



# Philosophy Day 2016

## California State University, Long Beach

Friday April 22, 2016 12:30pm (Bldg. LA2, Room 100)

### Join Us

You are cordially invited to Philosophy Day 2016. Please join the CSULB Department of Philosophy graduate students in this symposium-style gathering, for a time of philosophy, fellowship, and refreshments!

### About Philosophy Day

This year we will focus on the research, studies, and progress of a few of our Graduate Students. Each student will have 20 minutes to present, followed by 15 minutes allocated for Q & A. The Q & A is designed to give students feedback on their research and ask any questions about the material presented.

### Agenda

12:30pm	Opening Remarks Check-in/Coffee		
1:00pm	Alexander Beard “Absence Causation, Mechanisms, and Ontic Explanations”	3:20pm	Snack and Coffee Break
1:50pm	Joanne Dalby “In Defense of Descartes’ Science of Spatial Perception”	3:50pm	Nathan Lackey “Congruence, Geometry and Space”
2:40pm	Rebekah Ochoa-Chauvie “Kant on the <i>Self</i> ”	4:40pm	Andrew Bollhagen “Representationalism and Explanation: Is Representationalism Pseudo- Explanatory?”

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### Abstracts

#### **Absence Causation, Mechanisms, and Ontic Explanations—Alexander Beard**

Given their frequent inclusion in explanations of both everyday events and scientific phenomena, it seems as though absences can be genuine causes. I argue that there is no such thing as absence causation. Furthermore, I suggest that absence causation poses a significant problem for accounts of mechanistic explanation. This problem becomes increasingly troublesome when explanations are conceived of ontically. Given various metaphysical considerations, advocates of mechanistic explanation ought to be wary of absence causation—doubly so for those who defend the ontic conception. Absences are not causally efficacious, have no place in mechanisms, and attempts to incorporate them as causal relata undermine the ontic conception.

#### **In Defense of Descartes' Theory of Spatial Perception—Joanne Dalby**

Descartes' explanation of visual perception in the *Optics* was a radically new approach that sought to replace the long-standing resemblance theory of visual perception going back to Aristotle. Descartes' goal was to provide a purely mechanical theory of visual perception in which vision is presented to the reader as a 'given' via passive perceptual cues. However, critics argue that Descartes' theory of spatial perception fails as a consistently mechanistic explanation. For example, one author claims that Descartes vacillates between two explanations—one in terms of passive perceptual cues, and the other in terms of judgments or calculations. I defend Descartes against the charge of inconsistency.

#### **Kant on the Self—Rebekah Ochoa-Chauvie**

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant made claims regarding the unity of apperception in the Transcendental Deduction. Simply put, the unity of apperception is the unity of self-consciousness. To argue for the unity of apperception and other theories, Kant made reference to the idea of the self-consciousness. But Kant did not give a clear argument for the existence of the self or for knowledge of the existence of the self. I believe that, in terms of the Cartesian theory of knowledge of one's self found in *The Meditations*, it follows that Kant could have had a theory for the existence and knowledge of the existence of the self. Ultimately, I will argue that the self is the subject of the **I think** attached to our representations.

#### **Congruence, Geometry and Space—Nathan Lackey**

Philosophical assumptions underlie every scientific physical theory. Albert Einstein and Hans Reichenbach each defended different views of the philosophical implications of General Relativity (GR). I will weigh in on their debate by providing a critique of Reichenbach's ultimate conclusion. Rather than attempting to refute Reichenbach, I will suggest additional points that bolster his philosophical position. A direct answer to the following question was not provided by Reichenbach's response to Einstein: Is it correct to interpret the success of a theory as a reliable confirmation of its implicit assumptions? I will provide some potential answers that strengthen Reichenbach's position in opposition to Einstein.

#### **Representationalism and Explanation: Is Representationalism Pseudo-Explanatory?—Andrew Bollhagen**

Representationalism is a view in the philosophy of mind that maintains that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience is a species of representational content. Representationalists take their ability to explain the transparency of perceptual experience to be a significant feather in their hat. In this talk I will raise the question, 'is representationalism pseudo-explanatory?' First, I work through a number of examples of what I believe everyone will agree are genuine explanations and point out features that they share. I then argue that, insofar as representationalism takes itself to explain the transparency of perceptual experience, it does not seem to exhibit the features characteristic of genuine explanation.