BSET 2014

University of Cambridge

Fitzwilliam College, 14–16 July 2014

Monday 14 July

12.30	Registration
13.00	Welcome
13.10	*Do moral reasons explain anything?* BEN SACHS
14.20	*Contextualism about moral responsibility* EMILY MCTERNAN
15.30	Tea and Coffee
15.50	*What the utilitarian cannot think* MARK NELSON
17.15	Keynote Address SAMUEL SCHEFFLER (NYU)
19.30	Conference dinner *advanced booking required*

Tuesday 15 July

08.00	Breakfast *included with accommodation*
09.30	*Kant's moral theory and demandingness* ALICE PINHEIRO WALLA
10.40	Tea and Coffee
11.00	*Are there any conflicts of rights?* ADINA PREDA
12.10	Lunch
13.30	*Cryptonormative judgements* ALEX WORSNIP
14.40	Tea and Coffee
15.00	*Love and agency* ADRIENNE MARTIN
16.30	Keynote Address MIRANDA FRICKER (Sheffield)
19.00	Dinner *advanced booking required*

Wednesday 16 July

08.00	Breakfast *included with accommodation*
10.00	*Making sense of moral perception* RAFE MACGREGOR
11.10	Tea and Coffee
11.30	*The myth of balanced consequences* SAMUEL ELGIN

All talks will be in the Reddaway Room *map ref 3B*

Tea and coffee are served in Upper Hall 2 *map ref 3A*

Breakfast and dinner are served in Hall *map ref 2D*

Lunch is in the Café *map ref 2E*

Abstracts

Ben Sachs (St Andrews)
Do moral reasons explain anything?
Part of what we want out of a normative ethical theory is a good explanatory story; that is, we want it to tell us what grounds the facts, or makes it the case that, φ-ing is impermissible, that ψ-ing is obligatory, etc. Everyone agrees that moral explanations of this sort have to bottom out in the non-normative. However, one matter on which there is disagreement is whether there is more than one kind of non-normative fact that does grounding work. If you say that there is, then you are a moral pluralist.

The most popular version of pluralism is Indirect Moral Pluralism, the claim that the plural non-normative facts ground normative facts, and the verdictive facts (the facts about which actions are permissible, obligatory, supererogatory, etc.) are grounded in how those normative facts stack up in favor of or against various actions. My working definition of Indirect Moral Pluralism is the version of the view that says that those intermediate normative facts are moral reasons. It makes sense to discuss this version of Indirect Moral Pluralism in particular, since it seems to be the consensus view among philosophers including act-consequentialists (e.g. Kagan, Portmore), rule-consequentialists (e.g. Hooker), non-consequentialists (e.g. Nagel), and even particularists (e.g. Dancy).

I begin by identifying what I take to be the appeal of Indirect Moral Pluralism—namely, that it is consistent with and offers an explanation of three intuitively plausible metaethical claims. Then I show how Indirect Moral Pluralism is defective as an explanatory story. Having made my case for rejecting Indirect Moral Pluralism, I argue that we can do this while still holding onto all three of the intuitively plausible metaethical claims. Finally, I show how Direct Moral Pluralism avoids the shortfalls of Indirect Moral Pluralism while also defending it against three objections.

Emily McTernan (University College London)
Contextualism about moral responsibility
This paper defends a novel account of moral responsibility as 'context-sensitive', such that the conditions that must be met for an agent to be morally responsible vary in strictness with the context of assessment. While the vast majority of existing accounts of moral responsibility are 'invariantist', holding the conditions to be met to be responsible are cross-situationally consistent, I argue that variation is endemic in our responsibility practices and that our account of responsibility should reflect that. After introducing the context-sensitive account of moral responsibility in section 1, I offer two motivations of this account. First, in section 2, I demonstrate how contextualism about responsibility accommodates our responsibility practices, on the basis of an analysis of ordinary language about responsibility and how we disagree over responsibility attributions. Second, in section 3, I argue that recognising that responsibility is a context-sensitive concept offers a solution to the problem of moral luck.

Mark Nelson (Westmont)
What the Utilitarian Cannot Think
I argue that utilitarianism cannot accommodate a basic sort of moral judgment that many of us want to make, and that this inability counts against that theory. The moral judgment they cannot make is that some actions violate some people and so are wrong. Some utilitarians will

insist that they can say these things, but I argue that they cannot. Other utilitarians will agree that they cannot say these things, but shrug it off, saying 'Who cares about such pre-theoretical moral judgments?' I have nothing to say to them, except that that response, like the inability to make the judgment itself, is an example of what Bernard Williams describes as utilitarianism's 'simple-mindedness', which, he says, 'consists in having too few thoughts and feelings to match the world as it really is'.

Alice Pinheiro Walla (Trinity College Dublin)
Kant's Moral Theory and Demandingness
This paper addresses difficulties arising from Kant's distinction between perfect and imperfect duties and his claim that perfect duties have normative priority over imperfect ones. Firstly, I discuss the intuition that imperfect duties are able to 'trump' perfect ones under certain circumstances, for instance, in cases where we have a duty of rescue. If this intuition is correct, Kant's distinction between perfect and imperfect duties seems to be superfluous, since the structure of these duties does not seem to help us determine when there is a strict obligation to help. Further, the duty of beneficence may be far more demanding than Kant realized. In a world of acute and urgent need, one could argue that the obligation to help becomes a strict one.

Adina Preda (Limerick)
Are there any conflicts of rights?
This paper offers a classification of putative conflicts of rights and argues that many of these alleged conflicts do not occur, given a suitable definition of conflicts of rights as conflicts of correlative duties. I will be especially concerned with a putative conflict between positive and negative general rights and argue that it is not a genuine one.

My argument seeks only to show that the claim that general positive rights conflict with negative ones cannot be true. This claim presupposes, I argue, that the two rights are valid. This is the first assumption of my argument. The second is that general rights impose duties on everyone, not just the party who faces a conflict of correlative duties. These two assumptions yield the conclusion that positive rights impose enforceable duties on the holder of the negative right; no right is thus infringed if this duty is enforced so no conflict occurs.

If this is correct, it means that we can include welfare or socio-economic rights in a set of general rights without generating conflicts with negative rights to non-interference; this might clear some space for arguments that favour egalitarian redistribution although it does not show that general positive rights exist.

Alex Worsnip (Yale)
Cryptonormative judgements
Very roughly, a cryptonormative judgment is a judgment which is presented by the agent as non-normative (either generally or in some particular respect), but which is in fact normative (either generally or in that particular respect). The idea of cryptonormativity is familiar from debates in social theory, social psychology, and continental political philosophy, but it has to my knowledge never been treated in analytic metaethics, moral psychology, or epistemology except in passing. This is somewhat surprising, since cryptonormative judgments are familiar and pervasive features of ordinary life. In this paper, I hope to show that cryptonormative judgments are not only philosophically interesting in and of themselves, but that they shed light on extant debates about the conditions for making normative judgments, as well as for being in

mental states more generally.

Adrienne Martin (Pennsylvania)
Love and Agency
In this paper, I outline a Kantian moral psychology and use it to generate an analysis of the emotional attitude, love. At the heart of this moral psychology is a distinction between rational and subrational motives, and the thesis that interpersonal emotional attitudes like love are governed by a norm of respect. I show how an analysis of love that relies on this moral psychology tightly fits with paradigmatic cases of romantic love, reveals both the continuities and differences between romantic and other forms of love, and also explicates our ambivalence about certain cases. Finally, I argue that this analysis, although it sees love as essentially a bundle of volitions, has the resources to respond to both David Velleman's and Niko Kolodny's critiques of volition-based analyses of love. Taken as a whole, the discussion provides an argument for both this analysis of love and the moral psychology it presupposes.
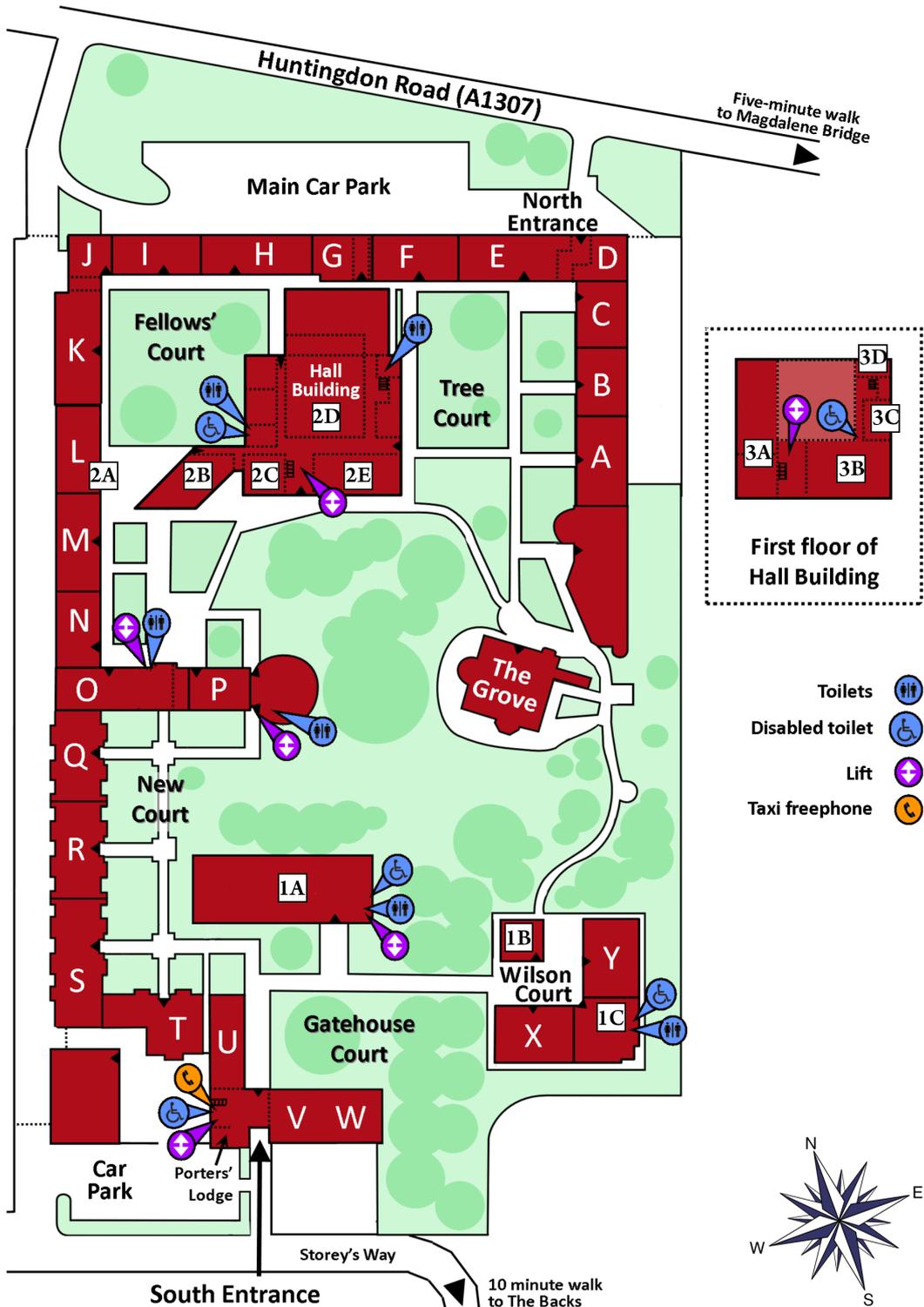
Rafe MacGregor (York)
Making sense of moral perception
The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that Francis Hutcheson's moral sense theory offers a satisfactory account of moral perception. I introduce Hutcheson's work in §1 and indicate why the existence of a sixth sense is not implausible. I provide a summary of Robert Cowan and Robert Audi's respective theories of evaluative perception in §2, identifying two problematic objections: the Directness Objection to Cowan's ethical perception and the aesthetic model objection to Audi's moral perception. §3 examines Hutcheson's moral sense theory, focusing on his discussion of benevolence. I deal with the unresolved issues in Hutcheson's account by recourse to Charles Darwin's evolutionary perspective on the moral sense in §4, arguing for the moral sense as the second-order faculty for judging benevolence. I return, in §5, to the two objections, showing that moral sense theory solves both problems and therefore offers a satisfactory account of moral perception.

Samuel Elgin (Yale)
The myth of balanced consequences
Consequentialism maintains that an act morally right just in case it produces the best consequences of any available alternative. But an agent cannot survey all the consequences, hence cannot know which alternative is best. Kagan (1998) contends that it is reasonable to assume that unforeseen good and bad consequences balance out, and can therefore be disregarded. A statistical argument demonstrates that Kagan's assumption is almost never correct. Acting on foreseeable consequences with the goal of achieving the best total consequences is barely better than flipping a coin.

Huntingdon Road (A1307)

Five-minute walk
to Magdalene Bridge

Main Car Park

North Entrance

J I H G F E D

K

Fellows' Court

L

Hall Building
2D

Tree Court

C

B

A

2A 2B 2C 2E

M

N

O P

The Grove

Q

New Court

R

1A

1B

Wilson Court

Y

S

X 1C

T U

Gatehouse Court

V W

Porters' Lodge

Car Park

Storey's Way

South Entrance

10 minute walk to The Backs

First floor of Hall Building

3D
3C
3A 3B

Toilets
Disabled toilet
Lift
Taxi freephone

N
E
W
S

1A. Auditorium
1B. Gordon Cameron
1C. William Thatcher

2A. Trust
2B. Old SCR
2C. Walter Grave
2D. Hall
2E. Café/Bar

3A. Upper Halls 1 & 2
3B. Reddaway
3C. Gaskoin
3D. Music