

DAY 2 Saturday, October 29th

9:30-10:50am Genia Schönbaumsfeld (Southampton)

Companions in Guilt: Aestheticism and Cartesianism as Two Sides of the Same Coin

In *Either/Or I*, the aesthete, A, gives us the following diagnosis of his predicament: ‘I think I have the courage to doubt everything; I think I have the courage to fight everything. But I do not have the courage to know anything, nor to possess, to own anything’ (E/O I 45). In this paper, I explore A’s fascinating claim that knowledge requires courage by way of juxtaposing the aesthetic life with Cartesian sceptical doubt. I show that just as the Cartesian doubter seeks refuge from radical scepticism in the safety of introspective knowledge – what is directly present to consciousness – so the aesthete seeks solace in the moment and what is sensuously present to him. Both methods ultimately prove ineffective and spurious, however: Cartesian introspection imprisons us in a mental cage with no beyond, just as aestheticism holds us captive in a self-spun world where our self dissolves. Consequently, what both the aesthete and the Cartesian need to do is to develop the strength to confront and overcome the anxieties that have motivated the flight from ‘the outer’ (the flight from the world) in the first place.

10:50-11:00am Break

11:00-12:30pm Katja Maria Vogt (Columbia)

Pyrrhonian Indeterminacy

In the terms of ancient epistemology, Pyrrho is a dogmatist, not a skeptic, simply on account of putting forward a metaphysical theory. His most contested claim is that things are indifferent, unmeasured, and indeterminate—or, on a competing reconstruction, that things are indifferentially, unmeasurable, and indeterminable. This paper argues that Pyrrho’s position, which I call Pyrrhonian Indeterminacy, belongs to a rich tradition of revisionist metaphysics that includes ancient atomism, flux metaphysics, Plato’s analysis of becoming, and today’s discussions of indeterminacy and vagueness. This tradition, my argument continues, makes room for a kind of metaphysics that proceeds in epistemological terms. Pyrrho’s indeterminacy claim says that things are indeterminate insofar as they do not have features by reference to which we can determine them to be such-and-such. We should not waver or be inclined to see things one way or another—we should see things, and describe them, as “no more this than that.”

12:30-1:10pm Lunch Break

DAY 2 Saturday, October 29th

1:10-2:30pm Annalisa Coliva (UC Irvine)

What philosophical skepticism and philosophical disagreement hinge on

In this paper we consider the nature of philosophical disagreement. We start by looking at how persistent disagreement in philosophy may sustain skepticism about philosophy and support the idea that philosophy, as a discipline, is not in pursuit of knowledge. We then introduce a specific instance of philosophical disagreement regarding the existence of physical objects and consider it an instance of hinge disagreement. We then look at how hinge disagreement gives rise to the Problem of lost disagreement and the Problem of rational inertia. Key to the solution to these problems is the idea that disagreement may arise between propositional attitudes other than belief. We then compare our solution with similar views advanced by Goldberg (2013), Barnett (2019) and Beebee (2018). In closing we offer a contextualist solution to philosophical disagreement. Key to it, is the distinction between disagreement between philosophical hinges and disagreement about non-philosophical hinges.

2:30-2:40pm Break

2:40-4:00pm Gregg Caruso (SUNY Corning)

Free Will Skepticism and Its Implications

Free will skepticism, at least the variety I defend, maintains that who we are and what we do is ultimately the result of factors beyond our control and because of this we are never morally responsible for our actions in the basic desert sense – the sense that would make us truly deserving of blame and praise, punishment and reward. For many people, the main problem with the skeptical position is not that there is considerable empirical evidence that it is false or that there is a challenging argument for its incoherence. The main concern is a practical one: Can we live with the belief that it is true? In this talk, I address three main classes of practical issues. The first concerns the extent to which the skeptic can retain our ordinary conception of morality. The second concerns the degree to which skepticism about free will and basic desert moral responsibility coheres with the emotions required for the kinds of personal relationships we value. Lastly, I discuss the implications of the view for treatment of criminals.

4pm Conference Close

FSU Werkmeister Conference on Skepticism 28 & 29 Oct

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