



Conference and Annual General Meeting 2023, University of Edinburgh

Thursday 7th December

Bayes Centre – G.03

15.00-15.30 Coffee and welcome

15.30-17.00 Alex Douglas (St. Andrews)

“Pythagorean naturalism? Spinoza's ontology as a system of mathematical objects”

Friday 8th December

Bayes Centre – G.03

9.00-10.30 Jennifer Corns (Glasgow)

“Psychiatric Kinds”

10.30-11.00 Coffee

11.00-12.30 Katie Robertson (Stirling)

“Why doesn't physics matter more?”

12.30-13.15 Lunch

13.15-14.30 Panel discussion on naturalism with Debbie Roberts (Edinburgh), Michael Wheeler (Stirling) and Jo Wolff (Edinburgh).

15.00-16.30 Annual General Meeting in Dugald Stewart Building, 7.01

For further details: m.chirimuuta@ed.ac.uk

Abstracts

Alex Douglas (St. Andrews)

Pythagorean naturalism? Spinoza's ontology as a system of mathematical objects

Spinoza is often characterised as a philosophical naturalist. This label captures something true about Spinoza: he believed in an inviolable order of natural laws, ruling out miracles and supernatural entities capable of violating the laws of nature. But the label carries misleading connotations in the contemporary context. Whereas contemporary naturalists tend to think of a natural order discoverable through the special sciences, Spinoza, I argue, regarded it as more like a system of mathematical objects: existing necessarily, discoverable by the pure intellect, and thus, in contemporary terms, more abstract than concrete. In other words, I present Spinoza as a sort of Pythagorean, who views the world as an abstract or mathematical object. This is far from what the typical supernaturalist thinks but also far from what the typical naturalist thinks.

Jennifer Corns (Glasgow)

Psychiatric Kinds

In this paper, I consider whether psychiatric kinds are natural kinds and argue that some are, but many are not. I contend that good medical practice, including good psychiatric practice, stands at the interface between everyday and scientific theories. While medical practice should be informed by our best science, it is not itself a science. As many everyday mental kinds appropriately deployed in psychiatric practice are not natural, many psychiatric kinds are likewise not natural. Lest one think these are negligible, I consider reasons for thinking that a great many everyday mental kinds are not natural. I close by considering implications for eliminativism, the boundary problem, and naturalism.

Katie Robertson (Stirling)

Why doesn't physics matter more?

Is it possible to be a non-naturalist in the philosophy of physics? In this talk, I will showcase certain views that seem to flout the naturalist ideal; one example by being insufficiently naturalist (though there will be problems with characterising this) and another that tries too hard to be naturalistic, and consequently strays into “physics imperialism”. I then discuss the principled reasons why physics cannot tell us about everything, and draw some tentative connections to the philosophy of mind.