

# Department of Philosophy

## Visiting Speaker Series 2013-2014

### Fall term:

<b>September 13th</b>	<b>Tim Kenyon (University of Waterloo)</b>	<b>Oral History and the Epistemology of Testimony</b>
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Epistemologists of testimony tend to focus on cases of oral testimony in particular. But they have typically relied on fictional examples of it, devoting relatively little attention to other disciplines having an applied focus on the reliability of oral reports. In particular, social epistemology in the analytic tradition has found little to say about the field of oral history as a source of insight. Some of the small attention that oral historiography has received from social epistemology has depicted it as supporting the thesis that there is a standing justification for accepting testimony, independent of supporting evidence in the first instance. The thought here is that historians allegedly place (expert, informed) trust in oral tradition even when no additional evidence supporting it is available to them.

I argue that oral historiography does not bear out the thesis of a standing justification for accepting testimony. But it holds different and broader lessons for social epistemology. It illustrates practical stakes of the thought that testimonial transmission is generally a reliable belief-forming process. It suggests that the warranted uptake of testimony critically involves a wider range of social and contextual factors than the philosophical literature might otherwise reflect. The weighing of diverse kinds of evidence, the social construction of interview contexts, and the varieties of communicative aims are often invisible in the one-off simplified examples of fictional discourse that characterize the epistemological literature on testimony. Historiography makes these issues central to the assessment of testimonial credibility. Recognizing and theorizing around these factors, I argue, enriches the epistemology of testimony.

<b>September 20th</b>	<b>Jennifer Primmer (Practice Job Talk)</b>	<b>Understanding the Dimensional Nature of Alexithymia</b>
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In this paper, I explore how best to conceptualize the nature of alexithymia. I argue that the condition is best understood as a dimensional construct; as such, it is likely that there exist various degrees of alexithymia. Moreover, I explore the merits of two analogies that others have used to try to understand the nature of alexithymia: one characterizes the condition as an analogue of associative visual object agnosia, and the other characterizes it as the emotional equivalent of blindsight. I argue that the analogy with blindsight more adequately portrays the processing deficit involved in mild alexithymia, but that neither the analogy with blindsight nor

the analogy with associative visual object agnosia is able to account for the deficit involved in severe alexithymia. Instead, I argue that the deficit involved in severe alexithymia is best understood through an analogy with apperceptive visual agnosia.

<b>September 27th</b>	<b>Louis-Philippe Hodgson (Glendon College)</b>	<b>Reproductive Choices and Distributive Justice: A Problem for Globalism</b>
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Children are perfectly innocent when they come into the world, but they are normally born as a result of *somebody's* choices. Many political philosophers focus exclusively on the first idea and therefore insist that the prospects of children everywhere should be equalized (in some suitable sense). But this commits them to a surprising claim, namely, that a person in one country can unilaterally create an enforceable duty for a person in another country *simply by choosing to have a child*. This poses a deep problem, and I argue that the solution is by no means simple: ultimately, it requires putting in place institutions that can realize conditions of *pure procedural justice* among the relevant individuals. The implication is that reproductive choices prove too much to handle for what I call *globalism—the view that the demands of distributive justice obtain independently of any specific institutional context*.

<b>October 4th</b>	<b>Juhani Yli-Vakkuri (Centre for the Study of Mind in Nature, Oslo)</b>	<b>Mirror Thoughts</b>
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Let the qualitative agential profile of a thought be the strongest qualitative intrinsic property of the system consisting of the thought and the agent who thinks it. Thus, e.g., the qualitative agential profile of the thought you express by 'Water is wet' is the same as that of the corresponding thought your doppelganger on Twin Earth expresses by the same (or sound-alike) words. One natural thought about narrow content is that, if there is such a thing as narrow content, then, necessarily, the narrow contents of thoughts with the same qualitative agential profile are the same. Another natural thought about narrow content is that (the first thought is true and) a priority supervenes on narrow content (or at least on narrow content plus logical form): if so, then, necessarily, whenever two thoughts have the same qualitative agential profile (or have the same logical form plus corresponding constituents with the same qualitative agential profiles), one is a priori if and only if the other is. The possibility of mirror thoughts—two or more distinct thoughts of the same agent that have the same qualitative agential profile—make trouble for both claims. First, if mirror thoughts are possible and the first thought is true, then the truth values of the narrow contents of our thoughts must vary with some very exotic parameters (the usual centered-worlds machinery of world-agent-time triples, or even world-agent-time-location quadruples, cannot handle them). Second, if mirror thoughts are possible, then the second thought is false.

<b>October 11th</b>	<b>Raffaella De Rosa</b>	<b>The Real Challenge of Locke's Critique of Nativism</b>
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	<b>(Rutgers University, Newark)</b>	
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This paper offers a new interpretation of Locke’s challenge to the doctrine of innateness. I disagree with recent claims that Locke’s arguments undermine nativism. But I also argue that this conclusion does not diminish their lasting contribution to the old and new debate over concept acquisition. Their lasting contribution consists in raising awareness – among nativists of all times – of the necessity to be clear about the nature of the hidden structure of thought. More precisely, why is this hidden structure specified in intentional as opposed to non-intentional terms? And what are the motivations underlying each specification? This is the real challenge of Locke’s critique of nativism. I reach these conclusions by first laying out the varieties of dispositional nativism that Locke was attacking; by discussing the basic structure of Locke’s arguments and, finally, by assessing their strengths and weaknesses.

<b>October 18th</b>	<b>Yussif Yakubu (Practice Job Talk)</b>	<b>Hume’s Moral Theory and the Darwinian Problem of Social Evolution</b>
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The problem of social/moral evolution has plagued evolutionary biologists and philosophers since Darwin proposed his theory of natural selection. To date, there is no account of social/moral evolution that is completely satisfactory. Instead, there is a patchwork of explanatory models, none of which has a universal appeal among biologist. As such, what we have is a chaotic theoretical landscape of social/moral evolution. In this presentation, I show why the modern Darwinian explanation breaks down in the arena of moral evolution. Then, with insights from Hume’s moral theory, I propose an approach to modeling social/moral evolution that precludes the theoretical barrier faced by current Darwinian models.

<b>October 25th</b>	<b>Peter Ludlow, McMaster Visiting Hooker Professor (Northwestern University)</b>	
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<b>November 8th – 10th</b>	<b>Conference: <i>Russell and Wittgenstein at the Crossroads</i></b>	
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<b>November 15th</b>	<b>John Hacker-Wright (University of Guelph)</b>	<b>Virtue and Practical Knowledge</b>
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This paper will discuss two sorts of practical knowledge that are required for possessing virtue. The first is a knowledge of proper ends. The virtuous agent knows that ends such as one’s own pleasure and personal gain must be subordinated to justice and benevolence, and knows this in

a certain way, that is, she knows it as it pertains to action, and so she knows what it is to place justice ahead of personal gain. Second, she knows how to realize virtuous ends, at least in the face of challenges that we typically face in our lives, especially those coming from desires and emotions that would otherwise divert us from proper ends. An ideally virtuous agent possesses practical knowledge of what to bring about and how. Obviously, there is a strong intellectual component to virtue on this account, but it is intellect that is embodied in practice. Hence, this view supports Aristotle's contention that we must learn to be virtuous by acting.

**November  
22th**

**Jennifer Nagel  
(University of Toronto)**

**Knowledge and Fallibility**

Epistemologists distinguish between various ways of knowing a fact: seeing that Jack is at the party is different from inferring that he is at the party and different again from learning that Jack is at the party through testimony. Recent work on grammaticalized evidentials can help us to understand what it means to see perception, inference and testimony as different sources of knowledge. If we clarify what it means for something to be a source of knowledge, we can find a way to challenge a piece of contemporary epistemological orthodoxy: the doctrine of fallibilism. The fallibilist says that knowledge is possible on the basis of a grounding that could have supported a false belief. I argue against this conception of grounding.

**December  
6th**

**Ben Hamby  
(McMaster University)**

**Critical Inquiry, the Toulmin Model, and Business  
Ethics: A Pedagogical Approach**

In this presentation I lobby for an alternative approach to teaching business ethics, in which critical inquiry and the Toulmin model of argument are explicitly incorporated into traditional course content. I follow Bailin and Battersby (2010) in defining critical inquiry as "the careful examination of an issue in order to reach a reasoned judgment", and adopt the influential layout of argument found in Toulmin (1958). The Toulmin model has the benefit of being easily visualized and used by students, and by virtue of its stress on field dependent backings, requires students to find plausible rationales for their inference licenses when they draw and attempt to justify conclusions. The Toulmin model is thus a highly relevant tool for critical inquiry, despite some prominent critiques, which I address. Next, I discuss the traditional textbook approach to teaching the curricular content of business ethics, arguing that its mostly didactic assumptions are inadequate, and that an inquiry approach better serves students in their practical efforts to think about ethical issues in the business context. This establishes a theoretical argument for the claim that introducing Toulmin's model in conjunction with an inquiry approach is a novel and superior way to introduce the traditional content of business ethics.

**Note: This talk will be held at 3:30pm in Kenneth Taylor Hall (KTH) B104**

## Winter term:

January 10th	Joanna Zaslow (McMaster University)	Master/slave BDSM and Racism
<p>BDSM Master/slave relationships are characterized by control, imbalanced power structures and, importantly, consent between both (or all) parties. Such relationships are expressed by 'ownership' of one party (the Master) over another (the slave). Additionally, such ownership is expressed through the use of a collar, often awarded to the slave during a collaring ceremony. Not only the language, but also the symbols of such relationships have roots in slavery and thus have undertones of racialization.</p> <p>Theoretical engagements with Master/slave relationships are heavily influenced by sex-positive feminism, which valorizes transgressive actions – the ability for one's practices to transcend the broader social sphere, including sexism, racism, and other forms of social stratification. This theoretical tradition is thus committed to viewing Master/slave as separate from racism or racialization. Yet, as concrete practices, an acknowledgement or engagement with the history behind the terms, tools, and symbols, prominent in many of these relationships, while necessary, is often lacking.</p> <p>There is value in BDSM and Master/slave attempts to challenge the limits and boundaries of our sexual selves, as well as normative sexual and gender roles, but practitioners must nonetheless be able to address the way their practices have the potential to reinforce racialized understandings. This paper will question whether the continued practices of the Master/slave relationships and the use of the collar continue to perpetuate racialized power imbalances. Can they transgress such histories of race and power in order to play with them and destabilize them within a controlled setting? I argue that BDSM practitioners and theorists must learn to engage with rather than ignore the history behind their symbols, otherwise their participation in BDSM as socially and politically transgressive is half-hearted.</p>		

January 17th	Mike Bennett (McMaster University)	Deleuze's (Mis)reading of Aristotle
<p>In recent years, there has been an explosion of interest in Gilles Deleuze's readings of the history of philosophy. Regrettably, Deleuze's reading of Aristotle, although it has received considerable attention because of the important role it plays in <i>Difference and Repetition</i>, has been generally misunderstood.</p> <p>Possibly, this misunderstanding is due to the fact that Deleuze's interpretive claims about Aristotle seem hard to square with some of the best contemporary commentaries on Aristotelian metaphysics. In sum, Deleuze appears to misread Aristotle. He claims that Aristotle unifies differences in being by means of <i>analogy</i>, while Aristotle actually contends that applications of the predicate being are organized by <i>homonymy</i> (as Aubenque, Owen and more recently Shields have shown). For Aristotle, being is homonymous in a <i>special way</i> that allows</p>		

for a scientific ontology even though being is not synonymous or univocal across all its applications. This is called by commentators “core-dependent” homonymy, organized around a “focal meaning”.

In this talk I defend Deleuze’s reading of Aristotle, and argue that some of his own commentators have obscured its sophistication and erudition. It’s not Deleuze that gets Aristotle wrong, it’s his readers. Deleuze is positively arguing, in a manner that anticipates Christopher Shields, that Aristotle fails to establish the kind of homonymy he needs to in order to save being from mere equivocality. For Deleuze, Aristotelian being is more purely equivocal than Aristotle wants to admit.

<b>January 24th</b>	<b>Jolen Galaugher Visiting Russell Professor</b>	<b>Russell's (A)historical Exposition of Leibniz</b>
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Russell's 1900 work, *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz*, has been criticized, correctly, for misrepresenting Leibniz's views. However, it has often been supposed that Russell's misunderstanding of Leibniz resulted, at least in part, from his embrace of an ahistorical approach to Leibniz's philosophy. Based on archival material and Russell's correspondence, I present some challenges for this characterization of Russell's approach. I then address the following questions: What was Russell's position at the time on the significance of the history of philosophy to substantive philosophizing, and is it at all compelling?

<b>January 31st</b>	<b>Monique Deveaux (University of Guelph)</b>	<b>Sufficiency, Priority, and the Harms of Inequality</b>
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Proponents of principles of ‘Sufficiency’ (e.g. H. Frankfurt) and ‘Priority’ (e.g. Derek Parfit) contend that economic egalitarians misperceive what is morally troubling about differences in welfare. Sufficiencyarians assert that is not inequality *per se* that is wrong, but rather, not *having enough* resources for a good life. Priorityarians insist that we should be concerned about the lower *absolute level* of deprivation associated with being worse-off. Both positions view relative differences in income and assets as largely irrelevant. In this talk, I challenge the foundations of the view that socio-economic inequalities are, in and of themselves, benign. I do so in part by drawing on the growing body of research in epidemiology and sociology attesting to the independently harmful effects of income inequality on health and social well-being. I also question the over-sharp dichotomy between inequality and poverty that I suggest both Priorityarian and Sufficiency views depend upon, one which belies current understandings of these conditions by development and labour economists. I conclude that the Sufficiency and Priority case against preferring a more egalitarian distribution of resources is undermined their reliance upon what is essentially a sociologically false picture of inequality’s consequences, and of the relationship between inequality and poverty.

<b>February 7th</b>	<b>Kevin Klement (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)</b>	<b>A Generic Russellian Elimination of Abstract Objects</b>
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Recently, there's been interest in "abstractionist" forms of logicism which attempt to deduce mathematical theories from abstraction principles, those that postulate abstract objects according to principles of the form:

$$f(x) = f(y) \text{ iff } Rxy$$

where R is an equivalence relation, and f is a functor mapping entities x and y in the same logical type to the same abstract object just in case R holds between them. In this paper I argue that it is possible to eliminate the need for principles postulating abstract objects by treating the terms in such an abstraction principles as "incomplete symbols", using a Russell's no-classes theory as a template from which to generalize. I defend views of this stripe against certain objections, most notably Richard Heck's charge that syntactic forms of nominalism cannot correctly deal with non-first-orderizable quantification over apparent abstracta.

<b>February 14th</b>	<b>Verena Gottschling (York University)</b>	<b>A Multicomponent Perceptual Account of Pain</b>
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Pain is a complicated and conceptually challenging topic. Perceptual accounts of pain are very popular these days. Nonetheless, they are also under heavy attack, because these types of accounts seem to be vulnerable to certain severe challenges and objections, two of which I discuss.

I argue that these objections in fact propose problems for only certain classes of perceptual accounts and rely on unfortunate assumptions about the nature of perceptual accounts. Nonetheless there are important lessons we can learn from discussing them. I will end by proposing a strong perceptual account of pain that avoids the mentioned problems and - in contrast to other contemporary PAP accounts - is compatible with the empirical data.

<b>February 21st</b>	<b>Winter Recess</b>	
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<b>February 28th</b>	<b>Heather Douglas (University of Waterloo)</b>	<b>Responsible Science in Democratic Societies</b>
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Science performs a valuable role in democratic societies. When functioning well, it provides a reliable (albeit uncertain and defeasible) source of empirical knowledge. This knowledge crucially shapes our understanding of ourselves, the world in which we live, our policy options for collective decisions, and our sense of responsibility. But it is neither value-neutral nor

always correct. And scientists do not just serve this role; they also are citizens of countries and part of the human community. Given these complexities, how are we to structure the ideals for the practices of scientists in democratic societies? What should we expect of our scientists in their choices and their communications? And how should we structure or alter our institutions to assist scientists in being responsible?

<b>March 7th</b>	<b>Alex Wellington (Ryerson University)</b>	<b>Theorizing Collective and Corporate Punishment: Hart's Sea Captain Revisited</b>
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Many persons, when asked whether corporations should be held accountable, and even punished for their wrongdoing, will respond favourably. That deceptively simple way of framing the question, however, glosses over some significant conceptual and practical challenges of moving forward on that path. In my view, those of us who believe, as I do, that the objective is eminently worthy and desperately called for in our times, should take upon ourselves the conceptual groundwork, to address the potential objections to doing so, in the hope of helping to clear away obstacles towards that path. A very important part of defending an account of corporate punishment, as part of a broader approach to the punishment of collective agents, is to carefully delineate and circumscribe the boundaries and intersections between natural persons and artificial persons, and between moral and legal responsibility. The literature on punishment has only very recently begun to come to terms with the challenges posed for well established and cherished theories of punishment. It is that gap at which this effort is aimed. This paper looks at an updated variant of Hart's Sea Captain story, incorporating a focus on the Capacity, Legal-Liability and Moral Responsibility of corporations and companies as quasi-moral agents, as well as the complex layers of responsibility of natural persons in their roles as officers and directors of such quasi-moral agents.

<b>March 14th</b>	<b>Dana Tulodziecki (Purdue University)</b>	<b>Epistemic virtues and scientific reasoning</b>
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Scientific realists and anti-realists have long debated the status of the so-called 'theoretical virtues'. Anti-realists judge these virtues to be merely pragmatic in nature, whereas realists think of them as epistemically potent. In this talk, I will argue that questions about the status of these virtues ought to be settled empirically, by examining the role these virtues play in real-life cases of scientific reasoning. I conclude by drawing out some of the consequences of this view for more general issues in the realism-debate.

<b>March 21st</b>	<b>Stefan Linquist (University of Guelph)</b>	<b>Functions in transposon biology: when causal roles are inferior to selected effects</b>
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Philosophical discussions of biological function tend to address the ways that alternative function-concepts, casual role (CR) versus selected effect (SE), feature in explanatory contexts. Questions about their investigative roles in experimental contexts are comparatively



unexamined. I argue that competing research traditions within transposon biology adopt either the CR or the SE function concept (never both) in their investigation of proximate mechanisms. Comparing the types of proximate hypotheses generated under these two frameworks suggests that SE functions are the more illuminating of the two. Since, for reasons discussed in this talk, the two approaches apparently cannot coexist in harmony, I suggest that CR functions are best abandoned by transposon biologists— maybe even by molecular biologists generally.

<b>March 28th</b>	<b>Clinton Tolley (University of California, San Diego)</b>	<b>The logical construction of the world of experience: reading Kant after Russell and Carnap</b>
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I will develop a novel 'constitution-theoretic' interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism, one which sees in Kant a spirit similar to what animates the construction programme of 1910s Russell and the constitution-theory of 1920s Carnap.

By first becoming attentive to kindred distinctions in Russell and Carnap, we can then see that Kant, too, holds that the objects of (outer) experience (physical bodies) are not identical either with the appearances of them that we are given in intuition or with the experiences of them that we come to have once we synthesize these appearances through imagination and judgment. We will also see, moreover, that, like construction/constitution in Russell/Carnap, Kant takes the progressive synthesis of appearances into experiences to be ordered as to cognitive, not temporal, priority.

The former point allows us to reevaluate which objects Kant takes to be transcendently ideal, and supports a two-world reading of Kant's idealism. The latter point allows us to reevaluate what sort of 'activity' Kant has in mind in his Transcendental Logic, and supports a broadly 'de-psychologized' reading of Kant's synthetic apriori 'Principles' (e.g., his 'Analogies of Experience').