



Meeting Program

Friday, 31 October	Session 1 The Maple Room	Session 2 The Walnut Room
9:00 – 9:30	<i>Registration</i>	
	Group A Chair: Sam Bennett	Group B Chair: Brian Johnson
9:30 – 10:20am	“Rethinking Target Systems: A Deflationary View” Speaker: Ziren Yang	“Staying True to Fiction: Beyond Lewis’s Analysis” Ashton Hoene
10:30 – 11:20am	“The Problem of Induction: Technically Revisited” Speaker: Zeguro Garrigues	“Dummett on Frege’s Definition of Number” Dohee Lee
11:30 – 12:20am	“Moral Deference, Political Motivation, and Self Flattery” Speaker: Adam Lake	“Frege’s Logical Criterion is Psychological” Joel B. Carini <i>Winner of the McCarty Prize in Logic</i>
12:30 – 2:15pm	Lunch on our own + <i>IPA Business Meeting 1:30-2:15</i>	
	Group C Chair: Julian Lee-Sursin	Group D Chair: Brian Chance
2:30 – 3:20pm	“Mountains out of Myhills” Speaker: Mack Sullivan	“Let’s Be Different Together: Meaningfulness of Lives as the Foundation of Neurodiversity” Michael Dickson
3:30 – 4:20pm	“Why AI Representation is Incompatible with Democratic Values” Speaker: Matthew Jackson	“Skepticism is not a Normative Theory” Yanai Sened
4:30 – 6:00pm	<i>Keynote Address, (The Dogwood Room)</i> “What is Kant’s Ethics?” Allen Wood, Indiana University	
7:00pm	For those interested, pizza will be provided in the IU Philosophy Department Lounge after the keynote. The lounge is in Sycamore Hall 023, and you are welcome to join the group of IU attendees as the y walk to Sycamore after the lecture.	

Saturday, 1 November	Session A The Maple Room	Session B The Walnut Room
9:00 – 9:30	<i>Registration</i>	
	Group E Chair: Brian Johnson	Group F Chair: Adam Lake
9:30 – 10:20am Speaker:	“Contingency and Non-Existence in the Cosmogony of Ibn Arabi” Amhad Rhatib Karkoutli	“Is Acquaintance a Sui Generis Epistemic Relation?” Julian Lee-Sursin <i>Winner of the Graduate Paper Prize</i>
10:30 – 11:20am Speaker:	“Reassessing Comparative Readings of Kant’s Theoretical Philosophy and the Buddhist Doctrine of Annata” Kavin Chada	“Rescuing the Desire to Know Account of Curiosity” Aleksandra Kuciel
11:30 – 1:30pm	<i>Lunch</i>	
	Group G Chair: Sam Bennett	Group H Chair: Brian Chance
1:30 – 2:20pm Speaker:	“Clarity, Distinctness and Mutability: Reconsidering Descartes Through Gassendi’s Objections” Juan Palencia	“Doing Our Part in this Non-Ideal World: A Duty to Pick up the Slack” Nicole Hassoun
2:30 – 3:20pm Speaker	“Descartes on Atheist’s Clear and Distinct Perception” Hyeongyun Kim	“A Plea for Revenge” David Holiday
3:30 – 4:20pm Speaker:	“A Proto-Spinozan Critique of Cartesian Dualism in 17th Century Dutch Art” Kevin Bethell	

IPA Executive Officers 2025-2026:

President:	Brian Johnson, Purdue
Vice President:	Samuel Bennett, Purdue
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Author: Kevin Bethell
Title: "A Proto-Spinozan Critique of Cartesian Dualism in 17th Century Dutch Art"

Abstract: This paper explores the intersection of philosophy, religion, and art in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, arguing that a proto-Spinozan critique of Cartesian dualism emerges not only in the philosophical writings of the period but also within the artistic transformations that accompanied the Protestant Reformation. In 1641, René Descartes, while living in the Netherlands, published his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, establishing the dualist framework that separated mind and body into distinct substances. Though enormously influential, Cartesian dualism provoked skepticism almost immediately, culminating in Benedict Spinoza's radical monism later in the century. Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677) rejected the separation of mind and body, instead advancing the identification of God with Nature (*Deus sive Natura*) as the single substance with infinite attributes. In his system, thought and extension are not separate realities but distinct expressions of the same underlying unity. This philosophical shift is illuminated by the broader religious and cultural transformations within the Dutch Republic. Following the Eighty Years' War and the rise of Calvinist theology, Catholic iconography and overtly religious painting declined sharply. Art inventories from Delft and Amsterdam demonstrate this movement: while biblical history paintings dominated in the early seventeenth century, by its close they had been largely displaced by landscapes, still lifes, and genre scenes. The visual emphasis on the natural world and everyday life reflects a cultural movement away from representations of God as an external, intervening agent and toward a conception of the divine as immanent within nature itself. Protestant iconoclasm rejected devotional images as idolatrous, yet this very rejection created an artistic space in which God's presence was rendered not in saints or miracles, but in the ordered beauty of the world. This paper does not claim a direct causal link between Spinoza's philosophy and Dutch artistic practice, but rather demonstrates how both were products of a shared intellectual and cultural milieu. Philosophers and painters alike absorbed the theological and social currents of their age. Just as Calvinist theologians rejected human projections onto the divine, Spinoza dismantled anthropomorphic conceptions of God, replacing them with a naturalistic metaphysics in which God and Nature are one. By placing Spinoza's metaphysics alongside the artistic evolution of seventeenth-century Dutch painting, this paper argues that both developments represent parallel critiques of Cartesian dualism. Where Descartes posited a transcendent soul distinct from matter, Dutch art and Spinoza alike reveal a growing conviction that mind, body, and world are inseparably one.

Author: Joel B. Carini
Title: "Frege's Logical Criterion is Psychological"

Abstract: Frege's criterion of content contravenes the logic-psychology distinction, his "fundamental principle." What is Frege's criterion? If a thinker can take contradictory attitudes toward contents, then they differ. But a thinker's possible attitudes are psychological features of her and not logical feature of contents, I will argue. Hence, what Frege's criterion distinguishes, viz., finely individuated "contents", are merely psychologically, not logically distinct. Thus, using a psychological criterion to individuate logical contents, Frege contravenes his logic-psychology distinction. While some contemporary Fregeans, content internalists, acquiesce in psychologism, the logic-psychology distinction continues to have bite. How? Because an accepted feature of contemporary notions of content is that content must have truth-conditions. But, I will argue, narrow content lacks truth-conditions. Hence, narrow content, as internalists like Fodor have conceded, is not content but merely Kaplanian character. Frege's criterion cannot be preserved by biting the psychologistic bullet. Among contemporary Fregeans who maintain the non-psychological character of content, David Chalmers' powerful account rests on a controversial notion of epistemic possibility. But epistemic possibility, I will argue, supervenes on psychological features of the thinker rather than objective or

logical features of content. Accordingly, contents with different epistemic possibilities for us may nevertheless have identical content. Many of today's externalists, direct reference theorists, and Russellians, though they reject aspects of Fregeanism, continue to genuflect to Frege's criterion. Social externalists like Burge individuate content finely based on Frege's criterion, and direct reference theorists and Russellians shift from naïve to sophisticated Russellianism, out of deference to Frege's criterion. But if my argument is correct, such deference is unwarranted, for Frege's criterion may be rejected for contravening Frege's own "fundamental principle": "Always to separate sharply the psychological from the logical." Even in contemporary context, the separation of psychology from logic remains stubbornly fundamental.

Author: Kavin Chada
Title: "Reassessing Comparative Readings of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy and the Buddhist Doctrine of Anattā"

Abstract:

Recent work on Kantian dimensions of Buddhist thought (Cummiskey 2011; O'Hagan 2018; Schafer 2024) remains held up by a persistent worry that Kant's theoretical philosophy is at odds with a central tenet of Buddhist philosophy: the doctrine of the not-self (anattā). Jay Garfield presents an example of one such worry in his introductory survey of comparative readings of Buddhist and Western philosophical discourses, *Engaging Buddhism*. He claims Kant's Transcendental Deduction offers an account of "the synchronic determinacy of identity," which is at odds with the doctrine of anatta (Garfield 2015). His reading of the Transcendental Deduction, which erroneously attributes many additional claims to Kant, misconstrues the project of the first Critique. The self is one of the principle metaphysical subjects Kant sought to set bounds on in the Critique. To see this one must read the Paralogisms alongside the Transcendental Deduction, which illustrates the genuinely Buddhist nature of some of Kant's claims. Oppositely, one might argue that there is a deep opposition between the Buddhist doctrine of anattā and Kant's philosophy of mind. Katrin Flikschuh argues along these lines, on the grounds that Buddhist practice encourages passive engagement with the world, and lacks the active engagement Kant recognizes as constitutive of consciousness (Flikschuh 2022). However Flikschuh seriously mischaracterizes Buddhist practice, in part due to her uncritical reliance on popular Western depictions of it, which lead her to conclude its passivity. Both Garfield and Flikschuh's comparative readings go awry in neglecting the fundamentally practical nature of the doctrine of anattā. Following Emer O'Hagan, I argue there is a strong resonance between Kant's practical philosophy and the doctrine of anattā regarded as a "contemplative practice" (O'Hagan 2018). Furthermore, there is no fundamental incompatibility between Kant's Transcendental Deduction and the doctrine of anattā, or Buddhist practice and the spontaneity required for Kantian consciousness.

Author: Michael Dickson
Title: "Let's Be Different Together: Meaningfulness of Lives as a Foundation for Neurodiversity"

Abstract: 'Neurodiversity' names both an empirical claim (broadly, "there is variation in the mental characteristics of human persons") and a call to action (broadly, "society should accept and support neurodivergent individuals as such"). Part one of this talk is an argument that attempts to ground the latter on the former do not succeed, because they rely on a background assumption that 'acceptance and support' follows from instrumental value. For example, Moore et al. (2021, 77) find that ADHD-diagnosed persons have "higher levels of entrepreneurial alertness", and on those grounds "encourage teachers to acknowledge and even nurture the cognitive differences displayed

by those with ADHD” (ibid., 83). Similarly, Dupuis et al. (2022) observe (as many have) that autistic persons can be well suited to intense and sustained focus. This kind of thinking harkens to the early days of the neurodiversity movement: “Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general” (Blume 1998). The problem is that those for whom no such case can be made (who are, overall, apparently, a ‘cost to society’) are left out. Attempts to show why the ‘usefulness argument’, properly understood, in fact includes them fail. The conclusion is not that the call to action should be dropped (nor, certainly, that its scope should be restricted to ‘useful’ people), but that it is in need of a firmer foundation. This firmer foundation is, perhaps ironically, to be found not in what makes us diverse, but in the intrinsic value of our common human nature. In the second part of the talk, this intrinsic value will be explicated in terms of Levinson’s (2004) idea that intrinsic value attaches to ‘lives being certain ways’ together with Audi’s (2005) notion of the ‘existential meaningfulness’ of lives.

Author: Zeguro Garrigues
Title: “The Problem of Induction Technically Revisited”

Abstract: Hume’s Principle, Leibniz’s Law, and diagonalization proofs are among the most fundamental operators shaping the roots of modern logical theory. Philosophical discussions have typically examined these tools in isolation, asking what each can or cannot secure within a formal system. Yet the challenge of induction—unlike deduction or abduction—places unique pressure on these operators, since inductive reasoning forces us to confront background assumptions that deduction can safely bypass and which abduction appears agnostic about. In this paper, I revisit the philosophical treatment of induction alongside these canonical operators to show how the choice of background framework alters their force and scope. My central claim is that induction exposes a structural gap between the guarantees afforded by deduction and the provisional status of generalization, and that this gap can be clarified by tracing how diagonalization interacts with principles of identity and abstraction. The result is a more precise account of what is at stake when a logical system opts for one operator over another, and how these choices bear on the broader philosophical problem of justification. Some repercussions for modeling Abduction fall naturally out of this account which leads to a new species of logic overlooked from Aristotle to CS Peirce—a logic of Edenics (semantic & syntactic) which is dubbed "Seduction".

Author: Nicole Hassoun
Title: “Doing Our Part in this Non-Ideal World: A Duty to Pick Up the Slack”

Abstract: What costs must we bear to help distant strangers avoid great suffering and death from natural causes? There are many answers to this question. This essay considers and critiques the claim that we must only do our fair share to help others. Proponents of fair share views are often motivated to find something that “sets the case where one directly confronts a person in imminent danger of death or serious injury apart from the wider set of circumstances in which we have opportunities to prevent harm or alleviate deprivation” (Miller, 2019, 328). Some hold that “agent-neutral principles should not under partial compliance require sacrifice of an agent where the total compliance effect on her, taking that sacrifice into account would be worse than it would be (all other aspects of her situation remaining the same) under full compliance from now on” (Murphy, 2000, 80). On these accounts, people should just bear their fair share of the costs of fulfilling our collective obligations to aid (Murphy, 2000, 74 – 101; Miller, 2019). However, this essay argues that depending on what each person must do if everyone did their part, fair shares views may let people do almost nothing for others while leaving great needs unmet or require some to sacrifice everything for others. Moreover, the main ways of specifying fair shares in the literature are unsustainable at least in our

non-ideal world where many people fail to do what they should. So, we should not endorse the rules that would produce the most good for society as a whole if people did what they should. When some fail to do their part, others often must take up the slack to ensure everyone fares well enough.

References

Author: Ashton Hoene
Title: "Staying True to Fiction - Beyond Lewis's Analysis"

Abstract: David Lewis' account of how to speak truly about fiction was designed to explain how it is that we may speak truly about non-existent objects, and in developing this account he gave both an analysis intended to capture psychological claims about fictional characters, and an explanation of how to speak truly about fictions which contain inconsistencies, but it appears that when taken together these two pieces of the account give rise to an odd tension. Suppose that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a Sherlock Holmes story in which Sherlock Holmes murdered a definitively innocent man in cold blood. I, an avid reader of Sherlock Holmes stories, would be likely to exclaim, "Sherlock Holmes would never do that!". Yet, it seems that Conan Doyle's decision to write such events makes it clear that Sherlock Holmes absolutely would do that; in fact, he just did! What, then, do we say of my statement? It does not seem simply false: given everything we know of Sherlock Holmes, prior to this story, it seems incredibly clear that he is not the kind of man to do something like that, which is what led me to make the statement in the first place. This tension is not neatly accounted for by either of the relevant pieces of Lewis' analysis, but I propose that his framework gives us the tools necessary to resolve it. Specifically, when an author is charged with mischaracterization, it is because, in the closest possible world in which the fiction is told as known fact and the audience's perception is true, had the author not asserted their will, the event would not have happened. The author's actions, in addition to conflicting with previously established truths of the fiction, move the fictional world further from reality.

Author: David Holiday
Title: "A Plea for Revenge"

Abstract: Revenge has a bad rap in moral philosophy. The "party line" on revenge in modern, Western moral thought (both Christian and secular) is unequivocal on this point. After suffering an injury, although it is natural to feel resentment, we must resist the drive to seek revenge and strive to forgive. I argue that such wholesale rejections of revenge are a mistake: in certain cases, and when it is done in a particular spirit, revenge is not only morally permissible, but may even be *the right thing to do*.

I first review ethicists' strongest concerns about revenge. Together, they make a persuasive case for the claim that most victims, most of the time, should follow Butler's advice and "forswear" vengeance. However, a close reading of Jean Améry's philosophical analysis of resentment and his desire for vengeance reveals a form of revenge distinct to stereotypical portrayal as a selfish indulgence in retaliatory blood lust. Améry shows that revenge can be an act of moral communication which: aims to reconstitute a moral relationship or community between victim and perpetrator; is motivated by a dedication to the truth (not subjective satisfaction of the victim-come-revenger); and, most importantly and surprisingly, it is done partly for the sake of its *patient* (the perpetrator of the original injury).

Having made my case, I contrast it with the two leading contemporary defences of vengeance: Jeffrie Murphy's claim that holding on to resentment may be virtuous in certain

circumstances of victimhood; and Peter French's pure retributivist account, which uses to Mackie's claim that our sense of wrongdoing is partly constituted by the sense that wrongs requires a hostile response to support the claim that vengefulness is a virtuous expression of a deep commitment to morality.

Author: Matthew Jackson
Title: "TBA"

Abstract: Recent advancements in artificial intelligence have prompted calls for the development of technology to improve our democratic practices. The most interesting form of so-called "augmented democracy" proposes the use of personalized Large Language Models (LLMs) to create digital twins from the preferences of individual citizens to automatically vote as those people would. If implemented well, augmented democracy offers solutions to problems of efficiency, representation, and complexity which undermine current democracies. Setting aside the obvious technical limitations, these proposals for augmented democracy offer a unique opportunity to consider what makes democracy valuable in the first place. Drawing on contemporary democratic theory, I identify both instrumental and non-instrumental justifications for democracy, and I show how LLMs cannot satisfy any plausible conception of democratic justification. LLMs fail in democratic contexts because they cannot deliberate in the way required to satisfy instrumental and non-instrumental accounts of democratic justification. As it stands, there is no reason to expect augmented democracy to improve existing democratic practices.

Author: Ahmad Rhatib Karkoutli
Title: "Contingency and Nonexistence in the Cosmogony of Ibn 'Arabī"

Abstract: The *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikām*, or *Bezels of Wisdom*, has been long regarded as one of the most perplexing texts composed by Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī (1165-1240) and has generated commentaries into the 20th century. It is made up of 28 chapters, each of which is dedicated to a prophet of the Islamic tradition and a corresponding divine perfection. Insofar as the prophets are interpreted as loci for the individuated manifestation of the transcendent Reality, Ibn 'Arabī finds in them exemplars of a cosmological system founded on the principle of theophany, or *tajallī*. The unity, intelligibility and beauty of the cosmos is only resolvable with reference to the singular Reality that it reflects. The systematic incorporation of theophany into a cosmological vision requires a particular understanding of the conventional metaphysical concepts inherited by classical Islamic philosophers. Utilizing the parameters of unity/multiplicity, temporality/eternality and necessity/contingency, we hope to provide an interpretation of the short, though intriguing, cosmogonical account with which Ibn 'Arabī opens the first chapter of his book on the Prophet Adam. Our aim is not only to demonstrate Ibn 'Arabī's deft deployment of these conventional metaphysical principles but to highlight the role of contingency and nonexistence in his theophanic cosmogony. Ibn 'Arabī's metaphysics is commonly described alternatively as monism, pantheism or panentheism. None of these terms are adequate; following the work of Henry Corbin (1903-1978), we contend that the term theophany is not only closer to the original Arabic terminology but allows for an explication of the transformed sense with which Ibn 'Arabī uses the principles of contingency (*al-imkān*) and nonexistence/privation (*al-'adm*) somewhat paradoxically as the differential marker between God and creature. What is more, we contend that the transformation of these terms begins in his predecessors, Ibn Sīna, Al-Ghazālī and Suhrawardī, who will be valuable in tracing this change.

Author: Hyeongyun Kim
Title: "Descartes on Atheists' Clear and Distinct Perception"

Abstract: It is a common reproach that Descartes' epistemological system is not immune to the charge of circularity, often referred to as the Cartesian Circle. This paper aims to show that both Descartes' arguments and the difficulties he encountered are far more complex than they initially appear. Since Descartes himself was well acquainted with objections of this kind, he responded in several places, offering a serious and non-circular justification for the validity of clear and distinct perceptions. Although such perceptions are known independently of God's existence and later used to construct a proof of it, Descartes simultaneously sought to preserve the significance of God's role in his epistemology. This seemingly paradoxical task is especially evident in his discussion of atheists' clear and distinct perceptions, which reveals that the distinction between *cognitio* and *scientia* is essential for understanding God's epistemic function within Descartes' system. That being said, I argue that his argument remains unsatisfactory, as it gives rise to a further dilemma: it either renders his criterion of true science arbitrary or continues to undermine the role of God in his epistemological system. To substantiate this, I first summarize Descartes' notion of clear and distinct perception along with its exegetical issues. I then reconstruct his reasoning and argue that it is ultimately untenable in light of this dilemma.

Author: Aleksandra Kuciel
Title: "Rescuing the Desire to Know Account of Curiosity"

Abstract: According to a common account of curiosity, to be curious p is to have the desire to know p (Williamson (2000), Whitcomb (2010), Haziza (2022)). The desire to know (DTK) account of curiosity is challenged by the argument from metacognition. Opponents of the DTK view point out that the account omits the observation that curiosity is an attitude experienced by beings who lack metacognitive states, such as desires to know. We should, instead, opt for an interrogativist account of curiosity (Friedman (2013, 2019)). On this competing view, curiosity is a *sui generis*, first-order attitude, irreducible to beliefs or other mental states, with questions rather than propositions as its contents. The aim of this paper is to argue that both the standard DTK account and interrogativism leave out relevant instances of curiosity and to offer a revised version of the DTK view. I suggest that a subject, S , is curious p if and only if she has the desire of perceiving having come to know p . I try to show how capturing curiosity as the desire for perceived knowledge allows us to accommodate instances of curiosity left out by the standard DTK views as well as by interrogativism. I then respond to the argument from metacognition and propose that an adequate explanation of curiosity needs to involve a metacognitive element in order to make sense of the correlation between curiosity and knowledge gaps. I conclude that a revised version of the DTK view can accommodate cases omitted by rival accounts and that invoking metacognition allows for a more comprehensive explanation of curiosity.

Author: Adam Lake
Title: "Moral Deference, Political Motivation, and Self Flattery"

Abstract: Deference, that is, forming a belief on the basis of testimony, is often regarded as surprising and unusual for moral beliefs. Compare forming a belief that lobsters can feel pain because an expert said so, to forming a belief that it is immoral to eat creatures that feel pain because an expert said so. There is an asymmetry that renders the latter surprising whereas the first feels commonplace. One popular attempt to explain this asymmetry involves affective dispositions. Moral beliefs, unlike non-moral beliefs, should be accompanied by emotions like

indignation and guilt. Many are skeptical that deferential moral beliefs will be accompanied by appropriate dispositions to feel connected moral emotions. However, I argue that the case of political belief shows that affective dispositions do not explain the strangeness of moral deference. Assertions by politicians shape morality-laden political beliefs. Those same politicians also manipulate emotional dispositions. Hence, one would expect deferential beliefs in politics to be accompanied by appropriate affective dispositions. However, openly deferring to a politician as an expert on purely moral matters, rather than non-moral facts about policy, still strikes one as unusual and surprising. I argue that the actual explanation for the asymmetry is found in motivated reasoning, reasoning which aims at protecting psychologically important parts of our self-image. Empirical literature suggests that motivated reasoning aimed at protecting one's partisan affiliation, rather than deference, explains the influence of politicians on political belief. Similarly, I suggest that we engage in motivated reasoning to protect our self image as competent moral reasoners who can reach the moral truth without deference. Acknowledging a need to rely on moral deference would undermine our confidence in our own moral reasoning. The motivation to reassure ourselves we are competent moral reasoners, absent in non-moral matters where deference is normal, explains the asymmetry.

Author: Dohee Lee
Title: "Dummett on Frege's Definition of Number: Between Language and Mathematical Practice"

Abstract: In distinguishing the uses of terms "one" and "unit," Frege argues that while "unit" can be plural and is therefore a concept word, "one" (like other cardinal numbers) is akin to a proper noun as there cannot be multiple "ones." According to Michael Dummett, within Frege's argument that cardinal numbers must be taken as objects, Frege often focuses on the form of the expressions that stand for those objects, claiming that most arithmetical contexts involve using them as proper names, or singular terms. Baker and Hacker, by contrast, contextualize Dummett's argument a flawed attempt to frame Frege as a philosopher of language significantly concerned with how we attach senses to words, noting that Frege does not explicitly state that using words in sentences attaches senses to them and that Dummett overestimates the plausibility of this interpretation. Assessing Dummett's characterization of Frege as relying on the grammatical usage of "one" to argue that the number one is an object thus proves central to the broader debate about Frege's place in the philosophy of language. This paper begins by considering Frege in the context of Dummett's characterization, analyzing whether Frege's examination of arithmetic language and its use entails engagement with the philosophy of language in Dummett's sense. Through Baker and Hacker, the paper then identifies possible sources of error in Dummett's characterization of Frege, in particular concerning the hierarchy of linguistic reflection and mathematical practice in Frege's *Grundlagen*. Lastly, the paper considers the relative import of Frege's theory of sense for the philosophy of language, on the one hand, and the definition of cardinal numbers, on the other. This paper shows that Frege's approach to defining the cardinal numbers demonstrates a distinct hierarchy of theoretical interest, undermining characterizations that his defining of cardinal numbers follows philosophical reflections on language external to mathematics.

Author: Juan Palencia
Title: "TBA"

Abstract In the *Meditations*, Descartes presents clear and distinct perceptions as a criterion of truth. However, Gassendi raises the following concern about these perceptions: if the conviction of a clear

and distinct perception like one found in geometry can later be overturned, then how can these perceptions guarantee infallible truth? Descartes's reply to these concerns in the Second Set of Replies seems question-begging, for he insists that clear and distinct perceptions are immune to doubt by their nature. This paper reconsiders Descartes's notion of clear and distinct perception in light of Gassendi's objection. Drawing on Louis Loeb's reading of Descartes, I argue that Descartes's appeal to the psychological irresistibility of these perceptions suggests a more fallibilistic interpretation of truth than is usually acknowledged. On this reading, clear and distinct perceptions are understood as doxastic states whose status are derived from the strength of conviction that they produce, as opposed to understanding them as absolute determinations of truth. This suggests the possibility, which I take Gassendi to be alluding to, that even clear and distinct perceptions might be revisable. By virtue of this reading, I show how Descartes's account of truth contains the resources for a more fallibilist conception of epistemic assurance that makes the notion of clear and distinct perceptions defensible.

Author: Julian Lee-Sursina
Title: "Is Acquaintance a Sui Generis Epistemic Relation?"

Abstract: This paper reassesses Bertrand Russell's theory of knowledge by acquaintance through the lens of recent work in epistemology. In early analytic philosophy, acquaintance was conceived as a direct, non-inferential relation to mental items—such as sense-data or one's own thoughts—that grounds empirical knowledge (Russell 1911, 1912). Russell described acquaintance as epistemically foundational: it provides access to particulars without inference or mediation. Figures like Moore and Broad treated this view as central to introspective awareness (Moore 1906; Broad 1925), while critics such as Hicks and Edgell challenged whether acquaintance could yield genuine knowledge (Hicks et al. 1919; Edgell 1918). Contemporary epistemology has revived interest in non-inferential justification through the concept of seemings. As McAllister (2018) argues, seemings are experiences with propositional content that present a proposition as true without requiring inference, endorsement, or prior belief. They are not beliefs: for instance, a Muller-Lyer illusion may still "seem to you to depict lines of unequal length even when you believe and know they are equal. Nor are seemings mere inclinations to believe: you might be inclined to believe that your friend is innocent because you want them to be, but that does not make it seem to you that they are. Seemings are thus sui generis: they are irreducible to either belief or desire-based tendencies, and are best understood as a distinct kind of experiential state with epistemic import. Crucially, seemings possess forcefulness: they do not merely represent that something might be the case, as imaginings do, but feel as though they disclose how things actually are. For example, imagining a red apple on a table involves a mental image without any impression that the apple is really there; in contrast, a seeming that there is a red apple on the table comes with an experiential "push" suggesting truth and justification. This forcefulness is central to their epistemic import, as it motivates rational responsiveness in a way imaginings do not. I argue that Russell's notion of acquaintance can be fruitfully understood in terms of this forceful epistemic character of seemings. Acquaintance, like seemings, provides a direct, non-inferential, and compelling experiential access to one's own mental states, making acquaintance not just a passive relation but an epistemically significant event that grounds immediate self-knowledge. This parallel helps clarify Russell's original idea and addresses critiques by situating acquaintance within a modern framework that explains how such direct awareness can justify knowledge claims without inferential mediation.

Author: Mack Sullivan
Title: “Mountains out of Myhills”

Abstract: It is often suggested that fine-grained views in metaphysics or logic entail a contradiction, given the resources of certain kinds of logic (*e.g.* plural logic) or set theory. (Call any such argument a *Russell-Myhill Paradox*, or *RMP*.)

In this paper, however, I suggest that the overall explanatory advantages of:

(i) Believing that the theorems of the logics on which logical RMPs rely are true *simpliciter*.

are swamped by the advantages of:

(ii) Believing in the truth of the fine-grained metaphysical or logical theories which those theorems’ truth *simpliciter* would rule out.

So, given a plausible abductive principle (Williamson 2016), those logics’ theorems are not true *simpliciter*, but instead simply true in the relevant models, and so a key premise in the logical RMPs is false.

I then suggest that, if we accept one familiar 20th-century semantic framework, then we should say that the entities which interest metaphysicians or logicians—every world, every proposition, every property, and more—are all *proper classes*. And I then show that the mathematical RMPs are unsound when directed against fine-grained views on which every such entity is a proper class. For the soundness of the mathematical RMPs requires that we can apply mathematical principles (*e.g.*, Cantor’s theorem) which do *not* apply to proper classes to the entities posited by the fine-grained theory that the relevant RMP targets.