The Postgraduate Philosophy Association of
Southern Africa
9th Annual Conference
19-20 July 2014
Innovation Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS
## Saturday, 19 July

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue 1</th>
<th>Venue 2</th>
<th>Venue 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08h30</td>
<td>REGISTRATION &amp; REFRESHMENTS - FOYER</td>
<td>WELCOME - AUDITORIUM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h00</td>
<td>SESSION 1A: The philosophy of unreality</td>
<td>SESSION 1B: Legal and moral studies in South Africa</td>
<td>SESSION 1C: From Marcuse to Seuss: Critical studies in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09h45</td>
<td>Greg Swer (UKZN)</td>
<td>Jeff Martin (UKZN)</td>
<td>Danelle Fourie (NWU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h00</td>
<td>Virtual reality: An ontological study of post-modern simulation and simulacra</td>
<td>The legal philosophy and politics behind offensive artwork in South Africa</td>
<td>Unless: Environmental Degradation Discourse within 'The Lorax'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10h45</td>
<td>Stefan van der Merwe (NWU)</td>
<td>Sharon Chimhande (WITS)</td>
<td>Muano Tshivase (NMMU)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 2</th>
<th>Session 3</th>
<th>Session 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11h00</td>
<td>SESSION 2A: The naked truth: Legal expertise to cultural transgression</td>
<td>SESSION 2B: The eternal return of Nietzsche</td>
<td>SESSION 2C: Communitarianism and liberation in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11h45</td>
<td>Context as the fundamental challenge of the novice/expert problem: What epistemological significance might it have for legal adjudication?</td>
<td>Spiritual pregnancy: The practical implication of Nietzsche’s Freedom</td>
<td>Fanon and the question of liberation in Azania/South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h30</td>
<td>Dee Cohen (UJ)</td>
<td>Stefan Smit (UP)</td>
<td>Thabang Dladla (UJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h30</td>
<td>The sub-culture of nudism as a transgressive cultural activity that challenges normative prescriptions of</td>
<td>Between toleration and resentment</td>
<td>African communitarianism vis à vis history: A call for a new philosophy for Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12h30</td>
<td>Somila Mjekula (NMMU)</td>
<td>Fritz Knauff (UP)</td>
<td>Johnbosco Nwogbo (UKZN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 3</th>
<th>Session 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14h00</td>
<td>SESSION 3A: Knowing the world; subjectivity and science</td>
<td>SESSION 3B: The metaphysics of race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14h45</td>
<td>Kant on the subjectivity of space</td>
<td>Identity without historical geographical origin and skin colour authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14h45</td>
<td>David Scholtz (UJ)</td>
<td>Josias Tembo (UP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15h30</td>
<td>Psychodynamics and empirical evidence</td>
<td>A normative approach: Can we eliminate race?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15h30</td>
<td>Jane Anderson (UJ)</td>
<td>Mutshidzi Maraganedza (UKZN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session 4</th>
<th>Session 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16h00</td>
<td>SESSION 4A: Bridging philosophy and science</td>
<td>SESSION 4B: Let’s get physical: Questions on physicalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16h45</td>
<td>Conventions in science as definitions</td>
<td>Bifactualism: A new physicalist account of experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16h45</td>
<td>Carin Robinson (UKZN)</td>
<td>Danielle Swanepoel (UJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17h30</td>
<td>Carnap, Heidegger and the proper relation between philosophy and the natural sciences</td>
<td>Categoricalism and the justification of Physicalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17h30</td>
<td>Mike Smith (UCT)</td>
<td>Ashley Coates (WITS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMPLIMENTARY DRINKS | DINING ROOM

CONFERENCE DINNER | AMSTERDAM BAR & GRILL
# Sunday, 20 July

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Venue 1</th>
<th>Venue 2</th>
<th>Venue 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>08h30</strong></td>
<td>**REGISTRATION &amp; REFRESHMENTS</td>
<td>FOYER**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 5A</strong></td>
<td>Existentialism on meaning and Being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 5B</strong></td>
<td>Morality, agency and belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 5C</strong></td>
<td>Analytics of perception: science vs. philosophy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Worldly consciousness: A phenomenological critique of the intellectualist dissociation of Being</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Hot and cold akrasia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Anti-brain naturalism vs Neurophilosophy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Sibusiso Maphanga (UZ)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Julie Reid (WITS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Serdal Tumkaya (METU)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Nancy on “sense” &amp; existential meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Is it justified to hold people morally responsible for their beliefs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>The perception of dance: Considering phenomenology and neuroscience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Darryl Wardle (UP)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Natasha Salant (WITS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09h00</strong></td>
<td>Devon Peterson (UJ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10h30</strong></td>
<td>**TEA &amp; REFRESHMENTS</td>
<td>DINING ROOM**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 6A</strong></td>
<td>Philosophy of technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 6B</strong></td>
<td>Hope and meaning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 6C</strong></td>
<td>Feminism, knowledge and identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td>Transgressing “Sex, Money and Power” via temporality in Gaspar Noé’s Enter the Void</td>
<td></td>
<td>A critical exposition of hope, the wellspring of freely chosen action</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td>Black feminist epistemology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td>Michael Barker (NMMU)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Swinney (UNISA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h00</strong></td>
<td>Patience Salane (UJ)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h45</strong></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 6A</strong></td>
<td>Philosophy of technology: Merleau-Ponty’s embodiment and the reshaping of reality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h45</strong></td>
<td>Meaning, argument and the Zhuangzi: filling the gaps</td>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond Bechdel: Towards the empowered ecofeminist voice in film narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h45</strong></td>
<td>Jean du Toit (NWU)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hannah Kirkaldy (RHODES)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11h45</strong></td>
<td>Melissa Sydie &amp; Lisa Weideman (NMMU)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12h30</strong></td>
<td>**FAREWELL &amp; THANK YOU</td>
<td>AUDITORIUM**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of abstracts

Psychodynamics and Empirical Evidence
Jane Anderson
201339683@student.uj.ac.za
In spite of the fact that Freud’s ‘Psychodynamic’ theory of Personality still underpins much of psychology, it has been criticized by many as being mistaken in various of its tenets. There has also been much debate about the extent to which it can be considered ‘scientific’. Popper uses, as an example of a good scientific theory, Einstein’s gravitational theory, which predicts that “stars close to the sun would look as if they had moved a little away from the sun, and from one another” (Popper 1963). According to Popper, the ease with which the prediction could be shown, by empirical evidence, to be false is what makes its success so impressive: in contrast, he says, Psychodynamic theory is so imprecise that any evidence at all could be interpreted as evidence in favour of the theory – even claims that actually contradict each other. But I reject Popper’s attack on Psychodynamics as ‘unscientific’ as being based on ignorance of the theory and misunderstanding of how to apply its principles.

Moreover, I wonder whether a theory like psychodynamics really needs to be scientific in order to be considered legitimate. How ‘scientific’, according to Popper’s criterion, are other practices that we typically accept without question – for example, medicine? My contention is that, where the structure of the mind/personality is concerned, the question of ‘scientific-ness’ does not arise, and thus that Popper’s criticism of psychodynamics is misdirected. If there is no type of empirical evidence that could potentially settle questions about psychological phenomena in a conclusive way, the test for such a theory of personality must be not whether or not it is ‘scientific’, but rather how well it explains the symptoms of patients, and/or how well the type of treatment suggested by the theory succeeds in solving the patients’ problems.

Transgressing “Sex, Money and Power” via temporality in Gaspar Noé’s Enter the Void (2009)
Michael Barker
mchl.barker@gmail.com
Technology is a double edged sword: it produces alienation yet streamlines sociality. Gaspar Noé’s film Enter the Void (2009) makes delicate use of digital revolution technologies to create a film which has been labelled as the art film counter-part to Avatar (2009). The film presents the exquisite sensory experience of an hallucinogenic user. Beauty can, however, be read as beautification- a veil covering a tragic existence. On the one hand, the visually stunning film intoxicates the audience in a superb psychedelic trip. On the other hand, it is not a good trip. A montage of the drug user’s traumas tears the veil by contrasting perceived beauties in the actual present to genuine beauties and complementary horrors in the virtual past. The amalgamation and interplay between the actual and virtual create time-images which colour profoundly alienated individuals who, like recreational drug users, appear to be sexual for pleasure but in fact use sex as a means to secure human connection. In this regard, the various theoretical perspectives on movement-images and time-images as theorised by Deleuze are discussed and accompanied by a synopsis of Enter the Void with the time-images therein. Against this backdrop, the novel forms of time-images that occur in the film and how they comprise (and precipitate) a reflection upon duration is analysed. Particular attention is paid to the value of such time-images in negotiating cultural/national identity. With this in mind, Rodowick illustrates that the digital revolution creates a digital time-image - or siliconicystal - which lays bare the transgressive potential of the time-image.
The Legal Philosophy and Politics Behind Offensive Artwork in South Africa

Sharon Chimhanda
sharose.honey@gmail.com

This research paper seeks to examine legal and moral issues relating to offensive artwork in South Africa, against the backdrop of a 2012 art piece called “The Spear”, which was painted by a South African artist Brett Murray. The painting, which proved to be controversial, depicted a popular art piece of Lenin, except the subject in the picture represented the current South African President Jacob Zuma, with his genitals hanging out. “The Spear” catalysed intensive political, philosophical, cultural and legal public debate in the country and brought to the forefront the longstanding contention of the conflicting rights of freedom of expression and the right to privacy. The chief contention lay in the following question: To what extent can an artwork be offensive, and to what extent should the rights of citizens be protected against this offense? The South African courts did not address the issue because the matter was not legally pursued in court. This research paper, therefore, seeks to do two things: Firstly, it will attempt to discuss what could have been the legal position had the courts addressed the issue. Secondly, it will examine whether, beyond the legal issue, an offensive artwork is morally unjustifiable. In addressing both issues I would like to defend the position that whether or not an offensive artwork such as the “The Spear” is legally justifiable or unjustifiable – it remains morally unjustifiable. I shall argue firstly, that something which is legally offensive is only offensive because the law says it is wrong and that the legality of the matter remains distinct from the morality thereof; and secondly, that something is morally offensive qua wrong because it violates certain norms and (or) beliefs. In order to defend my thesis, I will use the Offense Principle to not only show the limit of the legal position but the scope of the moral position.

Categoricalism and the Justification of Physicalism

Ashley Coates
ashley.coates2@gmail.com

Physicalism is the view that everything either is physical or, in some suitably strong sense, is determined by or depends on the physical. Categorical properties are properties that do not essentially play any theoretical, causal or dispositional role. Categoricalism is the view that all actual basic properties are categorical properties. Physicalist categoricalism, the conjunction of physicalism and categoricalism, is a highly influential position in contemporary metaphysics.

A well known argument against physicalist categoricalism is the argument from irremediable ignorance. According to this argument, physicalist categoricalism is unacceptable as it entails an unacceptable irremediable ignorance about the basic properties that populate the actual world. I argue that the standard version of this argument does not raise any serious problems for physicalist categoricalism. However, I also argue that the argument can be restructured into an argument that does raise serious epistemic problems for physicalist categoricalism.

Context as the fundamental challenge of the novice expert problem

Dee Cohen
deeteaspoon@gmail.com

Alvin Goldman’s (2001) novice/expert problem highlights the fundamental challenge faced by legal fact-finders when assessing the probative value of proffered expert evidence. In this application, Goldman’s account might be problematic as it underplays the role of institutional differences between bodies of specialised knowledge (i.e. the legal field and the expert’s field). I propose that the novice/expert problem as applied to legal fact finders is the result of domain differences between the novice and expert (rather than the result of the judge simply knowing less than the expert). Furthermore, I argue that even if judges and experts had the same knowledge, these problems would persist. This is because the judge is not assessing expert testimony from the perspective of a peer.
in the expert’s domain. They are instead motivated by the goals and standards of the legal field. Law, as a social institution, requires the legal fact finder to be motivated by more than factual accuracy of their decisions, but also certain practical considerations relevant to legal adjudication (e.g. substantive and procedural justice, timely and cost-effective dispute resolution). By emphasising these domain-based differences, I suggest that epistemological contextualism (as proposed by David Lewis) might provide a useful avenue for addressing legal challenges raised by the novice/expert problem.

*Fanon and the question of liberation in Azania/South Africa*

**Thabang Dladla**
dladlathabang@yahoo.com

As South Africa celebrates its 20 years of democratic rule the question arises as to whether is South Africa liberated from colonial and apartheid rule? In this paper I shall argue that South Africa’s democracy is meaningless without addressing the main issue that has marked the struggle against colonial rule which is the land question. African’s in South Africa have engaged in wars against the colonialist commercialization and expropriation of African land, namely; the Khoi resistance against Portuguese colonialist in 1510, the battle of Sandlwana in 1879 among many others. And 20 years into democratic rule the land issue is not addressed and as a result many natives/black people remain landless against the settler nation which is the whites. In this paper I shall argue that the land issue is of critical importance to the liberation of African people in South Africa as they are currently not liberated/free as Fanon correctly put it; “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.” (Fanon, 1961).

*Phenomenology of Technology: Merleau-Ponty’s embodiment and the reshaping of reality*

**Jean du Toit**
Jean.DuToit@nwu.ac.za

This study postulates that a philosophical analysis of technology (especially as manifested in new media) generates a better understanding of the shifting perspectives of reality caused by these technologies if done via Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of embodiment. This leads to an approach wherein the individual remains embodied within the technological landscape, but wherein technology also provides an avenue for alternative and expanded forms of engagement by the individual with reality. Technology thus leads to a broadening of the individual’s perception of the world, but this perception of the world is also more fluid due to the changing nature of technology (updating technology) and the creation of user-generated content in the extended virtual world: Reality is open to continuous reshaping. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology accommodates shifting views of reality created by technology whilst remaining embedded in the embodied, individual context. Perception can never (in the view of Merleau-Ponty) be separated from the embodied individual, but in the technological context reality is expanded for the individual by both an increased perception (inward) and an increased bodily influence of the individual (outward).

*New Possibilities for the Kalam Cosmological Argument*

**Kobus Erasmus**
kobus@intgo.net

In this paper I offer various new possibilities for a notable theistic argument, namely, the kalam cosmological argument. This argument contends (1) that the universe began to exist, (2) that the universe therefore has a cause, and (3) that this cause is a transcendent personal being (or God). In light of the fact that the kalam cosmological argument faces several forceful objections, I argue that there is a need to investigate whether or not there are new possibilities for the argument, such as new directions, formulations, or supporting arguments. I conclude that
there are various promising possibilities for strengthening the argument, and that these possibilities call for further research.

A philosophical-critical study of the consequences of “false needs” advertising in contemporary society

Danelle Fourie
danellefourie@gmail.com

The Industrial Revolution of the modern era and globalization in the postmodern era have influenced the contemporary consumer culture that is prevalent in today’s society. Consumerist behaviour is encouraged in contemporary postmodern society, specifically using advertising as tool. People have become so obsessed with material wealth and the consumption of products that they have become uncritical not only in how they spend their money, but also with regards to the reasons for purchasing something and the manipulation techniques that are used in advertising to encourage the purchasing of goods.

Herbert Marcuse is a well known social theorist and philosopher whose work focuses on topics such as consumer behaviour and capitalism. His central work, “One-dimensional Man” provides a valuable insight with regards to modern advertising through his identification of “false needs”, which opens an avenue of critique with regards to consumerism. The encouragement of the consumption of these false needs through advertising leads to negative effects on the individual, society and environment.

In this study it is suggested that in order to resist false needs advertisement critical reflection is needed on an individual level. This critical reflection requires the distinction of the individual's true needs and false needs, and also the re-evaluation of what should be considered true needs and false needs. The re-evaluation of true and false needs can be done in accordance to Epicurus’s philosophy of happiness. By doing this, one would not consume for the sake of consuming, but rather consume in accordance with one’s true needs. Furthermore, by using Epicurus’s philosophy of happiness one would be able to distinguish between what would truly bring happiness. The misconstrued image of happiness through false needs as seen in advertisements in today's contemporary consumer society can then be resisted.

Of Rodents and Robots: subsumption architectures and common currencies.

Blaize Kaye
blaize.kaye@gmail.com

There is a widely held view in the cognitive and behavioural sciences that orderly action selection is best explained by the existence of a psychological system that represents the potential outcomes of possible actions along a single dimension of value. This paper begins by describing a general version of the argument for a “common currency” for decision making and then raises a challenge to this family of arguments posed by work in behaviour-based robotics.

Specifically, I will examine Rodney Brooks’ work on “subsumption architectures”, an approach to robot control systems that has been especially influential within 4EA (embodied, extended, embedded, enactive, affective) approaches to cognitive science and the philosophy of mind. With the subsumption architecture, Brooks eschews explicit representations and centralised planning in favour of a set of modules, organized into a hierarchy of layers, each of which is more or less independently responsible for implementing one of the agent's goals. Crucially, while these layers do communicate, communication is restricted to extremely simple signalling – for instance, disabling or activating another layer or module.

Robots controlled by subsumption architectures are able to engage in simple but fairly robust patterns of behaviours. As such, any theory of motivation that posits a unidimensional representation of value will need to
address the fact that there exist agents that demonstrate ordered patterns in action selection but whose internal control system is both distributed and anti-representational.

Meaning, argument and the Zhuangzi: filling the gaps.
Hannah Kirkaldy
g10k3351@campus.ru.ac.za
Philosophy aims to understand the world and human meaning. Generally, it tries to achieve this understanding by using rational argument to explore particular issues. In this essay, I will argue, based on Raymond Gaita’s discussion of meaning, that there are aspects of human meaning that are not appropriate topics for rational argument, but which are still important for understanding the human world. In order to suggest one way in which the gap between philosophy’s goals and the way it tries to achieve them can be filled, I will look at the ancient Chinese philosophy text Zhuangzi. As a performatve text which communicates largely through stories, it illustrates the way in which stories can communicate philosophically in a way that can enrich traditional philosophy.

Between Toleration and Ressentiment
Fritz Knauff
mr.wistful@gmail.com
Pleas for tolerance have come to the fore in the vocabulary of moral and political discourses in the 21st century, being espoused and advocated by most normative frameworks including the UN and international conventions. Conversely, tolerance articulated within these discourses has been severely criticised – especially in Foucauldian schools - for its tendencies to perpetuate irreconcilable differences in the form of subject identities, establishing the liberal West as moral hegemon, obfuscating bourgeois Protestant norms behind a facade of neutrality and legitimating intolerance of and aggression toward non-liberal forms of politics. In acknowledgement of these criticisms, the aims of my paper are modest; it alternativey explores the possibility of situating tolerance within an existentialist framework. Such a perspective shifts the emphasis of tolerance, as an acute experience, back to the tolerating individual – rather than those who ought to be tolerated or the authority advocating tolerance. To conceptually distinguish between tolerance as an experience and tolerance as discourse, virtue or value, I shall refer to the former as toleration. This paper elaborates the conceptual field of tolerance and toleration, and explores the prospect of toleration ranking amongst other existential themes like angst, dread, despair and nausea. Whether or not toleration can be placed within an existenstialist framework, I maintain, will depend on its potential for authenticity – as Sartre outlines it. Occasions when toleration is experienced inauthentically likewise warrant consideration in light of the authenticity of toleration. Here I aver that inauthentic toleration is nothing other than an instance of ressentiment – as Nietzsche construes it.

Worldly consciousness: A phenomenological critique of the intellectualist dissociation of Being
Sibusiso Maphanga
zsmaphanga@gmail.com
The dualist argument is that only thought of the world can be realistically known, not the world. This view amounts to what we can call the dissociation of conscious being from itself.
In this article I argue from the phenomenological perspective that if we ‘bracket’ or ‘suspend’ the dualist argument by describing our honestly genuine experience of the essential self-givenness (Selbstgegebenheit) of phenomena, we are able to discover the coherent connectedness of our consciousness with being itself. I regard this experience as the phenomenological convergence of sensory consciousness or the united existence of the self, as opposed to the dualist divergence of consciousness from the world. Hence, I demonstrate that in our experiential engagement with the world there is much evidence to deny the claim that deems subject and object to be ontologically separate. The dualist assumptive ontology cannot be accepted for it separates consciousness from what it is
conscious of. Experience renders our human sensory experience as the connector of self with the experienced world. I conclude that in essence the activities of our consciousness through the power of intentionality do not deal with thought exclusively as if the world we inhabit remains illusory. Intentionality becomes the affinity binding people within a common interaction of intelligibly coherent unity of being.

**A Normative Approach: Can We Eliminate Race?**
**Mutshidzi Maraganedzha**
maraganedzham@gmail.com
It would not be exaggerating to point out that there is a clear controversy on the notion of race. It seems that the meaning of the notion of race is not solely in its content. In some instances philosophers acknowledge that race might have a meaning that can be traced to the actual natural world. In his, In My Father’s House: African in the Philosophy of Culture, Kwame Anthony Appiah has developed an account of race that is eliminativist in nature. Appiah’s intention was to demonstrate that the notion of race is nonexistent. Meanwhile, lines have been drawn between proponents who advocate for conservationism and others for eliminativism. These debates have some sense of merit; the controversy persists among philosophers with regard to the question whether to eliminate or conserve the concept of race. This paper seeks to examine the performance of the eliminativism theory, in contrast with conservation theory of race. I seek to show that the metaphysics of race via finding determinative theory of reference for racial terms or concepts is unfruitful. I seek to argue that racial eliminativist criticism against the notion of race is not convincing. I argue that we should preserve the notion of race, given, that the position of eliminativism does not account for social injustice that people of different races experience.

**Cheating Behaviour in a Sample of South African Students: Implications in Moral Cognition**
**Jeffrey Martin**
drcogsci@gmail.com
Empirical investigations into moral cognition have yielded a number of fascinating insights that bring together psychology, philosophy, behavioural economics, and neuroscience. However, cross-cultural replications of their findings are sorely lacking. To an extent, this may reflect an example of the WEIRD effect, and is of particular importance when considering broad statements regarding human nature, or the nature of morality generally speaking. To assess whether such broad pronouncements are justified, we performed a modified replication of a study conducted in the US and designed to assess whether a South African and American sample responded the same way to an opportunity to cheat on a test for additional money. Our results were dramatically different, and highlight the importance of approaching experimental, empirical, studies of morality with caution. In this paper, I discuss the background to these findings, the experimental results, and their implication for generalities in moral cognition, and whether conclusions can be drawn on how humans, qua humans, make moral decisions.

**The Sub-Culture of Nudism as a Transgressive Cultural Activity that Challenges the Normative Prescriptions of Sexuality which Appear in Foucault’s Texts on Disciplinary/Bio-power**
**Somila Mjeku**
m.soimal@yahoo.com
Naturism, otherwise known as nudism, is not only a philosophical practice but an instigative act that opposes the nature of society’s sexual subjectivity. That is, in a contemporary culture informed by unattainable physical appearances, plastic surgery, tabloid idolisation of celebrity bodies and the promotion of sexuality as a commodity, the sub-culture of naturism subverts these preoccupations of the flesh by depriving them of their definitively erotic meaning. By living a nudist lifestyle concerned with the care of the self that is in tune with nature, the Naturists effectively reject the modus operandi of sexuality as the dominant mechanism of subjectivity. With that said, firstly the writings of Michel Foucault in Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, as well as in The History of
Sexuality provide a theoretical backdrop relevant to the cultural activity of nudism. This is done in order to show how disciplinary power is still an omnipresent system in the decipherment of the subject through various state institutions and to expose the deployment of sexuality that subjects the body to the gaze in contemporary society. Secondly, the sub-culture of nudism is introduced through a discussion of its history, whilst highlighting its key themes and significant elements that qualify it as a return to the practice of Hellenistic philosophy’s ‘Care of the Self’. Lastly, the potential of the practice of nudism to exist outside the structures of disciplinary power, as well as to inform new subjectivities by the refusal to see the body as a sexual object is analysed in detail. This research into the cultural activity of nudism exposes the restrictions of disciplinary/bio-power and perverted ideologies attached to sexuality in media and society, as well as comments on how the practice of nudism is an anti-authority movement that reinvents subjectivity by rejecting normative prescriptions of the eroticised nude body.

African communitarianism vis a vis history: a call for a new philosophy for Africa
Johnbosco Nwogbo
214579845@stu.ukzn.ac.za
Since Placide Tempels published his Bantu Philosophy in 1945 to unofficially kick-start the project now known as African philosophy, communitarianism has constituted the central rallying point for most African scholars. The broad view is that, at root, the African is inclined towards communitarian being and thinking. Communitarianism construed thus is said to constitute the ontology of the African person. Ifeanyi Menkiti and D. A. Masolo are, at least by one reading of them, two theorists of African communitarianism of the essentialist/ontological bent. Where, in today’s Africa, evidence for communitarianism is dwindling, the impulse has been for these African philosophers to quickly suggest this as an instantiation of African societal decay, hence the necessity of a return. With this in mind, this paper will demonstrate that the essentialist African communitarian thesis is two things. (1) It is the product of “philosophy born out of a struggle”. I will argue that the essentialist communitarian thesis does not diverge in any significant way from the racial (or racist) philosophies of Aristotle or Hume, since they all seek to defend, or even extol, the value of a certain anthropology and its attendant social form. (2) It results from the fact that African scholars have neglected work done in other much more established areas of scholarship such as sociology and history. Highlighting the link between this neglect and African communitarian essentialism, a critique based on a generally acceptable historical narrative of human society will be proposed. An interpretation of the African as an agent in history will serve as fore-ground for a new philosophy for Africa. This paper will conclude that communitarianism, in Africa, Australasia, Europe or the Americas, is merely a characteristically human adaptation to environmental, economic and territorial conditions, and the African ought not to be read in a light other than this.

The perception of dance: Considering phenomenology and neuroscience.
Devon Petersen
rhythmnnword@yahoo.com
In “The Experience of Watching Dance: Phenomenological-Neuroscience Duets,” Corrine Jola, Shantal Ehrenberg and Dee Reynolds (2011) argue that phenomenology and neuroscience should be seen as complementary approaches to solving the problem of aesthetic perception, specifically in the context of watching dance. In their view, both approaches to aesthetic perception have several shortcomings and so it is, in their interpretation, only by combining these approaches that a richer and more complete understanding of the perception of dance can be achieved. The authors do, however, admit that there are a number of problems in attempting to combine phenomenological accounts of the first person experience of watching dance with current neuro-scientific methods of acquiring data on audience response to dance, noting, for example that “[t]he link between motor stimulation and empathic responses remains hypothetical” (Jola et al, 2011: 21).
his paper aims to consider the question raised by these authors: Is an understanding of aesthetic perception only possible through an examination of subjective experience or can the neuro-scientific experiments such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) provide an objective understanding of the aesthetic experience of dance? As such, this paper investigates the phenomenon of audience perception of dance by means of a critical consideration of both contemporary phenomenological and neuro-scientific approaches, and the possibility of a combination of these approaches, now referred to as neurophenomenology. I then address the research question - whether phenomenology and neuroscience can provide a true, objective understanding of the aesthetic experience of dance.

Hot and Cold Akrasia
Julie Reid
joolie.reid@gmail.com

‘Recalcitrant emotions’ are emotions that conflict with an evaluative judgement, and appear irrational. For example, feeling fear in the face of the gorilla that is locked away in a zoo and that one judges to pose no danger, seems unjustified; nonetheless is not hard to imagine certain people feeling fear at the sight of the gorilla. This presents evidence for the weakness of ‘cognitivist’ or judgment centred accounts of emotion. In support of a perceptual account, Michael S. Brady argues that the possibility of recalcitrant emotion reveals an important feature of emotion; namely, that its intentionality has a passive aspect.

In my paper I present Christine Tappolett’s account of the role that emotion plays in weakness of will or akrasia, i.e. cases of someone intentionally acting against her best judgment. Like Brady she notes the passivity of emotion and on her account, emotions have non-conceptual content. She argues that emotions can undercut judgement in causing action by presenting a situation to a subject as appearing to have a certain quality (e.g. danger) and concludes that emotions make cases of weakness of will ‘intelligible’. She adds that it is ‘cold’ cases (those of acting against one’s best judgment when there is no emotion involved) that are the most puzzling. I consider whether apparently ‘cold’ cases of weakness of will are in fact as ‘cold’ as they seem, because for any evaluative judgment to be possible (and evaluative judgements are central to making practical judgments), something must be valued. As long as something is valued, it seems that some emotional colouring of the situation can be expected, and emotion can enter into the explanation of the action. In exploring the possibility of ‘cold’ akrasia, I draw on Robert Roberts’ notion of emotions as concern-based construals and contrast it with Peter Goldie’s notion of ‘feeling towards’.

Conventions in science as definitions
Carin Robinson
carin.b.robinson@gmail.com

Much of the debate about whether or not there are scientifically or philosophically significant distinctions between hypotheses and conventions in science is concerned with the non-observability of the referents of theoretical terms, and the expressions or theories which include them. Many expressions in science are, in this regard, theoretical expressions. For theorists such as Carnap, Wright and Maddy the justification of such expressions is non-empirical. Such non-empirical justification is often called conventional justification or support.

However, the implication of some theories in science having ‘only’ conventional support has distinct consequences for different theorists: for theorists such as Carnap and Wright conventional support implies that the expression or theory in question is a linguistic convention or a type of definition. This also means that they are taken to have no empirical content. For theorists such a Maddy, conventional support does not imply that the expression is a
linguistic convention or definition. Maddy holds that, despite the conventional support of some scientific theories, they nevertheless have empirical content.

I argue that Maddy is wrong. When expressions or parts of theories are not justified empirically (i.e. conventionally) they cannot be taken to have empirical content; scientific conventions are, therefore, definitions.

Black Feminist Epistemology: Racism, Sexism and the Production of Knowledge
Patience Salane
pksalane@gmail.com
Black feminism arose as a movement to address the exclusion of racial oppression from traditional feminist narratives. That is, black feminists saw traditional feminism as a puzzle with one missing piece; it advocated for sexism and class oppression but left out the most valuable piece of the puzzle: racism. Patricia Hill Collins (2009: 93) calls this “meshing smoothly [of] intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality [the] matrix of domination.” According to Black Feminist Epistemology, dominant ideas, beliefs and practices of knowledge systematically disadvantage black women. These dominant beliefs and practices have come to be known collectively as “masculinity”. The aim of Black Feminist Epistemology is to therefore alter these beliefs and practices so as to include the interests of black women.

However, black feminism has been perceived as highly Western-centred and in this case, post-colonial feminists have assumed the anti-essentialist stance. Black feminism was seen as a vehicle to drive the interests of Western black women under the disguise that it was concerned with black women on a universal footing. As a result, black women from outside the Western context (African women) were left out of the black feminist narrative.

In this paper I will focus on the way in which dominant South African beliefs and practices of knowledge systematically disadvantage South African black women in particular. That is, a focus on how our knowledge; as well as how we come about that knowledge has been corroded by the perceptions of South African black women. Black women in South Africa have been denied authority on all levels of society because of the dominant perceptions that were largely inherited from apartheid South Africa. In particular, black women find it difficult to assume authority in different spheres of society because of being racially black, as well as biologically women.

Is it justified to hold people morally responsible for their beliefs?
Natasha Salant
natashasalant@gmail.com
I judge people unfavourably when I discover that they hold homophobic, racist or sexist beliefs. I think I am in line with common-sense morality when I do so. My judgement is generated by (1) the mere untruth of such beliefs; and (2) the intuition that people are responsible for the beliefs they hold. My paper will be concerned with the latter aspect: whether it is justified to hold people responsible for belief formation and preservation. This project is unlike common discussions around free will, for it seems as though the control we have over actions is not the same as the control we have over beliefs. Perhaps forming some belief is slightly more complex than performing some action: it would be much more difficult, for instance, to suddenly believe a sexist proposition than it would to suddenly raise my right hand. However, I suggest that the processes through which beliefs are formed, and the contexts in which beliefs are held, are in many cases, within our control. I call this control doxastic agency; and I propose that an argument for doxastic agency is successful whether or not one ascribes to doxastic voluntarism. Subsequently, the conditions for what counts as a moral belief will be engaged with regards to potential for praiseworthy and blameworthy action. Thus, I develop a case for doxastic agency as the basis of our moral responsibility.
**Kant on the Subjectivity of Space**

**David Scholtz**

scholtz.spider@gmail.com

In the Transcendental Aesthetic, as in other points of the first Critique, Kant makes the claims that (a) “[s]pace represents no property at all of any things in themselves nor any relation of them to each other” and that (b) “[s]pace is nothing other than merely the form of all appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us” (A26/B42). In defending these claims, Kant is most often interpreted, for example by Paul Guyer, as arguing for the exclusive ideality of space. This reading makes Kant vulnerable to the objection that just because our representations of objects are spatial does not prove that the objects our representations are of are not. Another interpretation, held by Henry Allison, is that Kant assumes rather than argues for the ideality of sensible conditions. Such an assumption is to be understood within Kant’s method of transcendental reflection as an account of the human conditions for cognition. Allison’s interpretation avoids the criticism levelled against Kant under Guyer’s reading. Focussing on Kant’s assumptions in his Introduction and his uses of “ideality” and “subjectivity”, I argue that, while Allison’s interpretation is more favourable than the kind held by Guyer, it also faces several important challenges.

**Spiritual Pregnancy: The Practical Implications of Nietzsche’s Freedom**

**Stéfan Renier Smit**

Stefan.Smit@up.ac.za

Nietzsche’s notion of freedom and selfhood has received much scholarly attention not long ago, and unsurprisingly, as it has the peculiar interest of being a naturalised account of selfhood and a sort of freedom that has nothing whatsoever to do with conscious volition, yet is nevertheless an attempt at rehabilitating rather than dismissing freedom and selfhood in light of naturalism. The fruits of this recent interest have shown that Nietzsche’s account of freedom, despite its radical departure from traditional understandings, can tenably support a model of agency sufficient to support a meaningful, albeit counterintuitive, notion of responsibility. The main concern of this essay is to investigate the practical dimension of Nietzsche’s account of freedom. Nietzsche holds that freedom is by no means universal or equal, and possessed only by a rare and exceptional few, yet urges his readers to embark on the arduous and dangerous process of becoming free. How does one respond to these urgings and attempt the task without consciously deciding to do so? And how can one be responsible for attaining freedom if your attempt is not a free one? Nietzsche’s answer, necessarily vague, comes in the form of a metaphor of ‘spiritual pregnancy’ and the cultivation of ‘ideal selfishness’.

**Carnap, Heidegger and the proper relation between philosophy and the natural sciences**

**Mike Smith**

mike1001smith@gmail.com

The so-called “dispute” between Carnap and Heidegger concerning the proper role of philosophy in relation to the natural sciences is often cited as a moment of rupture in the history of western philosophy. Whereas Carnap held that philosophy should be wholly integrated with the natural sciences, Heidegger believed that philosophy should establish a proper distance from science and turn toward the question of Being.

Heidegger and Carnap’s conflicting positions are essentially informed by their opposing treatments of the problem posed by metaphysics. Both attempt to “overcome” metaphysics albeit in completely different senses of the word “overcome”. In “What is Metaphysics?” it is clear that “overcoming” for Heidegger involves merely dissolving the history of metaphysics in order to retrieve Dasein’s original instinct for metaphysical thinking. In “The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of
Language” (1932) by contrast, Carnap renders metaphysics meaningless and abandons it with enthusiasm for what lies ahead for a philosophy based on logical analysis and science. For Carnap, “overcoming” means simply “elimination.”

In this paper I claim that Carnap and Heidegger’s respective responses to the challenge posed by Lebensphilosophie within German philosophical circles in the early 20th century is the key to understanding their divergence on the point of metaphysics and in turn, the task of philosophy. Where Heidegger welcomes “life-world” considerations into his philosophical project, Carnap develops a highly problematic dualism in which the practical realm of life and the theoretical realm of a science-oriented philosophy are strictly disconnected. Following Michael Friedman, I claim that paying close attention to the fundamental disagreement between Heidegger and Carnap on how best to confront the relationship between “logic and life,” opens up the space to think about the origins, and possible means for resolution, of the now institutionalized divide between continental and analytic philosophy.

The Problem of Creation
Shaun Stanley
shauntstanley@yahoo.com
Did the universe begin to exist, such that it requires a cause for its existence? This, I think, is the central issue of the Kalam Cosmological Argument. It is a question often thought to be of profound importance. William Lane Craig has staunchly defended the Kalam argument. His work, which is the starting block of my investigation, features in a long tradition which attempts to establish that since the universe began to exist (some finite time ago) there is (at least) an external supernatural causal agent which brought the world into existence. It has been thought that this position is supported by the apparent theological implications of physical cosmology – in particular those of the Standard Big Bang Model of cosmology. Craig has argued jointly that it is logically impossible that the universe is infinite in the past, and that physical cosmology comports with this apparent logical truth. Thus, he argues, the universe has an external supernatural cause for its existence. Directed by the opening question, I intend to investigate two principal matters. Firstly: the purely conceptual issues involved in the Kalam argument, such as those related to beginnings, causes, time and ‘nothing’ (from which the universe was allegedly created). Secondly: the conceptual misinterpretations of physical cosmology as they apply to the Kalam argument. I intend to argue for the position that the universe did not begin to exist such that it requires a cause. That physical cosmology, properly understood, meaningfully suggests that the universe has always existed. That ultimately there is no ‘problem of creation’; it is a problem borne of conceptual misunderstandings, and theistic misinterpretations of physical cosmology.

Bifactualism: A New Physicalist Account of Experience
Danielle Swanepoel
daniellemarie000@gmail.com
The Knowledge Argument is an argument for dualism that claims that there are both physical and non-physical facts, something we can know by reflecting on ‘Mary’ who is aware of all scientific data about colours but has yet to see any. I reject the Knowledge Argument and instead provide a new physicalist response I call ‘bifactualism’. Bifactualism is a physicalist account essentially comprising two elements. First, it distinguishes between two kinds of facts: general and particular facts. The second element is the claim that this distinction explains facts about consciousness. Bifactualism is a non-reductive physicalist account which will provide for a new way of understanding non-reductive claims. I argue that the case of Mary does not support dualism, and instead provides at least equal reason to support bifactualism. Most contributions made with regards to the Knowledge Argument focus on what Mary is able to learn once outside the black and white room. Bifactualism is interested in what she
is able to learn in the black and white room, namely, that she has not learned all the available physical facts, which makes this a novel approach to the Knowledge Argument.

Science Fiction: Oswald Spengler’s Philosophy of Science
Greg Swer
gregswer@gmail.com
Standard classifications of Spengler’s The Decline of the West as history or philosophy of history overlook the significant amount of attention that Spengler devotes to the subject of science. In the first volume of The Decline Spengler outlines an account of science that ranges from its primitive origins in magic and religion, to contemporary scientific developments in early 20th and mathematics. Spengler’s theory of science operates on two levels. On the first, it picks out the common features of the origins and practice of science at the intercultural level, noting the shared features of ‘scientific’ activity and conceptualization across the different world-cultures. On the second it explores the peculiar features of Western science, and considers the likely trajectory of scientific activity. In doing so it explores topics such as the incommensurability of differing scientific worldviews, the theory-ladenness of observation, and the philosophical significance of the mathematical nature of modern science. Science, for Spengler, is essentially a useful fiction whose predictive and manipulative success has no bearing on the truth of its metaphysical claims or the adequacy of its empirical/experimental observations.

Spengler’s philosophy of science stems from his wider philosophical concerns with the finite existence of culture-organisms and the antithesis between life and mechanization in human existence. And yet it does not merely serve as an exemplar of his own philosophy. It also offers an interesting insight into the evolving conceptualization of science in Germany during the long 19th Spengler both draws upon and reflects many of the ideas then current in the debates over the nature and direction of post-Hegelian science. Finally, Spengler’s account of the end (and ends) of Western science also provides the best way of grasping the overall point of his early philosophy, namely the analysis of the enabling conditions for Western civilisation’s final existential decision.

A critical exposition of hope, the wellspring of freely chosen action
Richard Swinney
maeglin@telkomsa.net
The proposed research intends to offer a critical exposition of the concept of hope and the problem of its interrelations with freedom to choose, voluntary and involuntary action, deliberation, and agency. As well as elucidating the aforementioned interrelations, the dissertation will also critically examine what hoping entails with respect to desire and belief, counter sceptical claims of hope, and critically evaluate the problem of the alleged opposites of hope, in order to argue that all freely chosen action has its ultimate source in hope.

Beyond Bechdel: towards the empowered ecofeminist voice in film narratives
Melissa Sydie and Lisa Weideman
melissa.sydie@webmail.co.za
lisaweideman1@gmail.com
Contemporary film studies have emphasised the importance of Allison Bechdel’s test, and its capacity for identifying the extent to which the woman’s voice is heard within narratives. The test, composed of three simple questions, seeks to determine whether the narrative contains at least two (named) female characters; whether these female characters talk to each other; and whether their discussions are of anything other than men. The test focuses on the general representation of females within film, and is regarded as a tool for measuring the specific gender-progressiveness of the narrative. However, it could be argued that while the Bechdel Test effectively determines whether the woman’s voice is present in the narrative, it fails to identify whether the film actively
transgresses the consumer-oriented female discourse present in mainstream Hollywood filmmaking. That is, while many narratives, such as Bridesmaids, could be considered as passing the Bechdel Test, their passing is not necessarily indicative of them containing either empowering or ecofeminist discourse. In light of this, it could be suggested that the Test requires another set of questions, parallel to it, which both complements, and improves, the viewer’s understanding of significant female representation within the film. To this end, in what follows, three questions will be suggested to achieve this, and to provide a tool for determining which mainstream films could be said to adequately depict an ecofeminist perspective. To illustrate how this could be achieved with the New Test, an analysis of the voices of certain female characters in Game of Thrones will be offered. While Game of Thrones could be said to pass the Bechdel Test, it would seem that an overpowering masculine presence drowns out many of the female characters. Conversely, certain female characters, such as Daenerys Targaryen, could be regarded as redeeming features, and envoys of ecofeminist discourse.

Identity without Historical Geographical Origin and Skin Colour Authority
Josias Tembo
tembojosias@yahoo.co.uk
Kwame A. Appiah informs us that ‘Talk of cosmopolitanism originally signaled, then, a rejection of the conventional view that every civilized person belonged to a community among communities’. Despite the fact that people of every colour can live together in all parts of the inhabitable world, and we have come to understand that a person’s identity is an affiliation to different aspects of life, we still persist in calling “black” people Africans and “white” people Europeans notwithstanding the fact that some “white” people have never been to Europe and some “black” people have never been to Africa. It is as if we are born with land DNA, or that nature has preserved particular lands for people of particular appearance. In reality, we do not own land; we belong to land as we exist in space and time.

Why should our historical geographical origins and skin colour be essentialised in defining who an African or European is? What gives historical geographical origin the authority to be the basis of land identity? In this paper I argue that basic identification of persons with skin colour and historical geographical origins is a misunderstanding of the relation between people and land, and is symptomatic of perpetuating racism and sometimes causing identity alienation to people who have made a home in a land considered not theirs while they belong to that land. In our cosmopolitan age, I propose that our understanding of identity and the relation between land and people should be broader than our inheritance from our remembered forefathers because the origins are beyond the memory of our forefathers and the present is not the life of our forefathers.

Anti-brain Naturalism vs Neurophilosophy
Serdal Tümkaya
stumkaya@metu.edu.tr
Naturalism, like many other major philosophical traditions, is too hard to precisely define. But it can easily be claimed that the core of naturalism is to accept the nonexistence of supernatural. Further, many philosophers intuitively believe that naturalist philosophers are science-friendly thinkers. Being science-friendly does not require to be science-like philosophy but to have a deep and infallible respect to the truth. A worthy philosophy should have “the virtues of workmanlike truthfulness”. To put it differently, naturalistic philosophy, at least, is (or should be) truth-addicted. How to reach the truth is the point that distinguishes the approaches within naturalistic tradition. For example, in analytical tradition, intuitions, introspection, symbolic logic, rational argumentation, thought experiments, conceptual, and linguistic analysis are the most widely used ways of figuring out the truths about our universe. However, none of the above requires you to be a naturalist. Accordingly, one can define herself as an analytical philosopher while declaring her non-naturalist perspective as shown in the study done within the philosophers of the world top universities. Even for the scientifically-minded naturalists, neurally-
minded ones could be easily distinguished from anti-brain ones. By neurophilosophy, I refer to the idea that in order to understand mind, we should study nervous systems. By anti-brain naturalism, I mean the ones which assert that neuroscience is irrelevant to the most important and interesting philosophical problems. Then what are the substantial differences between these analytical but non-naturalist and naturalist but non-neural philosophers and the neurophilosophers? Here, I examine these differences, and argue that anti-brain naturalism is in a full-blown crisis.

Virtual reality: An ontological study of post-modern simulation and simulacra

Stefan van der Merwe
22738363@nwu.ac.za

In contemporary society it is now technologically possible to alter the human reality through the means of Virtual Reality (VR). Recent technological advancements in virtual reality like Facebook’s Oculus Rift and Sony’s Project Morpheus will soon make it possible for VR technologies to be sold for personal home use. Virtual reality is a technology that convinces the participant that he or she is actually in another place by substituting the primary sensory input data produced by a computer. VR is therefore a simulation or simulacra (i.e. a likeness) of “reality”. In this paper I discuss the ontology of virtuality (virtual reality) and its historical progression to postmodern virtuality through the emergence of Jean Baudrillard’s hyperreality (i.e. the distinction between reality and virtuality becomes vague). Baudrillard’s view states that the simulacra or simulation is based in models which represent of reality although the emergence of hyperreality has led to a simulacrum without an original representation of reality. This paper also attempts to synthesize other postmodern concepts like Charles Taylor’s individualism and how it leads to the shift from an existence in reality to an existence in a virtual reality and trading in virtual environments as a commodity. This paper thus asks how virtual reality will challenge the individual’s experience of reality and how the hyperreality would influence the concept of individualistic atomism?

A critical engagement with Clark’s account of the role of motivation in a Bayesian information processing model of the brain

Elmarie Venter
weventer@gmail.com

In a recent target article in Behavioural Brain Sciences, Andy Clark examines predictive processing as a theory of brain function that aims to unify perception, action and cognition. On account of Clark’s view, the brain is bidirectional and hierarchical in nature; this involves the view that bottom-up input and top-down predictions constantly interact at various levels of cognition. The encounters between bottom-up input and top-down predictions generate a prediction error which can be best described as the difference between bottom-up input and top-down predictions. The main function of the cognitive system is to minimize this error. Prediction error can be minimized through backward updating of internal hypotheses, or through acting on the environment.

Clark thus proposes the action-oriented predictive processing approach in which perception and action work together to minimize prediction error. The implication of such a notion is that perception and action are primarily driven by predictions and expectations. Rational agents therefore ought to seek out situations that are void of prediction error or surprise. However, this is not the case because sophisticated agents (like humans) inhabit, and often seek out, environments that are rich in change and challenge. Within these changing environments, agents are required to make decisions about preferred actions. The focus of this survey thus concerns the role of motivation in action-selection, a topic strangely absent from Clark’s discussion.
The contemporary philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy evinces significant insight into human existence as it unfolds in all its vicissitudes within a postmodern world: a world that no longer has meaning or “sense” (in Nancy’s terms) but is itself “sense”. In The Sense of the World (1997) Nancy reveals how human beings “sense” and make sense of the world by situating their being not only in-the-world (à la Heidegger), but also, and perhaps more importantly, towards-the-world. The implications of Nancy’s philosophical (fore-)sights are appreciable insofar as they offer perceptive philosophical disclosures pertaining to our contemporary existential/ontological milieu. I will attempt to reveal the aforementioned aspects of Nancy’s philosophy by (de-)constructing an essay composed of three distinct fragments. Each of the three philosophical fragments accentuates a trenchant nuance in Nancy’s philosophy, thereby implicitly revealing significations within Nancy’s thought without explicitly defining/articulating such significations. This method of philosophical investigation belongs to Nancy himself, and I am employing it in an attempt to make manifest certain distinctive meanings or “senses” within Nancy’s thought which often efface themselves when approached via a strictly explicit philosophical reading. The three fragments will address three principal concerns. Firstly, what contemporary existential meaning might we glean from Nancy’s idiosyncratic conception of the “sense of the world”? Secondly, can Nancy’s conception of “sense” be construed as an intuitive continuation/furtherance of Nietzsche’s “transvaluation of values”; or even as a (re-)valuation of “value” itself? Thirdly, can Nancy’s philosophy legitimately serve as the staging/grounding of a nuanced, postmodern Existentialism, i.e. could/should human beings reconceptualise the question on the “meaning of life” in accordance with Nancy’s more intuitive discourse on the “sense of world”? The three fragments thus constitute a philosophical exposition of the significance of Nancy’s philosophy for contemporary human existence.