

UPJA Virtual Conference for Undergraduate Philosophy
28th & 29th May, 2022

Day 1: Saturday May 28th, 09:00 AM – 12:30 PM AEST (UTC+10)

Student Presentations

- [09:00]** *"Nietzsche on Death"*
Benjamin Campbell, Ohio State University
- [09:30]** *Degree of Oughtness*
Ayana Shirai, University of Pennsylvania
- [10:00]** *The Puzzle Of Negative-Existential Truths*
Juan Daniel Corrales, University of Cauca
- [10:30]** *Thinking About Sex: Pornography and the Intuitive Mind*
Brigitte Assi, University of Melbourne
- [11:00]** *Knowing Myself: A Reflection on Knowledge-Who and Existential Purposes*
Rylan Garwood, University of Nevada

Saturday Keynote Address

- [11:30]** *Through a Screen Darkly: Black Mirror, Thought Experiments, and Televisual Philosophy*
Robert Sinnerbrink, Macquarie University

Day 2: Sunday May 29th, 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM AEST (UTC+10)

Sunday Keynote Address

- [3:00]** *"Becoming Cisgender"*
Louise Richardson-Self, University of Tasmania
- [4:00]** Introduction to UPJA and Q&A with Editorial Team
Jack Hawke (何健平), Jessica Sophia Ralph, Anna Day, and James Cafferky

Student Presentations

- [4:30]** *Problematic Victimhood and Epistemic Injustice*
Haoze Du, Australian National University
- [5:00]** *Psychedelics and The Perennial Philosophy*
Roberta Burattini, University of Western Australia
- [5:30]** *The Rationality of Adopting Rights as Side Constraints instead of Utilitarianism of Rights*
Ziming Xia, London School of Economics
- [6:00]** *A Carnapian Treatment of Ontology Redux*
Cheong Kwang Aik Eldrick, National University of Singapore
- [6:30]** *Is Block a 'Block Head'?*
Abigail Bergeron, Trent University & Swansea University

Keynote Presenter Abstracts and Bios

[Saturday Keynote] Robert Sinnerbrink, Macquarie University
Saturday May 28th, 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM AEST (UTC+10)

Through a Screen Darkly: *Black Mirror*, Thought Experiments, and Televisual Philosophy

The award-winning television show *Black Mirror* (Brooker, 2011–19) has attracted widespread praise and critical acclaim. Recalling the episodic anthology format of *The Twilight Zone*, *Black Mirror* presents compelling depictions of near-future scenarios exploring the dark side of contemporary digital technology and audiovisual culture. Although most belong to the genre of dystopian science fiction, the episodes of *Black Mirror* could also be described as works of speculative cinematic fiction, deploying a variety of genres such as psychological horror, science fantasy, and the sociopolitical thriller. The stand-alone episodes of the five series of *Black Mirror* explore the uncanny, the fantastic, and the marvellous, but always with specific reference to our technologically mediated sense of social reality. With its focus on the ethical implications of current and future technological possibilities, *Black Mirror* offers a compelling case for the idea of “televisual philosophy.” In this presentation I shall develop this thesis by exploring three related ways of approaching this remarkable television series: *Black Mirror* (1) as thought experiment, (2) as reflecting a critique of modern technology, and (3) as engaged in critical self-reflection on audiovisual media and on its own status as episodic television.

Robert Sinnerbrink is Associate Professor of Philosophy and former Australian Research Council Future Fellow at Macquarie University. He is the author of New Philosophies of Film (Second Edition): An Introduction to Cinema as a Way of Thinking (Bloomsbury, 2022), Terrence Malick: Filmmaker and Philosopher (Bloomsbury, 2019), Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film (Routledge, 2016), New Philosophies of Film: Thinking Images (Continuum/Bloomsbury, 2011), and Understanding Hegelianism (Acumen, 2007/Routledge 2014). He has edited two books (Emotion, Ethics, and Cinematic Experience: New Phenomenological and Cognitivist Perspectives (Berghahn Books, 2021) and Critique Today (Brill, 2006) and is a member of the editorial boards of Film-Philosophy, Film and Philosophy, and Projections: The Journal of Movies and Mind.

[Sunday Keynote] Louise Richardson-Self, University of Tasmania
Sunday May 29th, 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM AEST (UTC+10)

“Becoming Cisgender”

The metaphysics of sex and gender is of significant philosophical, social, and cultural interest at present. Terms like transgender and cisgender have come into wider circulation in the fight for gender justice. While many are familiar with ‘transgender’, fewer know ‘cisgender’, the term that captures AFAB-women (assigned ‘female’ at birth-women) and AMAB-men. But ‘cisgender’ is (to me, surprisingly) controversial. In this article, I reflect on my process of recognising my *self* as cisgender. During, I highlight the ethico-political consequences of refusing the onto-epistemic category ‘cisgender’. I shall argue that *uptake* of ‘cisgender’ and *apprenticeship* to trans texts uncovers how we maintain, and might purposefully disturb, queer/cis-hetero, man/woman/other hierarchies of social identity power. I argue this self-recognition is a crucial tool for challenging ‘cisgender commonsense’ and may be a means toward dislodging ciscentrism in my (western, Anglophone) milieu.

Louise Richardson-Self is a feminist philosopher who has worked on contemporary issues such as same-sex marriage, religious freedom, and hate speech. She was awarded her PhD in 2014 from the University of Sydney, and began working in her current position at the University of Tasmania in 2015. She was awarded an Australian Research Council 'Discovery Early Career Researcher Award' in 2019, and a collaborative, interdisciplinary Discovery grant in 2020. Dr Richardson-Self has also won the Australasian Association of Philosophy's Annette Baier Prize (2019). Her most recent work focuses on cisgender identity, standpoint, intersubjectivity and interdependence, and embodiment, to articulate an imperative of self-understanding and of apprenticing oneself to trans texts. Parallel, yet related to this project, she is also writing a memoir about a life lived with chronic pelvic pain.

Student Presenter Abstracts and Bios

Brigitte Assi, University of Melbourne
Saturday May 28th, 10:30 AM AEST (UTC+10)

Thinking About Sex: Pornography and the Intuitive Mind

Most feminist discourse on the negative impacts of pornography focus on how pornography impacts the behaviours and views of men. This paper offers an account of pornography that considers its impact on female viewers. Specifically, I discuss how pornography impacts how female consumers intuitively think about sex and their sexual role. I argue that feminists should distance themselves from belief-desire models of action when accounting for certain sexual interactions, as belief-desire explanations can be stigmatising. I then deploy Elisabeth Camp’s work on characterisations and argue for the utility in investigating how women

characterise sex. I argue that pornographic material deploys certain representations which can construct patriarchal characterisations of sex in consumers. These characterisations then affect how women evaluatively, emotionally, judgmentally, and behaviourally respond to sex. I use Camp's idea of perspectivalism to demonstrate how people adopt pornographic perspectives which come to construct their characterisations of sex.

Brigitte is a recently graduated philosophy Honours student at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Finding philosophy late in her degree, Brigitte has a passion in a broad range of topics. These include philosophy of mind, cognitive philosophy, philosophy of perception (with a particular interest in the works of Merleau-Ponty), feminist phenomenology, and aesthetics. Brigitte recently completed her thesis where she wrote on the effects of pornographic material on the intuitive mind, giving insight as to how recent work in philosophy of mind can be used as a feminist tool. In continuing her passion, Brigitte is hoping to work toward obtaining a Master's in philosophy, focusing on feminist critiques of philosophical mental models of action and perception. When not studying, Brigitte is often found in her small North Melbourne garden tending to her tomato plants.

Abigail Bergeron, Trent University & Swansea University
Sunday May 29th, 6:30 PM AEST (UTC+10)

Is Block a "Blockhead"? A Critical Examination of Ned Block's Phenomenal and Access Consciousness Distinction in "Two Concepts of Consciousness"

In this paper, I present a critical review of Ned Block's dual account of consciousness presented in "Two Concepts of Consciousness" (1995). I argue that Block's distinction between phenomenal and access consciousness is incorrect, and instead lend my support to the view of *consciousness simpliciter* where access consciousness is understood as a cognitive mechanism, and not as a separate form of consciousness. However, I discuss that Block's distinction has interesting implications, particularly with regards to understanding abnormal cases where *consciousness simpliciter* appears fragmented, such as in the case of *petit mal* seizures or intoxication. I conclude with some further considerations regarding the plausibility of *A* without *P* consciousness.

Abigail is currently a philosophy Honours student at Trent University in Peterborough, Canada, and a law student at Swansea University, Wales, United Kingdom. She will be pursuing her MA in philosophy at Queen's University, Canada next fall, and looking to pursue additional graduate studies in law. Her interests in philosophy are broad, and include, philosophy of mind, philosophy of animal minds, legal philosophy and environmental law, free speech, cyber ethics, continental metaphysics, philosophy of disability and radical feminism. Her most recent work has focused on the phenomenology of digital technology.

Roberta Burattini, University of Western Australia
Sunday May 29th, 5:00 PM AEST (UTC+10)

Psychedelics and The Perennial Philosophy

In the past decade there has been a renewed interest in the study of psychedelics for the treatment of serious mental conditions, and the amount of papers being published each year has been growing exponentially. One of the interesting findings of such studies is the correlation between participants reporting mystical-type experiences, and positive outcomes of therapies. The definition of mystical experience that has been adopted and used in psychedelic research is based on the work of William Stace, a supporter of the perennial philosophy. Perennialism posits that mystical experiences are common across cultures, and that are a way to access the absolute principle of being, which is outside time and space, and the true nature of reality. This view has been criticised by constructivists which believe that no individual can have such an experience. In fact, they believe that every experience is necessarily filtered through the lense of culture. In this paper, I use recent psychedelic research to argue against such a view, and to defend the perennialist claim that culturally unmediated mystical experiences are possible.

After completing a Bachelor in Communication Sciences in Italy in 2007, Roberta has worked as a designer for many years. In 2013 she relocated to Australia, and in 2020 she decided to challenge herself by becoming a university student once again. Roberta is now a third-year Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) student at the University of Western Australia where she studies Philosophy, Anthropology & Sociology. She advocates for an interdisciplinary approach to research, as she believes it can facilitate a holistic understanding of the world, and bring to light otherwise hidden insights.

Benjamin Campbell, Ohio State University
Saturday May 28th, 09:00 AM AEST (UTC+10)

"Nietzsche on Death"

Despite his existential sensitivity, there has never been an attempt to create a Nietzschean "philosophy of death." Forgotten by scholars, Nietzsche's views on death are clear, helpful, and actionable. The central claim of this paper is that Nietzsche can be considered a unique philosopher of death. I break down his philosophy of death into two parts: metaphysics and ethics. These parts are connected, though not without complication. I discuss the complications and potential contradictions that arise when making a Nietzschean philosophy of death.

Benjamin is a rising third year philosophy student at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, USA. He is interested in the history of philosophy. He is particularly engaged with phenomenology in the vein of Husserl and Heidegger. Problems of significance to him include: the relation between life and death, the notion of the "Object," consciousness, technology, meaning, happiness and

suffering, and causality. Outside of formal schoolwork, Benjamin searches for new philosophical and literary inspirations. Recently, he has been engrossed in Baudelaire and Leibniz.

Juan Daniel Corrales, University of Cauca
Saturday May 28th, 10:00 AM AEST (UTC+10)

The Puzzle Of Negative-Existential Truths

This presentation aims to solve the puzzle of negative existential truths, which consists in explaining why truth bearers —such as statements, propositions and formulas— of the type “Santa Claus does not exist” or “Pegasus does not exist” are true. Apparently, expressing that an object is true is expressing that this occurs, in the same way that happens when expressing that an object exists. However, this has the following problem as a consequence: if it is true that Pegasus does not exist, then... does it occur that Pegasus does not occur? Is the above a contradiction? If it is not a contradiction, then indeed Pegasus does not exist; but if it is a contradiction, then Pegasus must exist! Which make us question the following philosophical puzzle: do negative existential truths exist? In order to solve this puzzle, we employ two methods; one that gives precision and validity to the argumentation, and another that takes advantage of empirical data to improve it: philosophical logic and experimental philosophy. The first method consists of the application of logical tools for the solution of philosophical problems, while the second consists of the use of cognitive experiments to confirm or reject philosophical intuitions.

Juan Daniel Corrales is a philosopher who graduated from the University of Cauca in Popayán, Colombia. He is currently pursuing success as a writer, and is the author of the paper Anaximander and the Puzzle of the Origin, a work that pretends to answer the question “does everything have an origin?” Two other papers and a book will be published soon. He is especially interested in philosophical logic, philosophy of logic, metaphilosophy, and metaphysics. The next presentation is going to glimpse these interests.

Haoze Du, Australian National University
Sunday May 29th, 4:30 PM AEST (UTC+10)

Problematic Victimhood and Epistemic Injustice

In this paper, I offer an analysis of a kind of epistemic injustice caused by the victimhood dynamic. By victimhood dynamic, I mean the relation between a group of supposed “victims” and the group that they identify as their “victimisers”. I argue that this kind of victimhood dynamic could be epistemically unjust as it inflicts epistemic violence on to the supposed victimisers. It causes testimonial injustice if the victim uses their moral injury to discredit the epistemic authority of the supposed “victimiser”. It causes hermeneutical injustice by dominating the moral narrative with the victimhood dynamic to present themselves as beyond critique.

Haoze is a philosophy Honours student at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. He is currently working on his thesis about the ethics of promises. Haoze is interested in ethics of belief, but also ethics, epistemology and political philosophy in general. When not doing philosophy, Haoze likes to try out vegan recipes and watch stand-up comedy.

Cheong Kwang Aik Eldrick, National University of Singapore
Sunday May 29th, 6:00 PM AEST (UTC+10)

A Carnapian Treatment of Ontology Redux

In his paper, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology", Rudolf Carnap advocates for a deflationary meta-ontology that adjudicates different linguistic frameworks on the basis of practical considerations, as a way of dissolving ontological disputes. Some contemporary philosophers, in the likes of Yablo (1998), Hirsch (2002) and, Thomasson (2014) have championed the Carnapian treatment of ontology. Conversely, some like Eklund (2009) who treats Carnap as an Ontological Pluralist, argues that Ontological Pluralism is an untenable metaontological position and thereby, opposes the Carnapian treatment of ontology. In this paper, I have two agenda. Firstly, I offer a reading of Carnap's meta-ontology as being deflationist and thoroughly pragmatic in nature. Such a reading states that ontological debates rest on a mistake and that ontological questions should be answered based on practical considerations alone. A result of this is that ontological questions are not truth-apt and hence, it makes little sense to argue, for instance, whether numbers really exist or not. Secondly, having established Carnap's Ontological Deflationist credentials, I argue against Eklund's characterisation of Carnap as an ontological pluralist, by claiming that Carnap is not committed to what Eklund takes him to be committed to i.e., that all linguistic frameworks are equally good.

Eldrick is an upcoming senior majoring in philosophy with minors in Japanese language and Japanese Studies. Although he has wide-ranging interests across the humanities, they are all centred around issues he cares about, some of which includes the historiographical divide between analytic and continental philosophy, phenomenological representation of subjective experiences and the notion of truth. One of his favourite quotes is by Rilke who says, "For one human being to love another is perhaps the most difficult task of all, the epitome, the ultimate test. It is that striving for which all other striving is merely preparation". He aspires to be an intellectual historian in the long run, specialising in early 20th century German philosophy, in particular, Husserl and all who have been influenced by him.

Rylan Garwood, University of Nevada
Saturday May 28th, 11:00 AM AEST (UTC+10)

Knowing Myself: A Reflection on Knowledge-Who and Existential Purposes

Boër and Lycan (1975) develop a unique, pragmatic account of knowledge-who. Given the hypothetical truth of their theory, I apply their conclusions to existential identity. To do so, I reflect on the peculiarity of knowing ourselves existentially. Then, I outline the prudential purposes for asking "Who am I?" before showing how Boër and Lycan's theory may offer a probable strategy for answering this question.

Rylan is a student at the Honors College of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is currently majoring in philosophy and psychology with a minor in neuroscience. He is specifically interested in ethics (whether normative or meta), philosophy of action, and theories of justification. Rylan also supports the Philosophy for Children movement and can be found corrupting the youth through the Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization. On the rare occasion that he is not studying, Rylan enjoys practising jazz piano.

Ayana Shirai, University of Pennsylvania
Saturday May 28th, 09:30 AM AEST (UTC+10)

Degree of Oughtness

This work discusses the modal verb "ought"," concerning the specification of its strength. It formalizes the notion that the modal verb can have a range of different strengths ("degree of oughtness") and shows its significance regarding its usefulness in the face of value disagreements. The work argues that paying attention to the continuous degree of oughtness benefits not only philosophy, but also other fields such as political science. At the end, the author defends the paper from potential counterarguments and closes with some suggestions for the potential applications. This could be considered as a work in meta-ethics that has potential implications in applied/ normative ethics, as well as other related fields.

Ayana is pursuing a dual degree in philosophy and healthcare management and policy at the University of Pennsylvania, USA. She has always had a passion for applying philosophy to contemporary problem, and she hopes to pursue a further degree in philosophy and public health. She still has a wide range of interest within philosophy, ranging from action theory to continental philosophy. She has also been active in various fellowships at the university, such as investigating the works of Elizabeth Anscombe, looking at finance and economics through philosophical lenses, and exploring how philosophy can improve the field of medical humanities.

Ziming Xia, London School of Economics
Sunday May 29th, 5:30 PM AEST (UTC+10)

The Rationality of Adopting Rights as Side Constraints instead of Utilitarianism of Rights

Libertarians believe individuals' certain rights, e.g., rights against aggression flow from their fundamental right of absolute self-ownership. Without individuals' consent, no external parties or states are justified in coercing individuals to violate their own wills. When it comes to the justifications and implications of such rights, 'rights as side-constraints (RSC)' and 'utilitarianism of rights (UofR)' are two contingent approaches to protect individuals' basic rights. As the representative figure in the libertarian tradition, Nozick explicitly prefers RSC over UofR as the correct approach for individual rights. However, as noted by Nozick himself, the RSC approach can be subject to the irrationality objection. In this paper, I aim to defend the RSC against the potential challenges and argue that it remains to be rational to choose RSC as the right way to protect individuals' rights, as opposed to UofR. I will consider the irrationality objection and the 'saveability' objection, then I will respond to them respectively by showing that both fail to debunk the rationale of adopting the RSC.

Ziming is from China, currently based in Shanghai. He has a BSc Economics degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science. Though holding an Economics degree, he found out that he is more interested in philosophising than doing constraint optimisations. He has a rather wide range of philosophical interests including but not limited to moral, political, legal, and social philosophy, philosophy and public policy, philosophy of economics, and rational choice theory. He will begin to pursue an MSc degree in Economics and Philosophy at the LSE soon. When not philosophising, he enjoys books, music, films, basketball, and badminton.

The UPJA Virtual Conference for Undergraduate Philosophy is brought to you by the Undergraduate Philosophy Journal of Australasia. Our current UPJA Editorial team is Jack Hawke (何健平), Jessica Sophia Ralph, Anna Day, and James Cafferky. You can find out more about the Journal's work and sign up for our mailing list at upja.online.