CRITIQUE

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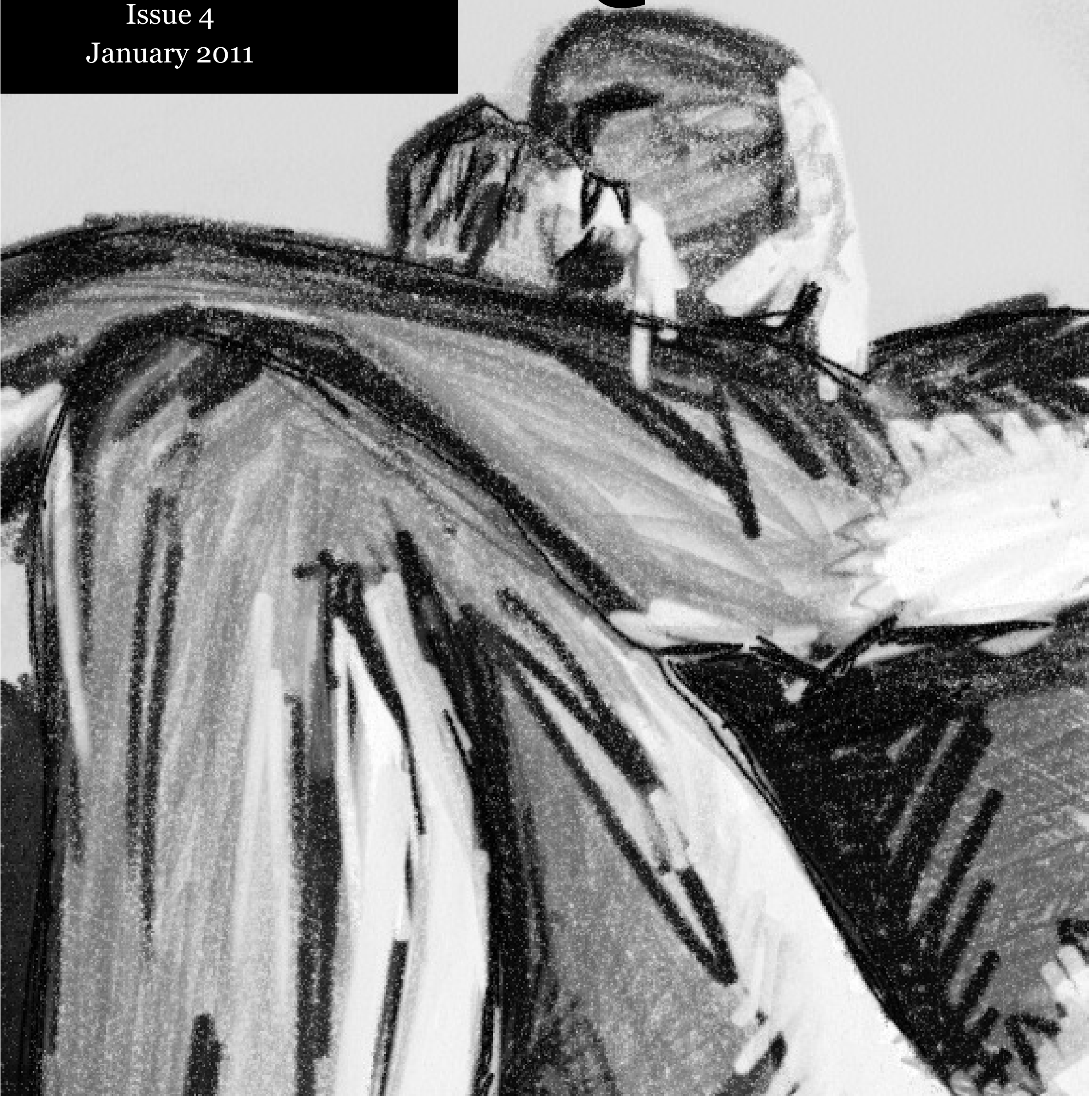

A Durham Philosophical Society Publication

Critique

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To enter a submission for Critique in the 2010-11 academic year, email the editor (s.c.dennis@durham.ac.uk). Entries should be around 1,000 words.

Editorial

The articles in this issue of *Critique* pose a wide variety of questions, reflecting that of interests here in Durham. Philosophy, it seems, trades in the currency of questions. We often talk of the 'problems of philosophy', which are structured as questions that call for systematic, coherent answers to stand as their solutions.

But how far does the analogy between the notions of question-answer and problem-solution actually hold? A problem solved is no longer a problem, we say. The problem simply ceases upon its being solved and, symmetrically, so too does the solution cease to be a solution. Likewise, where there is no problem, there is no solution to be had ("If it ain't broke, don't fix it").

Does this translate to the notions of question and answer? The knowledge we have is expressed as answers to questions, so that we always have a sense of some coherence and correspondence between items of our conceptualisation, knowledge and reality. Answers are always answers and, further, it is difficult to suppose that we could conceive of something of which we cannot ask questions at all. Keeping questions alive then, is not analogous to the problem -solution model. We do not need to re-create our ignorance in order to sustain an answer, as we would need to reinvigorate a problem in order to fulfil the performative aspect requisite of being a solution.

I sometimes imagine philosophy as a discipline as being like a vast crossword puzzle, whereby all the answers crossover and connect. A stand-alone answer is insufficient, it may appear to fit the number of letters or definition, but what matters is the whole. Importantly, the answers are next to meaningless without their corresponding clues and questions. Just as 'means' are defined in relation to 'ends' and 'solutions' by 'problems', so too must answers always stand in relation to questions. The difference is that the question-answer mode of conception requires continuity and constancy to be of any worth. Philosophy exemplifies this best of all, by always questioning, always seeking new and better answers.

Many thanks to the PhilSoc executive committee, to my predecessor Toby Newson, to the contributors and to the department.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Sam Dennis, *Editor*

There is a One in Ten Chance that you are Dreaming Right Now

JAN WESTERHOFF

Assume our life is made up of a finite number of moments of consciousness (mocs). For the sake of simplicity let there be one moc per second[1]. If we get a healthy amount of eight hours of sleep every night we are left with sixteen hours = 57600 mocs that constitute our waking time. Every night we are asleep for 2880 seconds. We know that 20 to 25 percent of our sleep consists of REM sleep, the kind of sleep during which dreaming takes place[2]. Assuming the lower figure of 20 percent this leaves us with 5760 mocs while we are dreaming. So one out of every ten mocs happens during a dream; the odds that your current moc is one of them is one in ten.

But is it reasonable to assume that there are mocs outside of the waking state? Norman Malcolm argued in 1956 that this was logically impossible: "if a person is in any state of consciousness it logically follows that he is not sound asleep."[3] This, however, depends entirely on what we take consciousness to be. We can hardly claim that a consensus on this has been reached, but if we understand consciousness in accordance with the contemporary discussion as something that can come in different strengths and constitutes at the very least an appearance of a world[4] then dreams do constitute some form for consciousness, since in a dream some form of a world appears to us. But even if dreams are conscious experiences the above argument might be a bit too quick. As experience confirms, one hour of carrying out a habitual boring task does not equal 3600 mocs; our consciousness might be elsewhere for most of the time.[5] Moreover, time in dreams might not obey the rules of the waking world, a dream-second may correspond to fewer or more mocs than a waking-second. This is true, but if we spend more of our waking life unconscious the ratio of waking mocs to dreaming mocs increases. It becomes even more likely that your present moc happens during a dream.

How dream-time relates to waking-time is indeed a difficult - question. The dreaming prophet Muhammad famously visited seven heavens in less time than it took for water to flow out of an over-

turned pitcher. Apparently when you are dreaming a lot can happen in a short time. Nevertheless we should note that as far as we can empirically determine the relation between dream-time and waking-time the two seem to be running at the same speed. Since the movement of our eyes is the only bodily action we can control during dreaming, experiments could be carried out with lucid dreamers asked to signal the beginning and end of an estimated time period by moving their eyes. These signals could then be tracked in a sleep laboratory[6]. The average length of an estimated ten-second interval of dream-time was thirteen seconds of waking time, which is the same as the average length of an estimated ten-second interval of waking time[7]. If this fact about lucid dreams can be generalized it appears to be plausible to suppose that there is the same amount of mocs per unit of time during the waking state as there is in a dream.

The reason why this result is interesting is that a ten percent likelihood of dreaming appears to be quite high. We usually regard the possibility that we are dreaming right now as something that is logically possible, but highly unlikely, i.e. as an event with probability of significantly less than 0.1. Of course none of the above claims that we can never be more than 90 percent certain that we are presently not dreaming. We could, for example, employ some sort of reality-testing techniques to find out whether we are really dreaming (trying to jump into the air to check whether we stay airborne any longer than usual, looking at a piece of printed text twice to see whether the letters have changed). But it is not quite clear how the outcomes of these should influence our credence. It is possible that they deliver a negative outcome (we fall to the ground immediately, the text stays constant) but we are still dreaming. Moreover, the very fact that we feel the need to carry out a reality-test may be a strong indication that we are dreaming. Philosophy tutorials aside, when we are awake we rarely wonder whether we are really awake.

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1 Any other value would do too. We also do not have to assume that this ratio is fixed and can allow for time speeding up (fewer mocs per unit of time) or slowing down (more mocs per unit of time). For the sake of simplicity we are going to ignore this complication, though.

2 J. Allan Hobson: The Dreaming Brain, Penguin, 1990, 148.

3 Norman Malcom: "Dreaming and Scepticism", Philosophical Review 1956, 65:1, 21.

4 Thomas Metzinger: Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity, MIT Press, 2004, 251.

5 For some discussion of this `time-gap experience' see Graham Reed: The Psychology of Anomalous Experience, Hutchinson, 1972, 18-20.

6 Stephen LaBerge: "Lucid dreaming: Evidence and methodology", Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 2000, 23:6, 962-963.

7 Stephen LaBerge: Lucid Dreaming, Ballantine, 1985, 82.

Jan Westerhoff is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy here in Durham, with research interests in metaphysics, philosophy of language and Indo-Tibetan philosophy, particularly the Madhyamaka.

Partiality, Care and the Value of Human Life

STEPHEN INGRAM

Many moral theories assume at the outset that the ethical point of view, the perspective from which ethical deliberation is ideally performed, is essentially impartial. But the dominance of impartiality has recently become less secure; partiality, empathy and human caring have been recognised by some as having fundamental importance in ethical life. I will first sketch out the motivation for impartiality. I will then outline a major flaw of conceiving the ethical point view as impartial, before arguing for the legitimacy of caring dispositions. I will finally attempt to show how human caring relates to issues surrounding the value of human life.

Impartiality has traditionally been celebrated as fundamental to the ethical point of view. William Godwin, for example, famously asked "[w]hat magic is there in the pronoun 'my' that should justify us in overturning the decisions of impartial truth" (1985, p.170). A key motivation for this kind of emphasis impartiality is that it seems to exclude bias from moral judgement. Preference for one's own race, for example, cannot enter into an impartial decision because it is a prejudice possessed from a personal standpoint. By abstracting from the personal standpoint and excluding partiality, we reject prejudice and make ethical decisions *fair*.

However, in recent times the dominance of impartiality has come under attack. Impartiality is invoked in order to exclude prejudices, but there does not seem to be anything absurd or prejudicial about a human being viewing the world from a human point of view (Williams 1985, p.118). Strong partial concern for oneself and one's 'near and dear' are part of this point of view, and as such have to be taken seriously rather than rejected outright. To me, it seems sloppy to reject all partiality as being prejudicial. Some partialities, such as racism, are obviously deplorable. But others, such as a father's special concern for his children, can be admirable. What we need is a credible source of partiality within the ethical point of view, which will enable us to distinguish the admirable partialities from the deplorable ones.

An emphasis on *care* and *empathy* can offer that source. Care-ethics emphasise how human motivations, particularly dispositions to care for others, can explain and justify our partial preferences to those to whom we are closest. Michael Slote, for example, claims that our obligations to distant strangers are less strong than our obligations to those who are in danger right in front of us, and that "this difference reflects a difference in normal empathic reactions" (2007, p.5). This is *not* to make the self-indulgent claim that distant others carry little or no weight in our ethical deliberation. Rather, it is merely that it is not absurd for both the short-term and long-term immediacy of situations to have a fundamental position in moral judgement.

Partiality has a key role to play in ethics. The reason that racism is a prejudice is not simply because it does not make sense from an impartial point of view. This is a worryingly cold-blooded way to reject racism. Racism involves a failure to appropriately empathise with one's fellow human beings, and should be rejected on those grounds. But not giving special concern to one's near and dear can also betray a failure in empathic concern. It would be a heartless father who only ever satisfied his children's most basic needs in order to devote the rest of his energy to helping the needy. We admire parents who, on the whole, favour their own children over random strangers. Partialities are not merely a practical necessity; they are a key component of human and ethical life.

We are now in a position to discuss how admirable human caring relates to the value of human life. Imagine an egoist who is content to violate the lives of others whenever it is in their interests to do so. By behaving in this way, the egoist expresses their lack of a key element of human life. They have implicitly rejected the possibility of building and maintaining *healthy* caring relationships, which are essential to well-being. It may be impossible to *persuade* the egoist to (authentically) engage in caring relationships. However, by observing that such relationships are admirable and integral to human life, we can see that we should be seeking ways to understand how human life is intrinsically valuable. To put it another way, failure to honour human life implies an arbitrary heartlessness towards (at

least some) others, which expresses a failure to fully realise one's caring dispositions. There is more than one way to care about humans, and caring is a matter of degree. But a complete lack of concern for another is clearly deplorable. So, we should seek ways to value human life intrinsically in order to fully realise our capacity for empathic concern. I have not attempted to demonstrate beyond any doubt that caring dispositions are all there is to morality. Nor have I tried to show that human life is intrinsically valuable. These would be gargantuan projects. My aim has been more modest. I have tried to show that giving partiality a fundamental role in the ethical point of view fits better with our view of human and ethical life and that by emphasising caring we can see the importance of valuing others intrinsically. Humans matter because humans are important to humans. Our mutual concern is something to be admired and encouraged. At the very least, we should avoid abstracting from our partial perspective. Viewing the world from a perspective that is no one's at all involves a heartlessness that is, at best, regrettable.

Godwin, W., 1985. *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Middlesex: Penguin Classics.

Slote, M., 2007. *The Ethics of Care and Empathy.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Williams, B., 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Stephen Ingram is a 3rd Year Philosophy Student working on a dissertation about the role of partiality in ethical deliberation.

Necessity Naturalised: Giving Kripke What he Says he Wants

HENRY TAYLOR

Since Kripke revived essentialism in 1980, there has been a question mark hanging over how exactly to understand his accounts of possibility and necessity. Kripke famously spoke of 'possible worlds' in Naming and Necessity (2007), leaving the rest of the philosophical world to mull over what this might mean ontologically. Here I present an addition to an ontologically parsimonious account of possibility, which will help us to make sense of necessity. This will hopefully furnish us with an account of necessity, which need make no use of possible worlds.

The account of possibility which I favour finds its roots in Charlie Martin (2007, Ch.2) and has been worked out in more detail by Borghini and Williams (2008). It rests upon the idea of properties as dispositions, for example, we may say that this cube of ice has the disposition to melt when it is heated. Conversely, this fire has the disposition to melt ice when it comes into contact with it. This picture is easy to apply across the board, the oxygen in the air, and the sulphuric adhesive on this match and the rough edge of this matchbox all have the dispositions to react with one another in certain circumstances and produce a flame. These dispositions are real, they are not to be reduced to 'if…then' statements, they are not mere possibilia. Whether or not they ever manifest their effects, they are still real. Even if a match never strikes, it still has the properties that allow it to strike if it ever were to come into vigorous contact with the side of a matchbox[1].

If we say 'it is possible that this vase should smash' we are faced with a problem: what is it that makes this claim true or false? What are the truthmakers for such a statement? If you are attracted to an ontology which includes only this universe, and not other possible

worlds, then ideally one can find these truthmakers in this universe. The suggestion is that if the dispositional properties that can react together to produce state x exist in the actual world, then the statement 'state x is possible' is true. The truthmakers for this statement are these dispositional properties. So if I say 'it is possible that this vase should smash' then the properties of fragility and brittleness that exist within the glass of the vase act as this statement's truthmakers.

This account is defended crisply and clearly by Borghini and Williams in their (2008). What is lacking, however, is an account of necessity. The ideas contained in Naming and Necessity are so firmly entrenched in the analytic tradition, that the view of Borghini and Williams risks being severely crippled, unless a satisfactory account of necessity can be built in. I suggest that we understand necessity within this rubric simply by saying that some state x is necessary iff. ¬x is impossible. That is to say, if there are no dispositional properties in existence that could render ¬x existent, then x is a necessary truth.

This is straightforward, but it is also very powerful. Crucially, it allows for the particular kind of necessity that Kripkeans defend, namely a-posteriori necessity. Whilst some necessary statements can be deduced a-priori, it is one of the primary contentions of Naming and Necessity that necessities may have to be empirically discovered. For example, if we are to follow Kripke and say that identity is a necessary relation, we can say that the fact that the morning star and the evening star are identical is an a-posteriori necessity. Upon our account, we may say that it simply is not within the dispositional properties of the universe that any possible interaction of them may make the morning star distinct from the evening star.

This is an attractive account of necessity, as it provides Kripkeans with the account that they are looking for, without having to talk of 'possible worlds' which many consider to be ontologically dubious. It also makes the contention that the truthmakers for statements about possibility should be discoverable to empirical science. If you find this parsimonious naturalism attractive, but still wish to preserve a realist understanding of modality, then this is the account for you.

1 I will not defend this account here, for a defence, see Heil 2005 and 2009.

Borghini, A. and Williams, N. 2008. "A Dispositional Account of Possibility." Dialectica. Vol. 62. pp. 21-41.

Heil, John. 2005. "Dispositions." Synthese. Vol. 144. pp. 343-356.

Heil, John. 2009. From an Ontological Point of View. (New York: Oxford University Press).

Kripke, Saul. 2007. Naming and Necessity. (Tyne and Wear: Blackwell).

Martin, C.B. 2007. The Mind in Nature. (New York: Oxford University Press).

Henry Taylor received his BA Durham last year and is now a philosophy masters student at the University of Cambridge. His primary research interests are philosophy of mind and metaphysics, particularly the work of John Heil and C.B. Martin.

Should Philosophy Become a Part of The Natural Sciences?

JAMIE SHERMAN

Here I will examine whether it would be beneficial for philosophy to become a science. I look at the reasons that Philosophy could work well as a science, such as the fact that Hume saw observables as an important factor in our understanding of the world, and the problems that arise from using this as evidence for the possibility of a coalition of the disciplines. I note Wittgenstein's reticence to philosophy being too scientific and look at the way that the two areas of academia can intertwine quite productively without any official change in the way they are organised. I conclude that this collaboration would be detrimental rather than useful, as it would blunt the creativity of either discipline. I believe both philosophy and the sciences can work independently while incorporating each other's ideas.

For philosophy to be comparable with science, it must be similar in its aims and method to physics, the purest of the natural sciences. It is generally assumed that physics provides the epistemological basis for the other sciences, specifically chemistry and biology. I will therefore look at the possibility of philosophy becoming a part of physics rather than an independent discipline in the realm of the arts. The features that characterise the arena of the natural sciences include the systematic nature of academic practice and the aim to be able to predict outcomes accurately as well as understanding the mechanism of the natural world.

David Hume said that if a person imagines something, that thing must exist in our perceived reality. We cannot conceive of things that are purely imaginary. Though this is the case, it is entirely possible to hold the idea of a unicorn as a part of our cognitive content, since in order to form this idea we simply combine the experienced horse and the experienced horn. In essence, Hume gives significance and veracity to our cognitive stock obtained through perception and, by relating this to reality, he gives our senses a great epistemological significance. Science, too, values the observable. It attempts to explain what we observe and explain why these observed

phenomena behave as such. This is suggestive, but is not necessarily enough to say that the two should be seen as one and the same discipline

Hume's theory could be associated with the Cartesian idea of causal adequacy, but this has a rather ugly consequence. It suggests that any idea we have must have its roots in reality and will therefore be only as real as something in the physical world. The problem with this formulation for philosophy, if viewed as a natural science, is that it leads to evidence for God's existence, as the idea of a creator suggests that a creator must exist in actuality. This may prove to weaken the bond between philosophy and physics, as the traditionally religious view proposes a story of creation highly contradictory to that given by the popular physicist. Therefore this may suggest flaw in the partnership of these disciplines, as the consequence of theistic thinking does not often sit well with the secular meta-narrative of science.

Wittgenstein was a great sceptic of philosophy as one of the natural sciences, as it is a discipline which he thought should occupy a less substantial position that that of sciences, which can bring "true propositions" through rigorous experimentation (Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 4.11). He believed that the models built up by science- the bodies of information governing how certain systems operate- were useful in observing patterns and inductive principles. However, the more general we attempt to be, the greater the number of subtle distinctions we miss becomes, and our model is essentially a problem for us. Wittgenstein didn't want philosophy to become a scientific area; he saw it as an exercise; a therapeutic activity, which lacks the capacity to solve the 'problems of life' that we observe in the natural world and need not follow the same path of generalisation which the sciences follow.

On those areas he did see as natural science, he wanted us to be able to explain things in better terms than theirs, but saw this as a futile endeavour since the real problems lie beyond language. He said "if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all" (*Ibid.,* 4.11). It is evident that for Wittgenstein, science could only go so far; for all its

marvelled explanations there would still remain a realm for which we have no explanation.

The relation between philosophy and physics has been discussed thus far in mostly abstract terms. What may be rewarding is to consider the actual method behind the two. For instance, sceptical lines of investigation have been used to ask whether gravity might provide clues as to the make-up of the universe, rather than being a single force which determines the movement of particles of matter towards one another. We have also taken ethical problems and attempted to form scientific ways of looking at them which make it easier to find the best outcome, the most correct way of looking at them and so on. Clearly these areas already benefit from the use of physics and philosophy in harmony. Practical combination of the two areas already exists, though we can see that philosophy need not become a science for either discipline to learn from the other.

Physics approximately takes what we observe and explains it. It puts observables down to non-observables, and boils down complex phenomena to their core premises, so that we may understand them and their origins in the most purely accurate way. This mechanism is mirrored in philosophy, because what philosophy does is to explain complex phenomena such as religion, science or ethics from the ground up. Clearly the two are related, and clearly they have points of crossover in their aims and their achievements, but this doesn't necessarily mean we have to combine them into a single area of academia.

I do not believe that philosophy should become a science. I think that to include philosophy in this remit is a myopic and unnecessary. A number of the merits of doing so already exist in both areas and the merging of these subjects may in fact lead to over-association of philosophical investigation with purely scientific goals. Its position in the arts holds the benefit that the research carried out may have investigative, analytical aims but the outcome of such research can be held for its own merit, and sought as such, without the inevitable descent that scientific research so often suffers, becoming subservient to the wants of the elite, eventually

reaching the point where this vice becomes the requirement for sponsorship.

Ogden, C.K (ed.), Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Translated by Charles Kay Ogden, Published by Routledge, 1990

Beauchamp, T. L. (ed.). David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press., 1999

Jamie Sherman is a first year philosophy and physics student from St Mary's College .

Coming up in Phil-Soc during Epiphany term:

27th January, **Prof. Jonardon Ganeri**, University of Sussex on Classical Indian Philosophy. ER149 07.30pm

March 3rd, **Dr. Monica Pearl**, University of Manchester '*The Opera Closet: Ador, Shame and Queer Confessions*'.

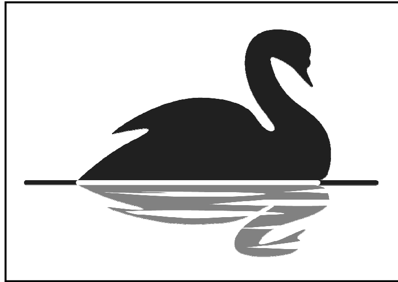
10th March, **Prof. David Sedley**, Christ's College, Cambridge, on Ancient Philosophy ER149 7.30

Date TBC **Prof. Thomas Baldwin**, University of York

Look out for details of our social events!

An Apology:

Critique would like to apologise for the misprint of the authorship of the article 'Does "Morally Right" Simply Mean "Approved of by a Certain Culture?' (Issue 3, p.19). The article was written by Will van der Lande.



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