

Poster Session

Megan Brubaker

Lissa Dechakul

Alex Estevez

Amy Harms

Shawn Hernandez

Michael Lara

Jeffrey Lee

Caitlin Mace

David Ramirez-Ruz

Kevin Reyes

Jonny Reza

Special Thanks To:

Student Philosophy Association

Artwork by Kyle Bollin



Schedule

12:30–1:40 Gerard Rothfus, “Planning and the Norms of Rational Choice”

Abstract: A distinguishing feature of rational agents is their capacity to form and execute optimal plans in settings of sequential choice. I defend this old idea against objections and explore some of its implications for the theory of rational choice.

1:40–2:00 Poster Session and Refreshments in PH1-127

2:00–3:10 Marie Jayasekera, “Descartes on the Will”

Abstract: In a key passage in the Fourth Meditation, Descartes says that the “the will or freedom of decision” “simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (that is, to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid); or rather, it consists simply in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward for affirmation or denial or for pursuit or avoidance, our inclinations are such that we feel we are determined to it by no external force” (AT VII 57). Taken as a definition of human freedom, as many commentators have done, the passage is obscure, at best. My aim is to situate these remarks in their proper context, a long-disputed question about the will’s relation to free decision, present an interpretation of what the will is for Descartes, and show how this interpretation makes sense of the key passage and his other characterizations of the will.

3:10–3:30 Poster Session and Refreshments in PH1-127

3:30–4:00 Avery Amerson, “Extended Cognition and the Evolution of Human Language”

Abstract: There is still much speculation in the literature as to how and why human language evolved. Most scholars agree that human language evolved to meet the cognitive needs of our ancestors. What exactly this cognition looks like and how much it played a role in language’s evolution is up for debate. The interaction between cognition and the environment may have shaped how human language

developed over time. I consider the possibility that extended cognition—the coupling of mind to the environment—contributed to the evolution of human language. Perhaps the extension of cognition is what allowed language to have evolved in such a rapid manner through the coupling of external resources with an internal cognitive system. Without the influence of cognition, there may have never been a need for the emergence of grammar. Cognition must have been present before the evolution of grammar, syntax, and thus, full language. What evolved later, I argue, was the extension of cognition. My research leads me to propose a scenario describing the evolution of language and cognition which involves four main steps: 1) cognition and early forms of communication, 2) evolution of protolanguage, 3) coevolution of full human language and extended cognition, and 4) development of written language.

4:00–4:20 Poster Session and Refreshments in PH1-127

4:20–5:30 Kyle Banick, “Phenomenology and (Meta-) Metaphysics: Husserl’s Philosophy of the Categories”

Abstract: This talk offers an account of an important aspect of Edmund Husserl’s categorial metaphysics. I will examine the evolution of Husserl’s notion of an independent concretum, an important kind of part-whole structure for metaphysics. I first look at Husserl’s understanding of parts and wholes in the Logical Investigations of 1901. I will then account for a fundamental change to Husserl’s thought on this matter in 1921. This evolution is marked by the introduction of a unique kind of part-whole structure that Husserl calls a monad. Husserl’s thinking on the monad has decisive significance for the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics. For example, some have thought that Husserl remained purely descriptive about the ontological categories, declining to offer a philosophical grounding for them. On such a picture, phenomenology has no robust metaphysically explanatory role. By contrast, my considerations show that Husserl eventually came to see his earlier descriptive phenomenology as a prelude to undertaking an “absolute consideration of the world” or a metaphysics. I then paint a preliminary picture of Husserl’s metaphysics by examining Husserl’s revisions to some central Aristotelian metaphysical concepts.