



**Everett McKay**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 9-9:50 | Tower Room 348**

**Where Emotions Become Ugly: Socioaestheticization and Aesthetic Pathologization**

Imagine yourself in a grocery store, watching a toddler scream and cry because their mother refused to buy them a candy bar. Now, imagine the same scene but replace the toddler with a forty-year-old man. Although the actual expression of emotion is identical, these situations evoke radically different emotional responses and judgments. But why does the identity of the expresser change the way that we affectively experience others' emotional expressions? I propose that these differences are, fundamentally, aesthetic. In this paper, I argue that the cultural norms surrounding identity and emotion, through a process I call socioaestheticization, render expressions of emotion as aesthetic artifacts. This process constrains our emotional freedom, thereby diminishing and devaluing the affective dimensions of our lives. In developing this position, I address an area that the field of everyday aesthetics has largely underexplored: the relationship between aesthetic experiences and the circulation of power within social systems. By applying and expanding Richard Wollheim's aesthetics and Jean Paul Sartre's concept of the gaze in an analysis of male vulnerability under patriarchal systems, I explain that emotional expressions evoke aesthetic experiences in those who observe them. Expressions that violate cultural norms, like bad art, result in unpleasant aesthetic experiences. In such cases, the underlying emotion is judged to be disordered and ugly, resulting in what I refer to as aesthetic pathologization. This incites punitive social responses that, over time, restructure the expresser's very experience of that emotion, causing both psychological and societal harm.

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**Fiona Hamilton**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 10-10:50 | Tower Room 348**

**Heraclitean Cosmos as a Container**

To what extent can the relationship between logos and flux in Heraclitus be understood metaphorically as a container and its content? This paper addresses this question by examining how flux and logos function in his fragments. For Heraclitus, flux is ceaseless change. It embodies the continuous scattering, gathering and transformation that defines reality. At the same time, logos operates as a universal structuring principle that imparts order, pattern and intelligibility to this constant movement. By reading Heraclitus' fragments on nature, harmony, law and cosmic order, I argue that logos contains flux in two key ways. First, it holds flux together which unifies oppositional poles. Second, it sets the boundaries for flux which prevents change from falling into disorder. This containment is apparent in the fragments about nature and the bow and lyre. I come to the conclusion that logos and flux are inseparable. I take this to mean that flux is the content of reality and logos is the container. This dynamic allows Heraclitus to present a perspective of reality as both perpetually in motion and fundamentally in order.

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**Heather Nakatsukasa****November 8<sup>th</sup> | 10-10:50 | Alumni Room 342****The Historical Development of Capital: Transforming Society**

How will society's unconscious reification of social beings and socialization of commodities continue to reproduce, and what could lead to real change? The purpose of this paper is to analyze the transformative nature of society, and to allow my audience an opportunity to ponder the possibilities for change.

Three distinct sections will address the following, respectively: historical context of social reification and commodity socialization, the history of capitalist reproduction and its cyclical nature, and lastly, potential for change—given relationality and transformativity. The only way to explore future change is to explore how things have changed historically. Capitalism reproduces precisely because it necessitates that we play our role as members. Thus, it is crucial we investigate ways through which conditions can change, so as to discontinue such entrapment.

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**Lucia Jackson****November 8<sup>th</sup> | 11-11:50 | Tower Room 348****The Enforced Vulnerability and Ungrievability of Black and Trans Women in The United States Prison System**

This paper examines how Black and Transgender women in the United States are rendered vulnerable and ungrievable within social and carceral systems. While intersectionality has become a prominent framework through which to analyze oppressions faced by minority groups, Black and Trans women's experiences remain under-explored in academia. Drawing on Judith Butler's theories of precarity and grievability, I argue their lives are systematically devalued through intersecting structures of racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. Beginning with an analysis of precarceral social systems, I analyze how social services fail to account for the specific needs of multiply marginalized women. Following Kimberlé Crenshaw I demonstrate how intersectional ignorance reproduces certain cycles of harm which leave these women more vulnerable to over-policing and incarceration. Once incarcerated, the state's dehumanizing practices only intensify the oppression felt by these women. Expanding upon Lisa Guenther's work on the ontological experience in prisons, I explore how strip searches enforce the ungrievability of Black and Trans women's bodies. Moving from Guenther, I engage with Nicole Francisco and Dilara Yarbrough's accounts of how cis-heteronormative standards in prison erase queer, non-conforming, and Trans identities. Finally, drawing on Jessi Lee Jackson's analysis of prisons and necropolitics, I examine how inadequate HIV/AIDS healthcare in prison marks queer, Black, and Trans bodies as ultimately ungrievable and inconsequential. By tracing the link from pre-incarceration to imprisonment, this paper effectively reveals how state institutions construct Black and Trans women as ungrievable subjects—their vulnerability is not incidental but instead a deliberate consequence of carceral logic.

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**Conrad McIntosh**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 11-11:50 | Alumni Room 342**

**Objective and Formal Reality: An Answer to the Gassendi Problem**

In Descartes' Third Meditation, he endeavors to prove the existence of something outside of himself. To accomplish this objective, he engages in his first attempt to logically prove the existence of God. In the process of doing so, he distinguishes between the concepts of "formal reality" and "objective reality", where objects possessing objective reality are mental representations of objects which contain formal (or actual) reality. This is an instrumental component of his proof, as it ultimately works in conjunction with his formulation of an ontological hierarchy that examines the metaphysical relationships between infinite substances, finite substances, and modes of finite substances. His hierarchy also outlines the ontological character of ideas of substances, which is that objectively existent ideas represent the entirety of an essence of a formally existent object. Although ideas of formally existent objects represent their indivisible essences and are therefore unable to be augmented or subtracted, Descartes still maintains that it is possible to garner increasing knowledge about God. Pierre Gassendi, a French philosopher and contemporary of Descartes, objects that the indivisibility of ideas is in tension with the notion that it is possible to learn more about God without augmenting or subtracting one's mental representation of Him. Alice Sowaal's "Cognitive Route Theory" adequately resolves this tension through an exploration of God's singular attribute of infinity, which maintains the validity of Descartes' epistemological claims regarding ideas of divinity.

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**Annika Prange**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 1:30-2:20 | Tower Room 348**

**She is Bound: A Peek at the Undressed Woman**

As Simone De Beauvoir seeks to uncover the heterosexual woman as something mediated by the man, her presence, according to Heidegger, manifests as being-there (Dasein) which, in this way, demonstrates this understanding: the woman's Dasein compliments like a mirror that of Heidegger's. That is, as the woman becomes disconnected from her guidance through her elevation of the man to that of a god, bound to this they-man through her pursuit of him and the denial of her own guidance, her expressions of love and narcissism emerge as bound. Now, she seeks him through her very being: submitting herself into the docile position of a child under that of her god-man while he is above her. This is the love she sorely seeks, the love she has been forced into by not only man, but herself. This is Dasein gendered- a gendering that insinuates the woman's Dasein as a relinquishing of herself to the man, her love and narcissism mediating her Dasein, and her Dasein mediated by the they-man. Exposed becomes the woman's Dasein, one that emerges bound through her submission to man. Thus, I consider when one might ask: how does the woman's being-there appear in relation to the man: we can call upon this brutally exposing analysis of the heterosexual woman as one that bears witness to the giving over of herself to her proclaimed they-man, a giving over that qualifies as her bounding to the man.

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**Shyanna Mayes**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 1:30-2:20 | Alumni Room 342**

**Feminism of Women's Projection onto Male Characters in Media**

There is a widespread phenomenon of women resonating more strongly and projecting themselves onto male characters in media rather than female characters. Many individuals have attributed this regular occurrence to fetishization despite indications of this behavior arising from women's desires to be seen as equals to their male counterparts and their own narcissistic needs to self-insert themselves onto their perceived doubles. This phenomenon incites an examination of women's roles in fandom spaces, their fixation on gay relationship culture, their desperate escape from their own femininity, and the role theatrical-like performance has within women's distortion and destruction of themselves. Beauvoir's words on women's defiance of femininity, dreams of living as an equal, and dedication to the theater serve to further highlight the feminist philosophical aspects to the questions asked. This, along with Freud's observations of the roles objectification, ownership, and possessiveness have when choosing an individual to fixate oneself upon, leads one to come to the conclusion that women project themselves onto male characters and celebrities in media to satisfy their inner aspirations to be viewed as equals within the world that deems them inferior and to escape their own femininity through narcissistic and destructive projections and objectifications of other individuals.

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**Priya Ghotane**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 2:30-3:20 | Tower Room 348**

***Indoctrination, Religious Education, and the Case for Epistemic Diversity in Curriculum***

The inclusion of religious education in public curricula has become a highly contentious issue in recent politics. There is a popular fear that religious education is inherently indoctrinating and thus jeopardizes students' ability to 'think freely'. This paper presents a case for a 'non-indoctrinating' religious education that would support the incorporation of epistemic pluralism in public curricula. Given that moral education is unavoidable in curriculum, there must be a significant distinction between religious education and other forms of moral education if the religious kind is to be uniquely indoctrinating. I argue that this difference does not exist, and so move to conceptualizing religious (and generally moral) education without indoctrination. Current pedagogical practices emphasize 'free thinking' while only rewarding specific types of knowledge (e.g., rational argumentation). This creates a pernicious form of thought control in which students are not told which conclusion is correct but that there is only one correct way to approach knowledge. Moral education, including religious education, has the potential to provide an antidote to this epistemic hegemony by supporting the development of other ways of knowing.

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**Olivia Niemenski****November 8<sup>th</sup> | 2:30-3:20 | Alumni Room 342****Scientific Participation and Engagement Between Researchers & The Public: An Archeological Museum Study**

This paper explores methods to increase scientific participation between researchers and the public in museum spaces. It argues against the classic, one-way transmission of information in museums, where scientific language bars public curiosity and limits understanding. Instead, it proposes a “transformative critique” model, utilizing case studies featuring re-examination and enthusiast participation in archeology.

The study first examines the South Lodge Camp excavation, highlighting how General Pitt-Rivers’ “meticulous dig and record” method was detailed, but contained his biased Social Darwinist stance, influencing an assumption not matched by the data. Later re-excavation by Stuart Piggott, who had different assumptions, revealed a more plausible conclusion, highlighting that there is no value-free ideal in the sciences and that re-examination is essential for approximate truth.

Continuing on, the paper discusses P.J. Reynolds’ roundhouse studies, which involved enthusiasts, or citizen scientists, to perform reenactments and interact with sites. While allowing for transformative critique by including diverse perspectives and having avenues and venues for criticism, this approach had limitations. Regarding Helen Longino’s “Social Procedural Objectivity”, there was a lack of shared standards and equality of intellectual authority between researchers and the public.

To address these shortcomings, this paper proposes a mediator role to be passed between archeological researchers, the public, and museum curators, to ensure equality of intellectual authority.

This paper suggests three potential shared standards between researchers and the public, including:

- Activist involvement: protecting archeological discoveries and promoting new knowledge
- Historical connections: retelling and contextualizing for the next generations
- Human ambitions to communicate: desire to share and spread new findings

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**Jacob MacFarland****November 8<sup>th</sup> | 3:30-4:20 | Tower Room 348****Hostage to the Pen: The Unethical Obligation of Exploitation Within Capitalism**

Capitalism essentially grants wealthy individuals benefits and encourages them to exploit the working class laborers which further perpetuates unequal distributions of wealth and power. Here, I argue that Enrique Dussel’s universal material criterion is necessary for understanding the ethical implications of capitalist development and the essential nature of capitalism itself.

I will address implications such as the labor contract, child labor, and exploitation/domestication of women which will contextualize and demonstrate the unethical nature of capitalism in practice. The question then is, how is capitalism essentially unethical as a societal system within the ethical framework of the universal material criterion via the labor contract?

In addressing the question above, I will discuss the nature of the labor contract, as in what it is and how it functions, as well as an ethical evaluation on the basis of its operation. In this discussion, I will determine the necessity of the labor contract as a core function of capitalism, and from the ethical judgement of the labor contract, an ethical judgement will consequently follow to capitalism, in its entirety, as a necessarily unethical social system. These ethical evaluations and judgements will be based on the aforementioned universal material criterion.

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**Jamison Nemecek**

**November 8<sup>th</sup> | 3:30-4:20 | Alumni Room 342**

**From Phenomenology to Dialectics: Space, Time, and the Moving Body**

This paper seeks to ontologize space and time and their role in the constitution of the body schema and consciousness itself. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's account in *The Phenomenology of Perception* provides a strong phenomenological account of the above, the way temporality and spatiality condition consciousness and are appropriated by it through movement, the moving body, such that the body experiences its own temporality and spatiality. But it is only through an explicitly materialist account that this relation can be established and laid down in its objectivity, the dialectic between world and subject; bodily spatiality is always grounded and conditioned by objective, external space. Once ontologized, movement is redefined through the dialectical materialist tradition as movement by and through contradiction, which is inherent in all reality and conditions the possibility of change and interaction, further reinforcing the world-subject relation characterized by motion.

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**Satyam Sinha**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 9-9:50 | Tower Room 348**

**Kant, Statelessness, and the Case for a World Government**

In the *Doctrine of Right*, Immanuel Kant argues that there is only one true right: the right to freedom. This right is universal for all rational beings and justifies a political system capable of coercively protecting rights through enforcement, which is a state. Currently, since the global political system consists of states, in theory, every individual's rights should be protected. However, in practice, there are categories of stateless persons – individuals who lack their rights even though they reside within a state: immigrants who have lost the right to freedom, refugees, and internally displaced persons. The existence of stateless individuals poses a problem for Kant because, although they are entitled to their rights, they lack a political structure to enforce them. In this paper, I analyze how the *Doctrine of Right* and Kant's international writings fail to address statelessness as an internal issue within his framework. I then examine his concept of cosmopolitan right and three international political models – the

League of Nations, World Republic, and World Government – to determine if any can be extended to resolve statelessness. I argue that only a World Government meets the necessary criteria to resolve statelessness, despite objections regarding its practicability and the rights of nations.

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**Kenneth McMillen**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 9-9:50 | Alumni Room 342**

**The Veil of Jurisprudence: How International Law Masks Coercive Violence**

Who enforces international law? The answer lies in the different countries that make up international treaties and bodies that legislate international law. These laws conceptually are supposed to serve the same purpose that laws domestically do. They are meant to preserve justice for the different nations, with a theoretical framework that follows liberal ideals popularized by theorists like H.L.A Hart. However, these conceptions are wholly inaccurate as they lack the historical context that any analysis and justification of a system must need to be valid. I begin with a historical analysis of how the legal system has been used under the framework popularized by Hart. Historical analysis shows why things are what they are, rather than leaving the state of the world entirely to theory. I then will combine the analyses of China Mieville, Margaret Davies, and Sora Han to construct a new vision of international law as it really is: a mechanism of violence for selfish ends. This critique will focus on how international law is predicated on coercive violence, creates and sustains itself through its own normative truths, and how legal precedence taints the roots of international law. Through this I argue that international law is not a mechanism for justice, but instead a veil for the oligarchy of powerful nations to have their way with those that lack the strength to resist.

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**Sage Henke**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 10-10:50 | Tower Room 348**

**I Always Feel Like Somebody's Watching Me: A Diagnosis of Ideological Conceptions in the Capitalist Legal Form**

Should you break the law? Many material and abstract reasons for acting as a law-abiding citizen are consistently present, regardless of a citizen's situation. The feeling of fear or guilt that presupposes even the consideration of countering legal norms may prove as reason enough for one to remain faithful to the laws of their society. Or, perhaps that consideration appears absolutely irrelevant. Absent-minded adherence to the law of one's particular society presents itself as normative. This essay diagnoses the root of that passivity and reveals the problematic nature of assuming law's normativity. Despite a semblance of neutrality, law's implications on its subjects give way to the historically specific mechanisms that dictate its function. This essay assesses how law's reified basis in a capitalist society promotes omnipotent intimidation among legal subjects, and further explores what this reveals about the ideological character of law.

**Kali Killingsworth**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 10-10:50 | Alumni Room 342**

### **Hyperdimensional Neutral Monism and the Proto-Panpsychist Structural Solution**

Jason Frenkel's Hyperdimensional Neutral Monism (HNM) offers a novel attempt to move beyond the mind-body impasse by positing a unique structural basis of consciousness through spatio-temporal protrusion into a proposed 'consciousness' fifth dimension. While its aim is to preserve monism while avoiding reductive materialism and "spooky" dualism, I argue that HNM's structuralist commitments are internally inconsistent.

Specifically, Frenkel adopts type-identity and token-identity, yet maintains distinction between dual-aspect properties in virtue of the mental's structural dependence—but not supervenience—on the physical. This structuralism, however, begs the question of whether such a dependency is truly as monist as it claims, and whether Frenkel's fundamental treatment of subjectivity is as far apart from cosmopsychism as he purports. Moreover, Frenkel's theory falls short of sufficiently addressing problems pertaining to causation. Motivated by these tensions, I examine three candidate structural accounts available to HNM, arguing these positions all fail by either inflating into a property-pluralism or deflating into epiphenomenalism by divorcing aspects from causal relevance.

Seeking resolution, I propose a hybrid model that retains HNM's structural monism while introducing an architecture of compositional power realization that treats aspects as modal second-order proto-powers that are co-instantiated globally. In doing so, the theory grounds consciousness as a derivative, compositional phenomenon without inflating ontology or compromising causal or structural symmetry. I conclude the best solution that keeps the spirit of Frenkel's intended neutral monist structuralism is to adopt the hybrid view—which would entail Frenkel concedes to proto-panpsychism as a modest version of the cosmopsychism he resists.

**Mallory Venezia**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 11-11:50 | Tower Room 348**

### **Without Ever Touching His Skin: The Autonomy of Sexual Fantasies**

Sexual and violent fantasies often lead to public and private discomfort, raising questions about their moral status and whether or not all sexual fantasies can be categorized as immoral. In this paper, I argue that even though these fantasies are uncomfortable, this is not sufficient to completely morally condemn all fantasies. I consider three possible claims for the morality of fantasies: 1) all fantasies are immoral (which I set aside as it is not plausible), 2) some fantasies are immoral, or 3) no fantasy is immoral. The second claim is championed by Stephan Kershnar, who claims that fantasies involving real people or pro-attitudes toward immoral acts are morally condemnable. In Section 2, I argue that both conditions rely on arbitrary external facts and a mischaracterization of pro-attitudes leads to unjustified condemnation of fantasies. In Section 3, I draw on analogies from Patrick Hopkins' argument of simulation qua simulation and analogies between fantasizing and mindreading to support



the thesis that fantasies function as autonomous mental acts and do not entail endorsement. Ultimately, I argue that all fantasies, including those that contain morally troubling scenarios, are morally insulated. I conclude that fantasies cannot be morally condemned based on its content alone.

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**Xavier Parker**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 11-11:50 | Alumni Room 342**

**Public Intoxication, the Purpose of Law and Autonomy**

This essay examines the purpose of law through Cesare Beccaria's framework in "An Essay on Crime and Punishment" and applies it to Arkansas Law 5-71-121 on public intoxication. I argue that the purpose of law is to secure individual autonomy by requiring people to give up the necessary amount of autonomy to protect the rest. Drawing on Beccaria's writings, law is only justified when it prevents individuals from infringing on the autonomy of others. However, Arkansas Law 5-71-121 restricts autonomy beyond this threshold. While framed as protecting the public from danger or disruption, the law criminalizes actions, such as drinking in public or being "unreasonably annoying," that do not inherently harm others' autonomy. Existing laws already address endangerment and property damage, making the law redundant. Furthermore, evidence shows that public intoxication laws disproportionately target the homeless and those of lower socioeconomic status. This selective enforcement shows that the law functions less to protect autonomy than to manage social "aesthetics," contradicting Beccaria's principle of equality in freedom. I conclude that Arkansas Law 5-71-121 fails to meet the purpose of law as it restricts freedom and its removal would protect equal freedom for all individuals.

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**Ava Ryan-Young**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 1:30-2:20 | Tower Room 348**

**Oral History in Scientific Communities**

Oral history, although often dismissed as an unreliable source, holds hundreds of years of Indigenous knowledge and is well-documented by generations of storytellers. The advent of Western culture in the Americas has subdued and destroyed these cultural practices, aiming to assimilate students into one, homogenous body. The well-held tradition of oral history in Indigenous communities is, in most cases, wholly neglected by Western academia. I discuss some aspects of Indigenous science, its credibility, and the benefits of utilizing both native and Western knowledge systems. I hope to provide insight into the history of oral traditions and encourage Western academics to act as allies in Indigenous efforts to preserve ancestral knowledge systems.

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**Jason Folk**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 1:30-2:20 | Alumni Room 342**

**An Issue with Issue 1**

On November 5, 2024, voters across the state of Ohio were set to vote on Issue 1, which would have established a nonpartisan citizen-led redistricting commission to eliminate

gerrymandered congressional and legislative districts backed by individuals on all sides of the aisle. However, in the weeks leading up to the election, voters were confronted with a peculiar message. Yard signs for Issue 1 and against Issue 1 appeared to convey the same message, both adopting anti-gerrymandering language (Pelzer 1). Furthermore, the ballot language did not align with the previous summary, stating that Issue 1 would "...repeal constitutional protections against gerrymandering approved by nearly three quarters of Ohio electors participating in the statewide election of 2015" (LaRose 2024). However, Ohio's Issue 1 would halt gerrymandering in the state (Rudensky 3). This presents a clear predicament. What does it mean when ballot language is not reflective of the actual proposal? Using an Austinian approach, I seek to examine Ohio's Issue 1, ultimately finding that Ohio Republicans are engaging in Communicative Gaslighting, the implications of which are dire.

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**Kallista Leggitt**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 2:30-3:20 | Tower Room 348**

**Nested Pediatric Ethicalities**

Children depend on others to exercise their rights, which can create an ethical conflict between the parent and the adolescent when it comes to medical decision making. This exposed conflict, when the adolescent and the parent come to opposing decisions, can be defined as adolescent consent dissonance (ACD). This relates back to childism—where it's generally believed that adults are superior—which can manifest in various ways: including dismissing an adolescent's opinions and needs, and ignoring their capability as an autonomous, ethical agent. Maintaining that ethical agency and autonomy is a key part of acknowledging adolescence as a developmental stage from childhood to adulthood. Promoting that ethical agency is a coordinated ethical obligation of healthcare professionals and the adolescents' family. One way to accomplish and address this is through the Patient Activation Measure (PAM). Specific needs and counselling-action depend entirely on the individuals' maturity level, as well as general level of awareness and understanding of their own health. Thus, we should employ the PAM framework to pediatric medical care to help us support how the adolescent understands and moves through their development as they gain "the confidence, knowledge and skills to manage her [condition] in a manner that improves her health. (Gibert et al., 2017)" It is through the acknowledgement of this issue, and the recognition of adolescents as autonomous, ethical, agents, that we can better empower and support them as they transition as champions of informed decision making.

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**Aryasatya Anindita**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 2:30-3:20 | Alumni Room 342**

**Searching for Laws: Rethinking the Metaphysics of Experimentation vis-à-vis Faraday and Kant**

This essay is an integrated History and Philosophy of Science (HPS) exploration of the metaphysics of Experimentation. This exploration entails the analysis of the activity of experimentation to its subsequent parts, viz., hypothesis-making and empirical testing. The focus, however, will be around the issue of hypothesis-making and its epistemic value in

guiding empirical testing to find a phenomenal law that arises out of interdependency between an array of observational facts. To facilitate such a discussion, the subject matter will be history—viz, Faraday’s experimental practice in his investigation of electricity. The rationale for this choice is that the historical episode provided us with a paradigmatic practice that is often overlooked in the formal analysis of scientific progress. Therefore, under the framework of epistemic iteration (Chang, 2011, “Beyond Case-Studies: History as Philosophy.”), the progression of the discovery of empirical law can be assessed in its fullest extent. By doing so, one would manage to discover—mediated by the Faraday episode—the metaphysical commitment (viz, necessary truths) which guide the experimentalist activity and then ground them properly. This essay is concluded with the metaphysical grounding of experimental activity in the unity-in-kinds of the Kantian power of Understanding (verstanden). The power (vermögen) of Understanding serves as the metaphysical basis for experimentation, which is the empirical application of the Transcendental Law of Specification. By extension, this also encompasses one of the many concrete empirical applications of the power of Understanding.

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**Peyton Cooper & Katherine Berensen**

**November 9<sup>th</sup> | 3:30-4:20 | Tower Room 348**

### **A New AI Crisis in Mental Healthcare**

We elucidate the ethical failures to uphold the four principles of bioethics in AI chatbots designed for clinical mental healthcare. WYSA, specifically, is a software company providing AI therapy to large corporations for their employees. We argue that these chatbots fail to satisfy the core principles of bioethics — autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Within the system of privatized healthcare, the capitalistic drive for profit often corrupts the quality of care delivered to patients. Because of this, our recommendation is that the companies running these AI chatbots, like WYSA, should be required to uphold these principles of bioethics. When these principles are treated as a suggestion rather than a duty, pre-existing vulnerable populations are at risk of further harm. We demonstrate these bioethical failures through a case study examination of the company, WYSA, and explore those failures in each of the four principles. For the purposes of this paper, we will primarily focus on the implications of the failure of WYSA to demonstrate the principle of justice.

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