THOUGHTS 2024

Friday 21 June (Room Omega)

09:30-11:00   César Reigosa Soler (University of Groningen). *Auriol on Omniscience without Future Truth.*
Respondent: Dominik Perler (Humboldt University of Berlin)

11:00-11:15   Coffee

11:15-12:45   Tarek Dika (University of Toronto). *The Problem of Finite Substance in Descartes*.
Respondent: Laura Georgescu (University of Groningen)

12:45-14:00   Lunch

14:00-15:30   Vincent Lee (University of Toronto). *Spinoza on Intrinsic and Extrinsic Denominations*.
Respondent: Han Thomas Adriaenssen (University of Groningen)

15:30-15:45   Coffee

15:45-17:15   Dominik Perler (Humboldt University of Berlin). *Suárez on the Will as a Two-Way Power*.

Saturday 22 June (Room Omega)

09:30-11:00   Leonardo Moauro (Humboldt University of Berlin). *Spinoza's Value Projectivism*.
Respondent: Lodi Nauta (University of Groningen)

11:00-11:15   Coffee

11:15-12:45   Maaike Korpershoek (University of Groningen). *Voltaire's* Élements *and Du Châtelet's* Institutions: *A Dialogue on Leibnizian and Newtonian Metaphysical Themes*
Respondent: Sebastian Bender (University of Göttingen)

12:45-14:00   Lunch

14:00-15:30   Lena Kreymann (Humboldt University of Berlin). *Leibniz on Higher Spirits.*
Respondent: Marleen Rozemond (University of Toronto)

15:30-15:45   Coffee

15:45-17:15   Anna Ortín Nadal (University of Groningen). *Cordemoy and the Cartesian Analogy between Language and Perception.*
Respondent: Donald Ainslie (University of Toronto)

ABSTRACTS

Tarek Dika (Toronto), '*The Problem of Finite Substance in Descartes'*

This paper is about the relation between infinite substance (God) and finite substance in Descartes' ontology. The argument is that finite substance cannot, in fact, be understood on its own, independently of any other substance. Since Descartes argues that x is a substance if, and only if, it can be understood on it own, independently of any other substance, this may very well mean that mind and body, while distinct, are not substances, according to Descartes' own principles. This is not because God created finite substance (it is not necessary to understand the cause of a substance in order to understand its essence, according to Descartes), nor is it because God is the only being who is a substance in the proper sense (or, equivalently, because God alone enjoys *per se* existence), but rather because the idea of God is the foundation of every other idea in the human mind, including the ideas of finite substances and their modes. All other ideas, as ideas of finite beings, require the introduction of privations and negations. Privations and negations, I argue, have a unique epistemic structure, well-known since Aristotle: they cannot be understood apart from their corresponding affirmations and perfections, respectively. This is built into Descartes' theory of simple natures in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*

and reasserted in *Meditations* III and related correspondence, where Descartes argues that the idea of God is prior to the idea of finite beings (including my idea of myself). Thus, insofar as minds or bodies lack any perfection, their privation cannot be understood but in relation to the corresponding perfection in God. This is not a unique species of epistemic dependence; it is no different than the epistemic dependence of the idea of motion or shape on the idea of extension. Nevertheless, ontologically, Descartes maintains that the dependence of shape on extension is its inherence in extension, whereas he does not maintain that the dependence of a privation on a perfection is its inherence in the substance whose perfection it is. This apparent disconnect between Descartes' theory of distinctions, on the one hand, and his ontology, on the other, requires further exploration.

Maaike Korpershoek (Groningen), '*Voltaire's* Élements *and Du Châtelet's* Institutions*: a dialogue on Leibnizian and Newtonian metaphysical themes'*

Voltaire and Du Châtelet lived together at Cirey from 1734 till Du Châtelet's death in 1749. during this time they worked on separate publications that covered Newtonian physics: Voltaire's *Élements de la philosophie de Newton* (1738, 1741) and Du Châtelet's *Institutions de physique* (1740, 1742). Although Voltaire and Du Châtelet both interpreted and disseminated Newtonian thought during the same period, they did so in different ways. In this paper, I argue that an interpretation and adaptation of the *Principle of Sufficient Reason* (PSR) seems to underlie these different approaches. The way Du Châtelet and Voltaire discuss and define the PSR, points to an ongoing dialogue between the two authors.

Newtonian (meta)physics and the PSR are discussed at length in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence (1715-1716). In this paper, I examine Voltaire's and Du Châtelet's reactions to this correspondence: their different receptions I argue, illustrate their different metaphysical systems. In line with their divergent metaphysical systems, Voltaire and Du Châtelet responded differently to a broadly discussed problem in Newton concerning the cause of gravity. Although Du Châtelet's dedication to Leibnizian metaphysics cannot be denied, other than Leibniz and other than Voltaire, she sees room for reconciling Newton's law of universal attraction with a mechanical explanation. A quite different story emerges in Voltaire's *Élements*, in which he takes some of Newton's metaphysical claims further than Newton himself was willing to do, and argues for superadded gravity.

I conclude that in their works, Du Châtelet and Voltaire both departed from Newton's *Principia*, but based on different metaphysical and methodological grounds.

Lena Kreymann (Berlin), *'Leibniz on Higher Spirits'*

While animals, humans, and angels have a well-established role in categorizing beings in early modern philosophy, another category appears in Leibniz's late works - the 'genies' or higher spirits. They are embodied and rational, not yet angels, but they surpass humans in their mental capacities. Leibniz discusses these beings in the context of early works in science fiction by writers like Fontenelle or Cyrano. Moreover, the 'genies' align with the idea of a chain of being, held by authors from antiquity to Leibniz's own time. Thus, philosophical as well as literary sources seem crucial for the introduction of higher spirits in Leibniz's works. Systematically, his main reason for postulating them is the Law of Continuity – the idea that there are no gaps in nature and all beings exist if they are compossible. In addition, the higher spirits are connected to his rejection of Cartesian mechanistic philosophy because this allows Leibniz to form a more nuanced picture of the hierarchy of beings. The assumption of higher spirits has some interesting implications for Leibniz's philosophy: It extends the scope of reason as a faculty beyond human beings. By that, it elevates the role of bodily features and physical appearance for distinguishing humans from 'genies'. Moreover, the higher spirits do not usually interfere with us on earth, but according to Leibniz, could do so elsewhere, which raises questions about their – good or evil – role in the chain of being. In my talk, I will introduce Leibniz's idea of higher spirits, explore its historical and systematic origins, and discuss some of the implications for Leibniz's philosophy.

Vincent Lee (Toronto), '*Spinoza on Intrinsic and Extrinsic Denominations*'

I will present an account of how Spinoza understands intrinsic and extrinsic denominations, drawing from the early parts of the *Ethics* as well as selections from the *Cogitata Metaphysica*, and then I bring this account to bear on Spinoza's related but independently stipulated definitions of the individual and of the singular thing that we find at the start of part two of the *Ethics* and in the middle of it, in a section known as the Physical Interlude.

Leonardo Moauro (Berlin), '*Spinoza's Value Projectivism*'

Spinoza's ethical theory displays all the marks of traditional perfectionism. It prescribes the full perfection of our intellects, achievable only by attaining the knowledge of God (4pref, 4D1-2, 4p28, 4appIV). Yet the core claims of his ethical theory do not obviously cohere with his affect-based moral psychology. Indeed, Spinoza claims that we call things good because we desire them (3p9s), and that we should understand by 'good' only joy, which we necessarily desire (3p39s). Scholars have developed several interpretations of these passages. Realist readings downplay the role of desire in the cognition of value, seeking thereby to salvage Spinoza's perfectionist ethical theory. By contrast, standard

antirealist readings attribute to Spinoza a subjectivist theory of value, thereby limiting the scope or character of his ethical perfectionism.

This paper develops an alternative, antirealist reading of 3p9s and 3p39 I call the Projectivist Reading. On this reading, Spinoza attempts to reconcile an antirealist theory of value with a traditional form of ethical perfectionism. Its central claim is that for Spinoza our desires lead us to *project* value properties onto their objects—that is, that (a) good and evil are notions indicating mind-independent properties of things, which are nevertheless (b) falsely ascribed to things based on our desires for them. In this way, I argue, Spinoza anticipates Hume's later view that value properties are a "new creation" imposed on the world by non-perceptual mechanisms. Yet I show in great detail how Spinoza develops his value projectivism from starting points very different from Hume's—his adaptation of a Cartesian psychology, with perhaps a touch of Hobbes. Understanding the psychological principles behind his value projectivism will allow us to see, I think, why Spinoza believes it provides an adequate foundation for his ethical perfectionism.

Anna Ortín Nadal (Groningen), '*Cordemoy and the Cartesian analogy between language and perception*'

In the Physical Discourse on Speech (Discourse Physique de la Parole, 1668), Géraud de Cordemoy advances a mechanistic account of human and animal physiology to explain the formation of sound, and he follows Descartes' insights in Part V of the Discourse on the Method to establish two related notions: the general framework of Cartesian substance dualism and a proof for the existence of other ensouled bodies aside from one's own. In order to resolve this (what we would now call the problem of other minds), he summons the nature, acquisition, and use of language. This is a key textual fact. The importance of the question of language in Cartesianism is at the convergence of two issues that are present in Descartes' works and that were picked up by some of his followers, Cordemoy included. (1) First, human beings institute signs (words, gestures, etc.) in order to declare their own thoughts, and that marks their essential difference with non-human animals. (2) Second, the association between conventional signs and thoughts is used as an analogy for understanding the relation between physical and mental states in interaction and, ultimately, to anchor the issue of substance dualism itself (Rodis-Lewis 1990). The claim of this paper is that, in the domain of the nature and use of language, Cordemoy's Cartesianism means that language becomes a naturalistic model for body-mind interaction. This is clear from Cordemoy's use of the language analogy as a way of conceiving of the union of the two substances (CG.210). The association of language and dualism in seventeenth-century thought is not odd, but it has received scant attention in the philosophical literature. This is even more so when language figures not only as a proof for dualism, but also as a model for substance interaction, where a

language of Nature is analogous to human language, and the institution of Nature becomes analogous to linguistic conventionalism. In §1, I lay out the Cartesian conception of language that Cordemoy expands on in his account of speech. In §2, I address the topic of language as a model for substance interaction. I focus on Cordemoy's analogy between language and the mind-body union and its place within an occasionalist system. I conclude in §3 with a finer assessment of Cordemoy's motivations for the view: the dissimilarity thesis and what I label as a "problem of communication". In summary, this paper enhances the understanding of Cordemoy's Cartesianism. It uncovers an obscured connection between the two authors at the intersection between language and causation models for mind and body; and it provides a finer account of the place of occasionalism in relation to the enterprise of natural philosophy.

Cesar Reigosa Soler (Groningen), '*Auriol on Omniscience without Future Truth*'

In his *Sentences* commentary, Peter Auriol takes himself to follow Aristotle in saying that future contingents lack truth-value. As a result, Auriol gives up divine foreknowledge but wants to keep divine omniscience. However, on the prevalent view that knowledge requires truth, it is difficult to maintain omniscience unless there are truths about the future. In this paper, I first consider Auriol's line of reasoning as to why future contingents do not have a truth-value and then, I turn to his account of divine omniscience without future truth. Whereas on the standard interpretation, Auriol preserves omniscience at the expense of future contingency, I argue that, on the contrary, Auriol preserves future contingency but is only entitled to what I call 'gappy' omniscience. Truth-value gaps are not responsible for 'gappy' omniscience, as one might expect. Rather, Auriol's criticisms against prevalent accounts of foreknowledge independently rule out anything close to the stronger notion of omniscience typically attributed to Auriol by modern readers. The interpretation defended here is more philosophically apt, and better explains the medieval reception of Auriol's views.