

2015 Central Division Meeting Invited Symposium Abstracts

The Semantics of Slurs: A Dual Speech-Act Analysis (III-B, Thursday 2:20)

Elisabeth Camp, Rutgers University

Slurs are incendiary linguistic expressions, so much so that hearers typically take offense at utterances containing slurs embedded within plugging or ‘inoculating’ contexts, such as conditionals, speech and attitude reports, and even direct quotation. Philosophers and linguists have recently wrestled with what theoretical role to assign to the derogatory attitudes that make slurs so offensive: Are they part of those expressions’ semantic values? Are they presuppositions? Conventional or conversational implicatures? I argue that explaining the full pattern of behavior supports a dual-speech acts view, on which slurs make two distinct but coordinated contributions to the illocutionary act: a truth-conditional predication of group membership, and a commitment to the appropriateness of a derogating perspective on that group. Different semantic constructions and pragmatic contexts alter the relative prominence and scope of these two acts.

Justice in Transnational Governance (VII-A, Saturday 2:30 p.m.)

Helena de Bres, Wellesley College

The small portion of philosophical work on global distributive justice that directly discusses particular agents, institutions or practices in global politics tends to focus on a narrow range of the existing set. The emphasis is chiefly on bilateral diplomacy or intergovernmental organizations, to the neglect of a variety of more recent forms of transnational governance, many of which incorporate non-state actors, have more limited membership, involve informal and dynamic structures, employ cooperative and reflexive methods for ensuring compliance, and operate largely out of the public eye. This paper considers how philosophers should conceive of distributive justice in relation to these neglected sites of transnational governance, using the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) as an illustration.

New Directions in Global Justice: An Agent-Principal Approach (VII-A, Saturday 2:30 p.m.)

Cristian Dumitriu, University of Kansas

In this paper, my ambition is to survey the most important discussions in global justice, and to explain future directions of research. I will organize the paper as follows. First, I will describe the two most important traditions in the global justice debate. Following Samuel Scheffler, I will call the first one “additive” and the second one “unitary.” Second, I will highlight a problem that both traditions have. The point I would like to make here is that the global justice debate has been structured in a way that makes the most pressing issues of global justice invisible. Third, I will propose a different way of approaching global justice which, I believe, radically departs from the additive and unitary traditions. This new different way, I believe, proposes the new direction that global justice debates should take.

Conservation and Persistence (I-A, Thursday 12:10 p.m.)

Julia Jorati, Ohio State University

According to classical theism, finite things depend on God both for their creation and for their conservation: divine activity is required not only to bring them into existence but also to keep them in existence. If God stops conserving a creature, it ceases to exist. My paper explores the consequences that the doctrine of conservationism has for the metaphysics of created substances. What must creatures be like if they require God’s conservation, and what constraints, if any, does conservationism place on theories of creaturely persistence? Does conservationism, for instance, entail four-dimensionalism, or is it compatible with both four- and three-dimensionalism? I argue that taking for granted assumptions typically made by contemporary analytic metaphysicians, it is difficult to reconcile conservationism with a three-dimensionalist theory of persistence. The combination of conservationism and four-dimensionalism is a much happier marriage. Yet, this does not entail that historical figures who endorse conservationism and three-dimensionalism face a serious problem. After all, medieval and early modern conservationists do not share some of our contemporary metaphysical assumptions: they have resources at their disposal that make it much easier to reconcile three-dimensionalism with conservationism. One of these resources is the Neoplatonist doctrine that God is being-itself and that creatures participate in the being that God emanates. Even thinkers whom we typically view primarily as members of the Aristotelian tradition invoke versions of this Neoplatonist doctrine. The paper illustrates how Thomas Aquinas, Francisco Suárez, and Gottfried Leibniz each employ the notions of participation

or emanation in their accounts of divine conservation. These notions, I argue, elegantly solve the problems facing contemporary three-dimensionalist conservationists.

What Is Explanation in Mathematics? (III-C, Thursday 2:20 p.m.)

Marc B. Lange, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Unlike explanations in science, explanation in mathematics has received relatively scant attention from philosophers. Whereas there are canonical examples of scientific explanations (as well as canonical examples of scientific non-explanations, such as “the flagpole”), few (if any) examples have become widely accepted as exhibiting the distinction between proofs that explain why some mathematical theorem holds and proofs that merely prove that some theorem holds. In this talk, I will propose some very simple examples (drawn from several branches of math) and argue that they suggest a particular account of explanation in mathematics (at least, of those explanations consisting of proofs). Along the way, I will talk about symmetry, mathematical coincidence, and mathematically natural properties.

Attention and Visual Crowding (IV-D, Friday 9:00 a.m.)

Declan Smithies, Ohio State University

What can we learn about visual attention from the phenomenon of visual crowding? Consider the following pair of claims:

- (1) **The Perception Thesis:** the capacity for attention to an object is necessary for conscious perception of the object.
- (2) **The Cognition Thesis:** the capacity for attention to an object is necessary for the capacity to demonstrate the object and to form justified beliefs about the object directly on the basis of perception.

Ned Block that certain cases of visual crowding provide counterexamples to the perception thesis and the cognition thesis alike. Meanwhile, Michael Tye argues that both the perception thesis and the cognition thesis can be defended against the threat of counterexample. So Tye accepts both while Block accepts neither. I will split the difference between Block and Tye by arguing that we can accept the cognition thesis while rejecting the perception thesis. Given the functional role that attention plays as an interface between perception and cognition, we should not expect these two theses to stand or fall together.