement. My focus here is limited to the question of whether it is morally permissible to eat meat for pleasure.

“Physicalism, Mereology, and the Incarnation,” Aquamarine I

Kevin Sharpe (St. Cloud State University)

According to the Christian faith, the divine Son of God became incarnate and in so doing became human. It’s widely held that physicalists have a difficult time making sense of the incarnation, since this would require a seeming impossibility, viz. the Son of God’s becoming a physical object. This is a problem for all physicalists, like me, who wholeheartedly embrace the ecumenical creeds of the Church. This paper is part of a larger project aimed at developing a physicalist account of the incarnation. Here I respond to Luke van Horn’s argument that it is impossible for the Son of God to become a physical object on the grounds that this would require a mereological simple to become a composite object. Van Horn argues that mereological simples are essentially simple and I reply by discussing one model of how the Son of God could become a human animal.

“Beneficial Oppression and the Harm of Fighting it,” Aquamarine II

Chelsea Haramia (Spring Hill College)

Those who are oppressed are typically considered harmed by oppression. But in some cases, it is the fight against oppression that harms the oppressed individuals. This claim relies on the commonsense notion that one is harmed when one is made worse off than she otherwise would have been. The main challenge to this account of welfare arises from the nonidentity problem. I show that the challenge from nonidentity actually uncovers a means for strengthening this account and grounding moral considerations otherwise occluded in real-world cases of oppression. This informs important questions regarding the responsibilities of the non-oppressed to end oppression.

“In Defense of Epistemic Blame,” Oleander II

Lindsay Rettler (Ohio State University)

Blaming agents for their beliefs is only legitimate if agents have the requisite voluntary control over their beliefs. In this paper I argue that we do have the kind of control required for robust epistemic blame. I distinguish between three types of doxastic control: intention-based control, reason-based control, and influence-based control. I argue that even though we lack intention-based control over our beliefs, such control is not necessary for doxastic blame. Then I argue that even though we have control over our beliefs in the form of reason-responsiveness, such control is not sufficient to satisfy the control condition for doxastic blame. In the end I conclude that we have a form of influence-based control over our beliefs, and that this capacity is both necessary and sufficient for satisfying the control condition for legitimate epistemic blame.

Session 7: Friday, 2:40 P.M. – 3:20 P.M.

“How to Debunk Moral Beliefs Empirically,” Coral Reef

Josh May (University of Alabama, Birmingham) and Victor Kumar (University of Toronto)

Attempts to debunk moral beliefs, by showing they're unjustified, have tended to be global, targeting all moral beliefs or a large set of them. Popular debunking arguments point to various factors purportedly influencing moral beliefs, from evolutionary pressures, to automatic and emotionally-driven processes, to framing effects. We show that such sweeping arguments face a debunker's dilemma: either the relevant factor is not a main basis for belief or it does not render the relevant beliefs unjustified. Empirical debunking arguments in ethics can avoid these problems but only if they are instead highly selective.

“The Silence of God and the Theological Virtue of Hope” Aquamarine I

Aaron D. Cobb (Auburn University, Montgomery)

The loss, or death, of hope is a significant threat to human agency and, thus, to human flourishing. For this reason, it is unclear why a perfectly loving God would permit demoralizing experiences of divine silence. In this paper, I articulate a response to this challenge. Distinguishing between natural hopes and the theological virtue of hope, I seek to show that experiences of divine silence are not incompatible with divine concern.

“The Constitutive Norm Account of Assertion: Explaining Epistemic Harm, but Not Silencing,” Aquamarine II

David Spewak (Mississippi State University)

Miranda Fricker identifies a harm she calls testimonial injustice. Testimonial injustices result from negative identity prejudice arising from stereotypes relating to race, gender, and class. Recently Sanford Goldberg has argued that his constitutive norm account of assertion properly characterizes testimonial injustice. I argue that although Goldberg's account captures a harm, it does not completely explain one component of testimonial injustice: silencing. In doing this, I briefly explain testimonial injustice and the notion of silence under consideration. I then argue that Goldberg's account of assertion does not have the tools to explain silencing as a result of testimonial injustice.

“Explanative Subordination and Explanative Modification,” Oleander II

Eric Carter (North Carolina State University)

The words 'because' and 'why' are paradigmatic expressions of explanation in English. In this paper I investigate how explanative expressions are grammatically integrated and licensed within an explanative sentence. I show how these grammatical factors restrain and regulate the interpretation of an explanative sentence.

Session 8: Friday, 3:30 P.M. – 4:10 P.M.

“Ethics, Character and Empirical Psychology: A Reply to Machery,” Coral Reef

Annalisa Paese (University of Pittsburgh)

Edouard Machery argues that the appeal to the notion of character in ethics relies on the assumption that human agency is unified in a certain kind of way and that this assumption is seriously challenged by three bodies of empirical findings. In this paper I argue that Machery misconstrues the sort of unity presupposed by the notion of character and that the empirical findings he exploits, in one case, are irrelevant to the issue altogether and, in the other two cases, actually provide reasons to cling to the notion of character rather than to abandon it.

“Theological Voluntarism and Moral Goodness: Answering Objections,” Aquamarine I

Matthew Jordan (Auburn University, Montgomery)

The most serious objections to theological voluntarism as an account of the morally good boil down to the charge that, on voluntarism, every natural fact turns out to be normatively impotent. In this essay, I consider this challenge and argue that, actually, Euthyphro was right all along.

“No Fundamental Determinables,” Aquamarine II

Jannai Shields (University of Rochester)

It is commonly thought that if there are such things as determinables, they are less fundamental than their determinates. However, in her paper “Fundamental Determinables”, Jessica Wilson argues for three things: (1) there are determinable properties, (2) the reasons typically given for thinking that determinables are less fundamental than their determinates fail to establish this fact, and (3) at least some determinables are fundamental. My focus is (2). Wilson argues that none of these reasons are adequate. But, her argument against what I call the Fixing View of grounding fails, leaving open the possibility that determinates ground determinables.

“Explanationist Bayesianism,” Oleander II

Ted Poston (University of South Alabama)

My goal in this paper is to argue that explanatory considerations provide a way of strengthening Bayesianism. I consider Bas van Fraassen’s incompatibility argument and Peter Lipton’s heuristic response. I then discuss Michael Huemer’s argument that explanatory considerations can provide a unique way out of a form of inductive skepticism that follows from one way of thinking about a Bayesian Pr-function. The upshot of this paper is that Bayesianism is made stronger by adopting explanationist constraints on an acceptable Pr-function

Session 9: Friday, 4:20 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.**UNDERGRADUATE ESSAY WINNER**

“Why Possibilism about Fiction Just Isn't Possible,” Coral Reef

Laura Crawford (University of South Alabama)

While David Lewis provides an interesting account of possibilism concerning fiction in his works “Truth in Fiction” and the subsequent “Postscripts,” he does not provide much of an explanation (if any) for what would seem to be an essential component of a theory concerning fiction: authorship. In this paper, I provide an account of Lewis’s theory, followed by speculation concerning what authorship could be in relation to modal realism. I then discuss several issues that arise from Lewis’s theory including the contradicting ways he employs the term ‘author’ as well as the death of fiction itself.

“The Moral Significance of Pain in Draper's Argument from Evil,” Aquamarine I

Megan Fritts (University of Wisconsin, Madison) and Robert Reed (Texas A&M University)

Nothing seems more obvious than that pain is intrinsically bad, and this normative claim forms the backbone of Draper’s argument from evil. We seek to call this commonplace assumption into question and show that it is in fact a substantive normative claim. Once the claim of intrinsic badness is disambiguated, we will show that considerations of pain’s representational content/motivational import reveal that its significance is drawn from outside itself, undermining claims of intrinsic badness. Against Draper, we deny the moral significance of pain is distinct from its biological role and that nothing else could play its motivational role.

“Revamping Traditional Arguments for Internalism,” Aquamarine II

Blake McAllister (Baylor University)

Two of the most traditional arguments for internalism contend that only on internalism are we (i) in sufficient control of whether we violate our intellectual norms and (ii) always blameworthy for violating these norms. Recent insights into the non-transparency of our (non-trivial) mental states as well as our general fallibility regarding our duties and their application have threatened to undermine these arguments. We aren’t always in a position to know what our duties require of us—even on internalism—so how does internalism fare any better than the alternatives with respect to (i) and (ii)? I argue that a certain version of internalism can acknowledge the above insights while retaining an advantage over the alternatives with respect to (i) and (ii).

“Explanationism, Perceptual Justification, and Defeat,” Oleander II

Kevin McCain (University of Alabama, Birmingham)

Any plausible theory of perceptual justification must be able to account for the justificatory impact of defeaters. Explanationist theories claim that a perceptual belief is justified when it is part of the best explanation of one’s perceptual experiences. In this paper I argue that consideration of the impact of defeaters on perceptual justification reveals a significant advantage of such theories over their primary rivals: reliabilism and phenomenal conservatism. Explanationist theories can account for the impact of defeaters in a principled, non-ad hoc manner while reliabilism and phenomenal conservatism can only do so in ways that seem ad hoc.

Session 10: Saturday, 8:30 A.M. – 9:10 A.M.

“Do Kripke's Thought Experiments Demonstrate the Existence of A Priori Contingencies?,” Coral Reef

Nathan Dahlberg (Georgia State University)

Kripke argues that some truths are knowable a priori, yet contingently true. In particular, Kripke cites examples where a speaker stipulates reference-fixing claims about an expression, and argues that in these cases the speaker has a priori knowledge of a contingent truth. In this paper, I argue that Kripke's examples fail to demonstrate the existence of a priori contingencies. I argue that when one fixes the reference of an expression via stipulation, they can do one of two things: they can stipulate the meaning of an expression or stipulate metasemantic facts that pick out the expression's meaning. I argue that, in both cases, the stipulated claim fails to express an a priori contingency.

“Are Social Groups Structured Wholes?,” Aquamarine I

Wesley D. Cray (Grand Valley State University)

Katherine Ritchie has argued that social groups are not fusions, but are instead *structured wholes*. Here, I examine problems faced by the structured whole view and develop a version of the fusion view that both avoids these problems and enjoys other theoretical advantages over the structured whole view.

“Monica,” Aquamarine II

Sydney Jolley (Auburn University)

In Augustine's *Confessions*, he writes about his mother's life, particularly in the section entitled, “Monica's Happy Marriage”. In this essay, I will investigate why Augustine goes to such trouble to praise his mother's virtues. I will figure out what seems to be her main virtue. And I will explain how Augustine's life can be compared to his mother's. Who was the more "successful?" Is she the weak character people often picture her as? As I have said my main focus will be the section about Monica's marriage, but I will also mention evidence from the whole of the *Confessions*.

Session 11: Saturday, 9:15 A.M. – 9:55 A.M.

“Not a Matter of Space,” Coral Reef

Cruz Davis (Virginia Tech)

It is commonly thought that material objects must be spatial. Nothing could be material yet lack a spatial location. I think that this view is wrong. In this paper I offer a combinatorial argument against the view that material objects must be spatial. Different accounts of material objects are discussed and found susceptible to similar combinatorial style considerations.

“The Metaphysics of Social Construction: A 'Grounding' Account,” Aquamarine I

Aaron Griffith (College of William and Mary)

This paper outlines a new metaphysical account of social construction. The account brings recent work on the notion of “metaphysical grounding” to bear on the phenomenon of social construction. According to the ‘grounding account’ of social construction, for a subject S to be socially constructed as being of a social kind K (e.g., being a woman) is for the fact that S is a K to be grounded in certain social, rather than biological, facts. The account situates the phenomenon of social construction within more general discussions of the metaphysical structure of reality. Insofar as it brings together two bodies of literature that have, heretofore, not been in contact, the grounding account is beneficial to both parties: to social constructionists who want a metaphysical framework for their theories of gender, race, etc. and to metaphysicians interested in new applications of a theory of grounding.

“What is Kant's Antinomy of Practical Reason?,” Aquamarine II

Jennifer Lockhart (Auburn University)

In this paper I consider Kant’s antinomy of practical reason—his claim that practical reason’s deployment of the concept of the highest good leads to an apparent “conflict of reason with itself” (226, 5:107). I argue that one standard understanding of the antinomy is unsatisfying because the “conflict” of reason can be resolved in a straightforward way. I propose a second interpretation of the antimony that presents the apparent conflict of reason as considerably less tractable.

“Why the Self-Defense Argument for Abortion Rights is Unsound,” Oleander II

Howard Hewitt (Auburn University)

The Self-Defense argument for abortion right claims that an unwanted pregnancy amounts to a serious, non-consensual use of the mother’s body by the fetus and that such a use of one’s body justifies lethal self-defense given there is no non-lethal means available to end that use. So, even if the fetus has a right to life, pre-viable abortion on demand is morally permissible self-defense, or can be justified as such in any case of unwanted pregnancy. I will examine this argument and show that one of its premises is false.

Session 12: Saturday, 10:00 A.M. – 10:40 A.M.

“Plain Truth and the Collapse of Alethic Functionalism to Strong Correspondence Monism,” Coral Reef

Jay Newhard (East Carolina State University)

According to alethic functionalism, truth is a functional property had by all true propositions, and it is manifested by numerous lower level alethic properties, or in some cases, by truth itself, depending on the subject matter properties of the proposition. A proposition whose truth-manifesting property is truth itself is plainly true. The essential functional roles of truth are described by core truisms. It is argued here that plain truth leads alethic functionalism to collapse to a version of strong alethic monism, and that the only core truisms are correspondence truisms. Taken together, alethic functionalism collapses to strong correspondence monism.

“Defeasibility and Reasonable Alternatives,” Aquamarine I

Joshua Smith (Central Michigan University)

Since antiquity, infinitism has struck many as untenable. The case recently made by Podlaskowski and Smith (Podlaskowski and Smith, 2011, 2014, Smith and Podlaskowski, 2013) has helped to secure that view against recent defenses of infinitism. In this article, a new defense from their charge is provided. This defense turns on rejecting an assumption which has gone largely undiscussed in the literature: namely, that the way in which propositions serve as mental contents and how they serve as reasons are, in an important respect, independent of one another.

“From the Principle of Sufficient Reason to Intrinsic Property Essentialism,” Aquamarine II

Joshua Watson (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

Why did Leibniz believe that each substance possesses its intrinsic properties essentially? That is a difficult question, and not one I aim to settle in this paper. Instead, I am interested in exploring a related issue: why would someone who endorsed some of the core Leibnizian doctrines come to this conclusion? In what follows I will present two arguments from the Principle of Sufficient Reason that each substance possesses its intrinsic properties essentially. Although it goes too far to say that this argument is Leibniz's, the argument as a whole is Leibnizian in spirit and crucial parts of it are not far removed from things Leibniz explicitly says. To this extent, the argument is Leibnizian.

“Against Static Dispositions,” Oleander II

Joseph Baltimore (West Virginia University)

Neil Williams advocates for a distinction between dynamic dispositions and static dispositions. Dynamic dispositions are dispositions the manifestation of which results in change. Static dispositions, on the other hand, will engage in manifestations that do not result in change. While certain pragmatic considerations might hinder our appreciation of static dispositions, Williams claims that they are ontologically on par with dynamic dispositions, such that both dispositions equally engage in causally significant manifestations. In this paper, however, I argue that Williams' advancement of static dispositions is unsuccessful, especially if one takes (as Williams himself favors) a powers view of properties.

Session 13: Saturday, 10:50 A.M. – 11:30 A.M.

“An Inferentialist Defense of Millianism,” Coral Reef

Adam Podlaskowski (Fairmont State University)

If (as Millians suggest) names directly refer to objects (or kinds), it is unclear how sentences featuring empty names can be meaningful. I propose that Millians are better served accepting inferential role (Gentzen-style) semantics for explaining how words combine to form sentences. In doing so, Millians may still maintain that the semantic function of a name is to directly refer, if they accept that this function determines the rules responsible for the composition of sentences. So, reference is still key (albeit indirectly) for meaningful sentences; and sentences with empty names are also meaningful, even if not truth-evaluable.

“Are You Sure?,” Aquamarine I

William Melanson (University of Nebraska, Omaha)

In our everyday lives, it seems that we spend far more time concerned with how sure we are than with whether we are justified or have knowledge. This paper examines the role and nature of such surety expressions. In particular, it argues that expressing one’s degree of surety is an important communicative advance beyond merely expressing one’s beliefs or even expressing one’s confidence in one’s beliefs. It is suggested that in expressing surety, one places a stake in the veracity of one’s testimony. This helps us to establish a basis for epistemic trust.

“The Metaphysics of the Good in the Ethics of Aristotle,” Aquamarine II

Samuel Baker (University of South Alabama)

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle makes important use of the following two notions of goodness: (1) *good of a kind*, e.g. a good sculptor or a good human, and (2) *good for something*, e.g. good for fish or good for Alexander the Great. Yet does he make use of *absolute goodness*, that is, goodness as an intrinsic and not merely relational property? Many scholars seem to think not. Moreover, some neo-Aristotelians have even argued that *goodness of a kind* and *goodness for something* are the only sorts of goodness that should be acknowledged. Mostly limiting myself to evidence within the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I argue that Aristotle is committed not only to things being absolutely good but also to a metaphysics of absolute goodness where God is the cause of all other absolute goods in virtue of being the absolutely best thing.

“The Puzzle of Interminable Blame,” Oleander II

Matt King (University of Alabama, Birmingham)

How should we regard the blameworthy over time? In one obvious sense, we ought to blame them. But there must also be limits on such blame. In this paper, I bring out a tension between the requirement that the blameworthy deserve blame and the observation that blaming indefinitely seems (ordinarily) objectionable. I resolve the tension by pointing to a class of norms governing our moral attention, highlighting the flexibility and generality of the approach. Not only does it resolve the puzzle of interminable blame, it promises to shed light on a variety of issues in the ethics of blaming.

Session 14: Saturday, 11:35 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.

“Linguistic Understanding and Knowledge of Truth Conditions,” Coral Reef
Chase Wrenn (University of Alabama)

Dorit Bar-on, Claire Horisk, and William Lycan (2000; see also Lycan 2010) have offered an argument for a truth-conditional account of linguistic understanding. It turns on two key claims. First, knowing a sentence’s meaning suffices, along with nonlinguistic omniscience, for knowing its truth-value. Second, knowing enough to assign a sentence a truth-value, given nonlinguistic omniscience, involves knowing the sentence’s truth-conditions. I argue that the first claim is false unless we understand “facts” in a way that makes the second claim implausible. A natural reformulation of the argument in terms of propositional, rather than factual, knowledge, puts off the problem but does not solve it.

“Are Evidentialism and Permissivism Compatible?,” Aquamarine I
Chris Tweedt (Baylor University)

Permissivism is the view that given a total body of evidence, there is more than one epistemically justified confidence level or doxastic attitude that one can have toward a proposition. According to Permissivists, something besides the evidence affects what is justified for a subject. In contrast, Evidentialism, according to Conee and Feldman, requires a supervenience thesis according to which two evidential duplicates are also exactly alike with respect to which propositions are epistemically justified for them. On this view, evidence solely determines what’s justified for a subject. Permissivism and Evidentialism thus described seem flatly incompatible. I’ll argue that they are, despite appearances, compatible. With respect to Permissivism debates, then, Evidentialism is not at stake. I’ll then show why it *seems* that Evidentialism and Permissivism are incompatible, and I’ll clarify what’s really at stake in debates about Permissivism. What’s at stake may be disconcerting to Evidentialists, but Evidentialism will remain unscathed.

“Epistemological Disjunctivism and Warrant Transfer,” Aquamarine II
Tom Lockhart (Auburn University)

Duncan Pritchard claims that his version of epistemological disjunctivism provides the resources to respond to the radical sceptic. The argument he employs is a descendant of Moore’s response to the sceptic. José Zalabardo argues that, according to a ‘reasonable’ condition on evidence-based knowledge, Pritchard’s reasoning is impermissible because the premises cannot serve as an evidential basis for the conclusion and, thus, the Neo-Moorean anti-sceptical strategy fails. In this paper, we motivate an alternative restriction on when warrant may be transmitted across an entailment, which, we contend, is both superior to Zalabardo’s condition and permits Pritchard’s disjunctivist neo-Moorean argument.

“The “Afterlife Conjecture” and Malleability in Meaningful Projects: A Critique of Samuel Scheffler’s “Doomsday” and “Infertility” Scenarios,” Aquamarine II
Jason Gray (University of Alabama, Birmingham)

Samuel Scheffler provides two thought experiments meant to motivate the idea that most of the value we derive from life projects comes not from concern for ourselves or for those we love, but from our belief that humanity as a whole will continue on into the distant future. I argue that one of Scheffler’s thought experiments can be used to motivate intuitions that are the opposite of those which he hopes to elicit and that there are many projects which can provide as much, and as worthy, a value to life as ones that depend on humanity’s continued existence.