Northern New England Philosophy Association Annual Conference

26-27 October 2018
University of Vermont
Presented by the UVM Philosophy Department
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and a Coor Programming Grant from the the UVM Humanities Center

Friday, 26 October 2018

9:30-4:30: Registration (70 South Williams Street, #101)

10:30-11:50:

> **Undergraduate session** (Waterman, Memorial Lounge)
>
> **Chair:** Susan Stark (Bates)
>
> **Nadav Battat** (Clark)
> "The Question of Artificial Agency"
>
> **Kayla Jackson** (Bates)
> "Title VII, Black Women's Hair, and the Performance of Identity"

2:15-3:35:

Session IA (Cohen 101)	**Session IB** (Cohen 102)
Chair: James Kintz (St. Joseph's (ME))	**Chair**: Gordon Purves (Sacred Heart)
Katy Meadows (MIT)	**Jeff Buechner** (Rutgers University-Newark and CUNY Grad. Ctr.)
"Ground Control: Aristotle on Grounding and Causation"	"Quine's Principle of Minimal Mutilation and Inclusion of All Logical Consequences in a Belief Set: Why One has to Go"
Ambrose DeMarco (Holy Cross)	**Mike Dacey** (Bates)
"The Intersection of Reason and Emotion for Practical Reasoning in Aristotle"	"Evidence in Default"

3:55-5:15:

Session IIA (Cohen 101)	**Session IIB** (Cohen 102)
Chair: Catherine Elgin (Harvard)	**Chair**: David Cummiskey (Bates)
Anna Vaughn (Sacred Heart) "What is the Epistemic Status of Judgment in Locke's Treatment of Perception?"	**C. Wesley DeMarco** (Clark) "Consciousness of the Rule of Law: Risks and Reminders"
Dan Kervick (Independent Scholar) "Hume against the Geometers: Extension and Geometry in Hume's *Treatise*"	**Christine Susienka** (Sacred Heart) "Human Rights and Social Trust"

5:35-6:15:

Session IIIA (Cohen 101)	**Session IIIB** (Cohen 102)
Chair: Randall Harp (UVM)	**Chair**: Katharine Wolfe (St. Lawrence)
Daniel Muñoz (MIT) "Why Isn't Supererogation Wrong?"	**Paul Schofield** (Bates) "Wellbeing, Perfectionism, and the Testimony of Disabled Persons"

6:30-9:30:

> **Reception, Dinner, and Keynote** (Waterman, Memorial Lounge)
>
> **Chair:** Randall Harp (UVM)
>
> **Michael Bratman** (Stanford) "Shared Agency, Institutional Agency, Intentional Agency"

Saturday, 27 October 2018

8:45-12:30: Registration (Waterman, Memorial Lounge)

9:30-11:00:

> **Plenary Session** (Waterman, Memorial Lounge)
>
> **Chair**: Matt Weiner (UVM)
>
> **Quinn White** (MIT) "Love for All and Love for One"
>
> **James Kintz** (St. Joseph's (ME)) "Acting Together: The Co-Constituted Nature of Shared Agency"

11:20-noon: **Business meeting** (Cohen 101)

noon-1:30: **Lunch Break**: local eateries (10-15 min. walk).

1:30-2:50:

Session IVA (Cohen 101)	**Session IVB** (Cohen 102)
Chair: Lauren Ashwell (Bates)	**Chair**: Louis deRosset (UVM)
David Kaspar (St. John's (NY)) "Foundations of Morality"	**Gordon Purves** (Sacred Heart) "Can *de Minimus* Really Save the Precautionary Principle?"
Nathaniel Baron-Schmitt (MIT) "Winning"	**Paul McNamara** (UNH) "Toward a Systematization of Logics for Monadic and Dyadic Agency"

3:10-5:10:

Session VA (Cohen 101)	**Session VB** (Cohen 102)
Chair: Nathaniel Baron-Schmitt (MIT)	**Chair**: David Kaspar (St. John's (NY))
Kelly Gaus (MIT) "Reasoning from Impossibility: A Non-Vacuist Account of Counterpossible Conditionals"	**Pengbo Liu** (Bentley University) "Attachment, Loss, and Resilience"
Zach Thornton (Chapel Hill) "Distincness as Possible Difference"	**Uku Tooming** (Harvard and Tartu) "Self-Knowledge of Desire: Answering the Wrong Question"
Samuel Elgin (UCSD) "The Semantic Foundations of Philosophical Analysis"	**Ian Blaustein** (Tufts) "Living in Spite Houses"

Paper Titles and Abstracts
by session

Undergraduate Session:

Nadav Battat (Clark)
"The Question of Artificial Agency"

Artificial agency is a relatively new and important topic for philosophical study. Since agency itself is a contended and contentious term, I begin with two distinct definitions of agency: one that requires intention and consciousness, and the other that turns on the ability to learn. After some brief discussion of machine learning and artificial intelligence, I show the second definition readily allows for artificial agency, while the first allows it only if artificial intelligence and consciousness are possible.

Kayla Jackson (Bates)
"Title VII, Black Women's Hair, and the Performance of Identity"

Title VII is a statute within the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that bans discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, and national origin in the workplace. This has been used by workers to challenge workplace grooming policies that regulate workers' appearances while on duty. In order to determine what aspects of appearance are tied to identity and therefore are protected, courts use the concept of immutability, which references attributes that cannot be changed or are viewed as essential to the identity group. Using cases brought forward under Title VII by black women who have faced discrimination on the basis of how they style their hair, this paper argues that the immutability criterion for external identity characteristics misunderstands what it means to embody an identity. Through the framework of Judith Butler's concept of performativity, I argue that immutability fails to capture the active and reactive relationship between an individual's identity, the community, and the social context in which that identity comes to be. I argue that this more dynamic understanding of identity is necessary when considering external identity characteristics to reflect the individual's agency in forming and enacting their as well as the historical context that shapes how these enactments are received by others.

Session IA (Cohen 101)

Katy Meadows (MIT)
"Ground Control: Aristotle on Grounding and Causation"

Grounding theorists often point to Aristotle's interest in priority as a historical precedent for their own project: Schaffer (2009), for example, argues that "for Aristotle, metaphysics is about what grounds what". This paper argues that the cases of priority that Aristotle thought were most important for metaphysics have features that grounding theorists take to be characteristic of causation as opposed to grounding. If this is right, Aristotle did not think that metaphysics was about what grounds what. The paper closes by suggesting an explanation for this distance: grounding theorists take metaphysics to be defined by a particular mode of explanation (constitutive explanation), while Aristotle took metaphysics to be defined by a particular explanandum (being).

Ambrose DeMarco (Holy Cross)
"The Intersection of Reason and Emotion for Practical Reasoning in Aristotle"

Commentators acknowledge that desires are necessary for motivating action for Aristotle, but they disagree about the nature of how nonrational desires, such as the emotions, which motivate people to act with fear or in anger, are controlled by reason. I will explain the ways that John Cooper and Stephen Leighton interpret the relation between reason and emotion in Aristotle. I draw on how practical reason and more specifically, rational wish (*boulêsis*), and the nonrational desires can move the soul (in Aristotle's *De Anima*) to critically evaluate Cooper's and Leighton's interpretation of reason and emotion in Aristotle. By appealing to Aristotle's discussion of rational and nonrational desires, as well as pleasure and pain in his *Rhetoric*, I show how Cooper's and Leighton's interpretations of reason and emotion in Aristotle are mistaken. In my view, they err by not properly distinguishing emotions *prior to*, and *after* habituation. As such, they over-emphasize emotion or reason in their understanding of Aristotle's views of these concepts.

Session IB (Cohen 102)

Jeff Buechner (Rutgers University-Newark and CUNY Grad. Ctr.)
"Quine's Principle of Minimal Mutilation and Inclusion of All Logical Consequences in a Belief Set: Why One has to Go"

In a neglected footnote in his paper "Two Dogmas of Belief Revision," Hans Rott delivered a bombshell proof that there is no comparative quantitative measure of conservatism in the logic of belief revision. That is, there is no comparative quantitative measure of what Quine calls 'minimum mutilation' when one logically revises one's beliefs. Thus, one cannot compare two different ways of logically revising a given set of beliefs with respect to which is the more conservative revision – which revision gives up the least number of the beliefs in the original, unrevised belief set. I will examine several assumptions that need to be made in order for Rott's proof to work. Perhaps the most important assumption is that any belief set is closed under logical consequence, and so any revision of a belief set is closed under logical consequence. Without this assumption, Rott's proof will not work. However, it appears to be a natural and incontestable assumption – surely one would not want to omit from a belief set logical consequences of beliefs in that belief set. (Note that this assumption is a normative constraint on belief revision–human beings do not have the computational resources to enforce such a constraint–and so it is descriptively inaccurate of the psychology of belief revision.) I will argue that as a normative constraint on the logic of belief revision it should be given up.

Mike Dacey (Bates)
"Evidence in Default"

Experiments in comparative (animal) psychology typically aim to test a default model against an alternative. For instance, Morgan's Canon dictates that researchers prefer models that posit the simplest processes. This is often interpreted by analogy to null hypothesis statistical testing (NHST), the dominant statistical method in psychology: the "simpler" model should be the default. Morgan's Canon has faced considerable criticism lately, and the two proposed replacements in the literature set up the central tension of this paper. One replacement, *contextual null choice* (Mikhalevich 2015, Mikhalevich, Powell, Logan 2017), accepts the general default model framing while choosing nulls/defaults case by case. The other, *evidentialism* (Sober 2005, Fitzpatrick 2008, 2017), rejects defaults altogether in favor of a

more holistic inference to the best explanation. I argue for a version of evidentialism over the default model framing. We should never treat one model as the null or default. First, I attack the analogy that supports the default model framing: The analogy between default models and NHST fails to respect the difference between statistical hypotheses and substantive hypotheses. Statistical hypotheses specify a distribution of a certain feature (to be measured); substantive hypotheses are models of the target system that motivate the statistical hypotheses and, potentially, explain them. The inferential gap between statistical and substantive hypotheses looms large in comparative psychology, because in comparative work any model can be consistent with many possible specific experimental outcomes. In such cases, the failure of any statistical hypothesis does not entail the failure of any substantive hypothesis. Next, I attack the default model framing directly, by arguing that it distorts the weighting of evidence, and systematically biases experimental practices.

Session IIA (Cohen 101)

Anna Vaughn (Sacred Heart)
"What is the Epistemic Status of Judgment in Locke's Treatment of Perception?"

Locke employs the mental faculty of judgment in several contexts throughout his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. One important instance is in describing how the ideas of adults often, without their realizing it, get changed from ideas of flat circles to globes (related to his discussion of Molyneux's question). However, his use of judgment in this context is little understood, in part because Locke says so little about it. Is the idea resulting from judgment a new idea created by judgment or a previously perceived idea that is simply recalled? What kind of experience is necessary for us to successfully form these judgments? And what is the epistemic status of these judgments? Do they improve our knowledge of the world or is there reason to be wary of such judgments? Understanding this process and what Locke considers to be the epistemic status of the ideas resulting from judgment is really important to Locke's account of knowledge. These are the questions I aim to answer in this paper.

Some scholars (including Bolton 2007, Walsh 2014, and Sheridan 2010) speak of perceiving-with-judgment as playing a "corrective" role in improving our incomplete sense perceptions. I argue here that actually Locke's attitude toward such judgments is one of caution. There is textual evidence to suggest that Locke recognizes the epistemic risk involved in mistaking our judgments for sense perceptions. Furthermore, such mistakes jeopardize the reliability of our sensory knowledge of the external world, which in part depends upon the reliability of our ideas produced by sensation. If our confidence in the reliability of sensory ideas is undermined by mistaking ideas of judgment for ideas of sensation without our realizing, then so too is our confidence in our sensory knowledge.

Dan Kervick (Independent Scholar)
"Hume against the Geometers: Extension and Geometry in Hume's *Treatise*"

In the *Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume mounts a spirited assault on the doctrine of the infinite divisibility of extension, and defends in its place the contrary position that extension is everywhere only finitely divisible. Hume then defends his position against standard mathematical arguments for infinite divisibility, and in that context he develops an intricate

philosophical appraisal of the science of geometry.

Since Hume's positive views on extension appear to be a very radical departure from the more conventional conceptions of space that are embodied in Euclidean geometry, those views would seem to require a deep and thoroughgoing revision of the traditional Euclidean framework. But Hume does not appear to contemplate any radical, revisionary strategy for dealing with traditional geometry. Instead Hume espouses a more conservative approach. Hume suggests that geometry fails only "in this single point" – in its purported proofs of infinite divisibility – while "all of its other arguments" remain intact.

I argue that Hume's attempt to sustain this conservative approach is a failure. Hume's views about extension pose a far more radical and extensive challenge to traditional Euclidean geometry than he seems prepared to acknowledge.

Session IIB (Cohen 102)

C. Wesley DeMarco (Clark)
"Consciousness of the Rule of Law: Risks and Reminders"

The rule of law ("RL") for a regime is a habit of deference to the authority of law on the part of citizens and residents. This habit requires an at least dispositional consciousness of the rule of law: an awareness, however dim and inexplicit, of the legitimacy of the authority of law.
I briefly consider four practices that are typically taken to be threats to RL, and argue that they help us to see features important to it: (i) jury nullification, (ii) executive pardon, (iii) civil disobedience, and, even more briefly, (iv) judicial review. While each of these four practices inevitably involves risks of abuse, each also offers reminders that are indispensable to the consciousness of the rule of law. These reminders direct attention to the human element of the law but also to the normative prerequisites of the legitimacy of the authority of law.

Christine Susienka (Sacred Heart)
"Human Rights and Social Trust"

Accounting for human rights-related responsibilities even in close personal relationships is necessary if we take seriously the claim that individual human beings are human rights holders, and that they hold those rights against all others. If this is the case, then it is puzzling that we often only speak about human rights violations when states are the violators, or when a sufficiently large number of people have been affected. Throughout my talk, I will argue that we can resolve this tension by explaining that in our interpersonal relationships human rights claims act as intermediaries. Typically, thicker moral reasoning that invokes the particularities of one's own relationship effectively communicates expectations and harms, builds trust, and motivates relatives. However, when invoking the particularities of one's own relationship is insufficient for communicating with and motivating one's relatives, one must appeal to more general relationship types: in the case of human rights, to the basic relationship that exists between human beings qua human being. Human rights claims then flag the severity of a situation and highlight otherwise ignored normatively basic features, creating the circumstances such that new and more precise thick concepts can be identified. In addition, they point toward a breakdown in social trust, without which, I argue, human rights cannot be fully secured. Ultimately, identifying the distinctive role of human rights invocations can influence how we conceptualize human rights and aim to fulfill them.

Session IIIA (Cohen 101)

Daniel Muñoz (MIT)
"Why Isn't Supererogation Wrong?"

Sometimes, doing less than best is optional – keeping your pain pill even though others need it more, declining to do favors. But how could we be allowed to do less than best? Why isn't "supererogation," action supposedly beyond the call of duty, just plain required? The classic answer is that we may act from a "personal point of view" on which a cost to oneself matters extra. But I argue (1) that the appeal to cost requires ad hoc tweaks to our theories of rights, benefits, and obligation; and (2) that costs to oneself aren't necessary or sufficient for permissions to be suboptimal. My argument for (2) centers on three hard cases: costless supererogation, self-benefiting supererogation, and agent-sacrifice (where one may give a benefit to others at a bigger cost to oneself). The moral of the cases is that supererogation isn't essentially linked to self-interest. Instead, I propose basing our theory of supererogation in moral rights. For rights are already known to block demands to pursue the greatest good when those demands require intrusion on others–I may not take out your kidney even if my friend needs it more. But this raises a question. Why am I allowed to give my own kidney, imposing a sacrifice on myself that I may not impose on others? Why isn't supererogation wrong? My answer is that rights against oneself are waived when one acts against them, so they can't be wrong-making reasons. Instead, they are prerogatives: they help justify, but don't favor or require, doing less than best.

Session IIIB (Cohen 102)

Paul Schofield (Bates)
"Wellbeing, Perfectionism, and the Testimony of Disabled Persons"

In *The Minority Body*, Elizabeth Barnes argues that disabled persons possess a kind of authority when it comes to issues about the impact of their disability on their wellbeing. Many testify that their disability is not bad for them, and Barnes thinks that we should "take them at their word." In this paper, I argue that there's legitimate reason to deny that disabled persons have this sort of authority over questions about their wellbeing. However, I will not conclude that we should simply ignore their testimony. Rather, I will argue that the testimony of disabled persons plays an essential role in explaining how such persons live characteristically good or flourishing human lives, which, I will suggest, is crucial if we're to better understand the relationship between disability and wellbeing.

Keynote Address (Waterman, Memorial Lounge)

Michael Bratman (Stanford)
"Shared Agency, Institutional Agency, Intentional Agency"

In my 2014 book I develop a planning model of small-scale shared intentional activities (SIAs) – such as our painting the house together – and associated shared intentions. This model draws from the planning theory of individual intention, a theory that highlights the fundamental role of partial plans in the cross-temporal organization of our individual agency. This supports the

idea that the best explanation of these twin human capacities for temporally extended and shared intentional activity appeals to our human capacity for planning agency. My question today is whether this model of SIA can play a central role in a theoretically illuminating model of organized social institutions such as a neighborhood association, a limited-liability corporation, a legal system, or a democratic state. Does our capacity for planning agency also underlie our capacities for organized institutions?

I seek to bring together the planning theory of SIA with resources from H.L.A. Hart's theory of law – especially Hart's idea of a social rule. What emerges is a strategy for endorsing both the reductive ambitions of the planning theory of SIA and the recognition of institutional intentional agents.

In highlighting distinctive roles of intentions within the planning economy of our human agency, the planning theory is already in tension with the desire-belief model of our agency in Donald Davidson's field-shaping 1963 essay. But our efforts to combine the reductive ambitions of the planning theory of SIA with the recognition of institutional intentional agents point to a challenge to yet two further ideas in Davidson's overall philosophy of action. These are ideas about the holism of the mental infrastructure of intentional agency, and about the relation between intentional action and acting for a reason.

Plenary Session (Waterman, Memorial Lounge)

Quinn White (MIT)
"Love for All and Love for One"

Among love's forms are *selective love* and *agape*. Selective love is a broad genus of love whose species include romantic and familial love; it is essentially directed at particular individuals as such. Agape is love for all of humanity – for any and every person qua human being. Both of these loves are virtues, i.e., failure to instantiate either constitutes a practical failure. However, these two loves cannot be co-instantiated. Part of what it is to love selectively is to see the object of our love as something more than one among many–as of special practical significance to us. Put another way, selective love is essentially partial. But agape is love extended to all–and (put roughly) if all are special, then no one is. Agape is essentially impartial. We should embrace this tension and see virtue as disunified, not least because it explains the phenomenology of many difficult ethical decisions. I sketch a theory of practical reasoning which makes sense of this disunity by permitting us to love either way while requiring us to approximate the love we do not instantiate inasmuch as we can; it moreover holds that there is an important sense in which however we love, we exhibit a kind of practical failure. My hope is that it is the beginning of a view that can answer Murdoch's call for "a moral philosophy in which the concept of love... can once again be made central" (The Sovereignty of Good, 1970).

James Kintz (St. Joseph's (ME))
"Acting Together: The Co-Constituted Nature of Shared Agency"

There has been much recent work in social metaphysics concerning the nature of shared agency, but while there are many approaches to this issue, most theorists seem to adopt the view that shared agency can be reduced to the cognitive, conative, and agential capacities of individuals. That is, each person who is engaged in a shared activity has an individual action, belief, goal, experience, etc. that, when coordinated in the right way with other participants,

results in a joint activity. However, in this paper I argue that a reductive analysis such as this ultimately fails to explain why certain social activities are truly shared. To show this, I develop an account of shared agency based on a model of triadic joint attention. The mutual awareness that obtains in central cases of joint attention seems to be distinct from having an experience by oneself, and I utilize a neo-Aristotelian ontology to argue that this highlights the need for distinctively interpersonal cognitive capacities. I then extend this model of joint attention to shared agency, arguing that joint action does not occur merely by syncing up self-sufficient cognitive states, but instead requires the co-actualized and co-dependent mental agency of the persons involved. On my account, neither person could engage in the kind of mental activity needed to bring about a case of shared agency without the other, and when we actualize these interpersonal cognitive capacities with others the result is a shared activity that is essentially co-constituted by each person.

Session IVA (Cohen 101)

David Kaspar (St. John's (NY))
"Foundations of Morality"

Moral theory began as a search for the foundations of morality. Such foundations were claimed to be knowledge by the original moral theorists such as Kant, Bentham, and Mill. Although work along Kantian and utilitarian lines continues today, no successor to the great originators will claim their supreme principle is knowledge, let alone attempt to show that it is. Intuitionists provide an exception to the rule. We are up front about our principles being knowledge. We provide explanations of how we know the fundamental moral principles: they are self-evidently true. In this talk I'll explain how my particular Rossian intuitionism provides principles that are the foundations of morality. The principles of my system meet three necessary requirements of moral foundations. First, they are the substantive fundamental moral propositions on which all other moral knowledge rests. Second, they have very high epistemic credibility, in contrast to other fundamental principles on offer. And third, they capture the grounds of morality, the portions of the world that explain what makes right acts right. In the process of defending the intuitive principles as foundations of morality, I'll argue against supreme principle theories. Next, I'll show that reasons theories don't meet the requirements of foundations of morality. Finally, I'll show that no Conceptual Intuitionism, such as that of Cuneo and Shafer-Landau, 2014 and Cowan, 2017 provides the foundations of morality.

Nathaniel Baron-Schmitt (MIT)
"Winning"

People sometimes seem to care immensely about rather odd things. Consider some friends playing a casual yet intense game of basketball, or some fans watching a game on TV and cheering for their team of preference. Why do they care so much about whether a ball goes through one hoop rather than another? Are they attuned to some great significance of the outcome of the game? Thomas Hurka (2006) and Gwen Bradford (2015) think so: the players have the opportunity to vanquish a tough opponent, which would constitute a valuable achievement. I disagree: I doubt this can make sense of the attitudes of the fans, who do not stand to gain much from the victory of their favorite team. Is there some other way of making sense of their investment in the outcome? Do they have some other reason to care? One idea is that they care in order to have more fun, or so that they can participate in an enjoyable activity. I argue that these cannot be reasons to care: they are the "wrong kind of reason".

My view is that players and fans often do not believe that the outcome of a game matters. Instead, they pretend that it matters, and this causes them to have the phenomenology of caring about the outcome. I develop an idea from Kendall Walton (2015): that games crucially involve an element of fiction. The fiction says that it is important to follow the rules of a game, and ultimately to win. Of course, winning often really is important, and players and fans often recognize that it is. Money or pride or fame may be on the line. But when it comes to casual but enthusiastic players and fans, I think they generally only pretend that winning matters.

Session IVB (Cohen 102)

Gordon Purves (Sacred Heart)
"Can *de Minimus* Really Save the Precautionary Principle?"

This project concerns attempts to construct a rational principle of environmental policy. Specifically, it investigates some recent work on the precautionary principle, which advises that we ought to, when possible, take steps to avoid potentially disastrous consequences of our actions. The precautionary principle has faced criticism from several directions. One of these critiques charges that it leads to decision paralysis if understood strictly. I examine some recent claims that applying a de minimis rule prior to the application of the precautionary principle can help to avoid this decision paralysis. This work will argue that, while at first glance de minimis rules seem to help avoid this problem, it falls far short of a complete solution in exactly those situations where a decision procedure is most needed. More specifically, there is an element of arbitrariness that de minimis rules ineliminably introduce to the precautionary principle that undercuts much of what makes precautionary reasoning desirable: namely, its ability to lend a rational basis to environmental preservation.

Paul McNamara (UNH)
"Toward a Systematization of Logics for Monadic and Dyadic Agency"

Simple logical frameworks for monadic agency (Jane Doe brings it about that p) and ability (Jane Doe is able to bring it about that p), broadly in the tradition of Kanger, Porn, Elgesem, Jones, Sergot, Santos, etc. are well known in deontic logic circles. However, with the exception of Elgesem, dyadic agency has been neglected in this tradition, as well as in the STIT (sees to it that) tradition of Chellas, Belnap, Horty, Perloff , Xu, Broerson, etc. I've taken some first steps toward systematizing the domain of these logics, in both pure forms as well as in mixed forms (e.g. monadic agency logics, dyadic agency logics, and monadic-dyadic agency logics), adding a number of formulae overlooked or prematurely rejected in past work both for monadic and for dyadic constructions. Here I provide a non-technical sketch of the work, presenting the motivation, as well as the main results, and potential applications and/or rationales for some of the principles. Time-permitting, I will consider one possible line of reduction of monadic agency to the dyadic notion, and perhaps sketch how ability operators might be added.

Kelly Gaus (MIT)
"Reasoning from Impossibility: A Non-Vacuist Account of Counterpossible Conditionals"

Counterpossible conditionals are frequently treated as rather exotic bits of language: they are conditionals relating not to ways the world could have been, but rather ways the world could not have been. I argue that these counterfactuals that happen to have impossible antecedents are, in fact, no more exotic than their possible cousins. However, taking counterpossibles seriously requires us to revise our semantics for counterfactuals. I'll assume we follow Lewis and Stalnaker in analyzing counterfactuals (roughly) as being true if and only if at the nearest possible worlds in which the antecedent is true, the consequent is also true. Then there's a clear problem for counterpossibles: since their antecedents are impossible, there is no possible world at which the antecedent is true. But vacuous universal quantification just makes for vacuous truth. So, on standard accounts, all counterpossibles are vacuously true. I'll first motivate the thought that a non-vacuous treatment would be preferable, based both on linguistic data and on philosophical use of counterpossible reasoning. Then I'll sketch the beginnings of a non-vacuous account using machinery from Boris Kment. Finally, I'll discuss how this approach to truth-conditions relates to what is communicated when we utter counterpossibles.

Zach Thornton (Chapel Hill)
"Distincness as Possible Difference"

Imagine a world that contains only two iron spheres at a distance from one another, each perfectly resembling the other in size, shape, and all other ways. This world contains indiscernibles – entities that a distinct but qualitative duplicates. The possibility of this world raises a deceptively simple question: how can two things be distinct but not qualitatively different? Our answer to this question has significant ontological consequences. I argue that we should consider indiscernibles possible and the above question compelling. I will then provide an answer to the deceptively simple question that has surprising ontological results.

Samuel Elgin (UCSD)
"The Semantic Foundations of Philosophical Analysis"

I provide an analysis of sentences of the form 'To be F is to be G' in terms of exact truth-maker semantics–an approach that identifies the meanings of sentences with the states of the world exactly responsible for their truth-values. Roughly, I argue that these sentences hold just in case that which makes something F is that which makes it G (and vice versa). This approach is hyperintensional, and possesses desirable logical and modal features. These sentences are reflexive, transitive and symmetric, and, if they are true, then they are necessarily true, and it is necessary that all and only Fs are Gs. I provide the resulting logic of analysis, discuss why it is preferable to other accounts in the literature, and (time permitting) demonstrate that it has desirable modal results. I close by defining an asymmetric and irreflexive notion of analysis, which we might call a 'real definition,' in terms of the reflexive and symmetric notion.

Pengbo Liu (Bentley University)
"Attachment, Loss, and Resilience"

Recent empirical research on loss and bereavement suggests that, contrary to common beliefs, most people do not suffer from long-term distress in the face of the loss of loved ones. However, some philosophers claim that this resilience, even if all things considered beneficial, is in some respects deeply disturbing: it exposes the shallowness of our love, or at any rate indicates that our loved ones are much less important to us than we imagine.

This paper is a defense of resilience against such arguments. Drawing on the ancient Chinese philosopher, Zhuangzi, and contemporary attachment theory, I argue that, first, even if someone's role in our life is nonsubstitutable, it does not follow that indefinite distress is the only appropriate response to her death, since there are many ways of recognizing that non-substitutability; second, resilience can be an appropriate response to loss because it, among other things, makes our open to other worthwhile ways to appreciate the importance of our loved ones, and ways to preserve and continue our relationship after they are gone; and third, chronic grief over the death of loved ones often is a symptom of self-indulgence or some pathological forms of attachment that are incompatible with proper ways of valuing our loved ones.

Uku Tooming (Harvard and Tartu)
"Self-Knowledge of Desire: Answering the Wrong Question"

According to inferentialism about self-knowledge of desire, the basic way in which we come to know what we want is through inference. In this paper, I argue that existing inferentialist accounts do not explain how one's self-ascriptions of desire can be safe, at least when one aims at knowing one's standing desires, distinct from wishes or whims. I look at two inferentialist models, one proposed by Alex Byrne and the other by Krista Lawlor, and argue that they face structurally similar objections: the methods of self-ascription that they propose do not settle the question about one's present, actual desires. In Byrne's case, the inference from desirability to desire primarily answers the question of what one should want. In Lawlor's case, the causal inference from one's imaginings to desire primarily answers the question of what one wished. In response to those difficulties, I argue that we can explain how self-ascriptions can be safe if we take into account the agent's role in sustaining their desires through attending and elaborating on their content through imagination. Self-ascriptions of desire express genuine self-knowledge when they are properly based on the desire-sustaining imaginings which ensure that one has and continues to have the self-ascribed desire.

Ian Blaustein (Tufts)
"Living in Spite Houses"

Though negative affects have gotten increasing attention in recent years, there has been no literature on spite. What's interesting about acting from spite is that, when you do so, you treat someone else's well-being – or rather, ill-being – as more important to your deliberations of how to act than your own. So spiteful actions are, in our standard terms of prudential or egoistic motivation, *selfless*. In this essay, I build an account of spite, a form of ethically undesirable selflessness. I do so by distinguishing spite from some neighbors: resentment, envy, malevolence, and revenge.