

# Conference on Organic Unities

## Parts, Wholes and Values

Geneva, May 26-27<sup>th</sup> 2011



UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE

Thumos & eidos (Prof. Kevin Mulligan),  
in collaboration with Episteme (Prof. Pascal Engel).



Affective Sciences  
SWISS NATIONAL CENTER OF COMPETENCE IN RESEARCH

### Thursday 26<sup>th</sup>, Room S030 (Uni Mail)

- 13h00-13h15 Welcome
- 13h15-14h45 **Noah Lemos** (William and Mary), “Organic Unities and Summation”
- 15h15-16h45 **Johan Brännmark** (Lund), “Good-making and Organic Unity”
- 17h00-18h30 **Kris McDaniel** (Syracuse), “The Moorean View of the Value of Lives: a Partial Defense”

20h00 *Conference dinner.*

### Friday 27<sup>th</sup>, Room U408 (Uni Dufour)

- 9h00-10h30 **Wlodek Rabinowicz** (Lund), “Value Relations — New Wine in Old Bottles”
- 11h00-12h30 **Jan Woleński** (Jagiellonian University), “Axiological Sentences”

*Lunch*

- 14h00-15h30 **Erik Carlson** (Uppsala), “Defining Goodness and Badness in Terms of Betterness without Negation”
- 16h00-17h30 **Kathrin Koslicki** (Boulder), “Independence Criteria for Substancehood”

*Coffee break discussion and end of the conference.*

### PhilEAs Talks, Room B105 (Uni Bastions)

- 18h15-20h00 **Stephan Torre** (Oxford / Oriel College), “Against ‘Scientifically Motivated’ Restrictions on Diachronic Composition”

**Sponsors** The conference is supported by *eidos* through the *Fundamentality and Perspectivity* SNFS Metaphysics Graduate School 2011, the *Intentionality: the Mark of the Mental* SNSF Sinergia project, the *Marie Gretler Foundation* in Zürich and the *Thumos team* based at the Geneva University Philosophy Department and the Swiss Center on Affective Sciences.

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**Web page** [http://www.unige.ch/lettres/philos/evenements/2011/organic\\_unities.php](http://www.unige.ch/lettres/philos/evenements/2011/organic_unities.php)



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Thumos, the Genevan research team on emotions, values and norms, together with eidós, Centre for Metaphysics — in collaboration with Episteme.



### Abstracts of the Talks

*(order of the conference program)*

#### **Noah M. Lemos (William and Mary), “Organic Unities and Summation”.**

*Abstract TBC.*

#### **Johan Brännmark (Lund), “Good-making and Organic Unity”.**

Since Moore introduced his concept of organic unity there has certainly been some discussion of how one should best understand this notion and whether there are any organic unities in the Moorean sense. Such discussions do however often put general questions about part-whole relations to the side. In this paper it is suggested that we should distinguish between two kinds of complex wholes, collections and complex unities, and that given this distinction we can also distinguish between two kinds of organic unities. It is also suggested that by drawing this distinction we can get a better understanding of good-making in general.

#### **Kris McDaniel (Syracuse), “The Moorean View of the Value of Lives: a Partial Defense”.**

*Abstract TBC.*

#### **Wlodek Rabinowicz (Lund), “Value Relations - New Wine in Old Bottles”.**

Abstract: In *Theoria* 2008, I presented an analysis of value relations in terms of normative assessments of preferences. The outcome was a taxonomy of fifteen different atomic types of value relations. Unfortunately, this fitting-attitude kind of analysis is problematic in several respects. Some of these problems can be traced back to my account of preferences and they can therefore be avoided, without the taxonomy of value relations being modified, if the notion of preference is appropriately re-interpreted. Essentially, this re-interpretation gives up the idea that preference is a comparative, dyadic attitude directed towards a pair of objects and replaces it by the proposal to view preference as a relationship between monadic attitudes directed towards the objects in question.

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### **Jan Woleński (Jagiellonian University), “Axiological Sentences”.**

This paper discusses axiological sentences and views about them. Simple axiological sentences fall under the scheme (1) “a is P”, where a is an individual name or description and P is an axiological predicate, for example, “is good” or “is beautiful”. However, several reasons motivate a modal approach to axiological sentences on which their form is represented by the formula (in the ethical case; aesthetic sentences are analogical) (2) is this good that A, that the letter A is a propositional variable. Using (2) we can investigate axiological sentences as subjected to logical relations displayed by the logical square and its generalizations. Logical analysis of axiological sentences illuminated problems related to cognitivism and non-cognitivism. Finally, axiological presentism is proposed as a view consistent with naturalism.

### **Erik Carlson (Uppsala), "Defining Goodness and Badness in Terms of Betterness without Negation".**

There is a long tradition of attempts to define the monadic value properties of intrinsic or final goodness and badness in terms of the dyadic betterness relation. Such definitions, if possible, would seem desirable for reasons of theoretical simplicity. It appears that every extant proposal of this kind relies on the concept of negation, presupposing that the value bearers are proposition-like entities, such as states of affairs, facts, or propositions. In this paper, we shall investigate the possibility of defining the monadic value properties in terms of betterness, without assuming that negation or other logical connectives can be applied to the value bearers. Many value theorists believe that, for example, physical objects can have intrinsic or final value. It is therefore worthwhile to explore whether the monadic value properties can be defined in terms of betterness, within a framework that puts no restrictions on what kinds of entities that can be bearers of value. Two alternative definition formats will be discussed.

### **Kathrin M. Koslicki (Colorado-Boulder), “Independence Criteria for Substancehood”.**

The history of philosophy overflows with different views concerning the question of what sorts of entities should be assigned the ontologically fundamental status of substances. Independence criteria of substancehood have been especially important in attempting to provide a method for distinguishing the substances from other categories of entities. According to these criteria, an entity qualifies as a substance just in case it is ontologically independent in a certain preferred sense. But what is the preferred sense of “ontological

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independence” that is most suited to the formulation of a successful independence criterion for substancehood? This question has proved to be controversial and difficult to answer. In this talk, I examine different sorts of answers that have been proposed to the question of how best to formulate an independence criterion for substancehood, in particular: modal vs. non-modal construals; existential vs. non-existential construals; essentialist construals which emphasize real definition vs. essentialist construals which emphasize individuation. I end on a somewhat skeptical note: while the most promising independence criteria of substancehood manage to bring out that certain taxonomic categories of entities are more ontologically fundamental than others in certain respects, it is questionable whether any such criterion manages to single out a particular taxonomic category of entities as ontologically fundamental in any absolute sense. The proper conclusion to draw from this observation might be that we were misled in the first place to search for an absolute conception of substancehood or ontological fundamentality.

### Reading suggestions:

Kathrin Koslicki, "Varieties of Ontological Dependence",

([http://spot.colorado.edu/~koslicki/work\\_in\\_progress.html](http://spot.colorado.edu/~koslicki/work_in_progress.html));

Howard Robinson, "Substance", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

(<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/substance/>);

Peter Simons, "Farewell to Substance: A Differentiated Leave-Taking" (if you cannot find the paper, ask for it by writing to [alain.pe-curto@unige.ch](mailto:alain.pe-curto@unige.ch)).

### PhilEAs Talk after the conference

#### Stephan Torre (Oxford / Oriel College), “Against ‘Scientifically Motivated’ Restrictions on Diachronic Composition”.

When do objects at different times compose a further object? This is the question of diachronic composition. The universalist answers ‘always’. Others argue for restrictions on diachronic composition: composition occurs only when certain conditions are met. Recently some philosophers have argued that restrictions on diachronic compositions are motivated by our best physical theories. In *Persistence and Spacetime* and elsewhere, Yuri Balashov argues that diachronic compositions are restricted in terms of causal connections between object stages. In a recent paper, Nick Effingham (2011) argues that the standard objections to views that endorse restrictions on composition do not apply to a view that restricts composition according to compliance with the laws of nature. On the face of it, such restrictions on diachronic composition preserve our common sense ontology while eliminating from it scientifically revisionary objects that travel faster than the speed of light.

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I argue that these attempts to restrict diachronic composition by appealing to either causal or nomological constraints face insurmountable difficulties. I argue that neither approach succeeds in preserving our common sense ontology. I also argue that both approaches face difficulties when considering composition within the context of special relativity.