

# KENTUCKY PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION

## SPRING 2012 MEETING PROGRAM

CENTRE COLLEGE  
CAMPUS CENTER, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR  
EWEN ROOM & ROOM 201  
600 WEST WALNUT STREET  
DANVILLE, KY 40422

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2012

8:30 AM-4:00 PM

8:30-9:00 a.m.	<b>Registration, Breakfast, Welcome</b> <b>Ewen Room</b>	
9:00-10:00 a.m.	<b>Audrey Anton</b> , Western Kentucky University  "Fixed and Flexible Characters: Aristotle on the Permanence and Mutability of Distinct Types of Character"  <b>Commentator:</b> Eva Maria Cadavid, Centre College  <b>Ewen Room</b>	
10:00-11:00 a.m.	<b>Ben Dixon</b> , Stephen F. Austin State University  "A Decision Procedure for Sustainable Development"  <b>Commentator:</b> Robert Sandmeyer, University of Kentucky  <b>Ewen Room</b>	<b>Robert Guerin</b> , University of Kentucky  "Presuppositions and Grounds: Maimon and Fichte on the <i>Quid Facti</i> of the Transcendental Deduction"  <b>Commentator:</b> Chaz DeBord, University of Kentucky  <b>Room 201</b>

11:00-Noon	<p><b>Adam Bowen</b>, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</p> <p>“Perceptual Atomism and the Charge of Tensed Content”</p> <p><b>Commentator:</b> Terry Pence, Northern Kentucky University</p> <p><b>Ewen Room</b></p>	<p><b>Robert Carry Osborne</b>, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign</p> <p>“Why Death Is a Loss: The Asymmetry of Pre-Natal and Post-Mortem Non-Existence”</p> <p><b>Commentator:</b> Clint Jones, University of Kentucky</p> <p><b>Room 201</b></p>
Noon-1:00 p.m.	<p><b>Lunch</b></p> <p><b>Location TBA</b></p>	
1:00-2:00 p.m.	<p><b>Business Meeting: All Are Welcome and Invited</b></p> <p><b>Ewen Room</b></p>	
2:00-3:00 p.m.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Winner of the 2012 KPA Student Essay Contest</b></p> <p><b>Harry Chalmers</b>, Centre College</p> <p>“On the Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism: Exploring the Role of Choice”</p> <p><b>Commentator:</b> Audrey Anton, Western Kentucky University</p> <p><b>Ewen Room</b></p>	
3:00-4:00 p.m.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Keynote Address</b></p> <p><b>Anita Superson</b>, University of Kentucky</p> <p>“Moral Bindingness”</p> <p><b>Ewen Room</b></p>	

## ABSTRACTS

**Audrey Anton, Western Kentucky University**

**“Fixed and Flexible Characters: Aristotle on the Permanence and Mutability of Distinct Types of Character”**

Scholars often try to reconcile two main claims thought to be held by Aristotle: characters are *states*, which are fixed dispositions, and it is possible to change one's character. In this paper, I shall argue that while both claims are true, each is *true* of one pair of the four character types than it is of the other pair. Fundamentally, each character type involves significant (somewhat rigid) habituation *and* it is possible for one to change from any of the four character types. However, virtue and vice are the truly fixed character states and continence and incontinence are fundamentally flexible. I shall argue that the manner in which change is possible for each pair mutually distinguishes them.

**Adam Bowen, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

**“Perceptual Atomism and the Charge of Tensed Content”**

Christoph Hoerl (2009) defends two theses regarding temporal experience: (1) the content of a temporal experience is tenseless; and (2) a temporal experience is of the same temporal extent as the event one is directly experiencing. These two claims are meant to provide constraints on any phenomenological account of the content and nature of temporal experience. In §1, I argue, against Hoerl, that temporal experience can have either tenseless or present progressive content; and offer a revision of (1) so as to incorporate progressive content. In §2, I proceed by marking the distinction between two ways of interpreting the specious present doctrine: atomism and molecularism. Hoerl charges atomism with a commitment to tensed content, and claims that only molecularism is compatible with both his constraints. In §3, I outline a strategy for defending atomism against the charge of tensed content, and argue that (2) is false and consequently is not a general constraint on accounts of temporal experience.

**Harry Chalmers, Centre College**

**♦Winner of the 2012 KPA Student Essay Contest♦**

**“On the Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism: Exploring the Role of Choice”**

In this paper I argue that free will and determinism are incompatible. I begin by explaining a presupposition of any reasonable definition or account of free will: namely, choice. That is, if we have free will, then we must be able to choose in some sense, and if we are not able to choose, then we do not have free will. I

then argue that a necessary condition of choice is the existence of multiple possible futures. Because determinism precludes multiple possible futures, determinism is incompatible with choice and, by extension, free will. I conclude the essay by responding to two objections: first, that my argument fails to take into account a relevant interpretation of “physical possibility,” and second, that it is not necessary for us to break a law of nature in order to act otherwise than we are determined.

**Ben Dixon, Stephen F. Austin State University**

### **“A Decision Procedure for Sustainable Development”**

My essay is an environmental ethics piece, and it formulates a moral principle I call *sustainability's golden rule*. This principle, “*We should do unto future generations what we would have had previous generations do unto ours,*” I argue, goes a long way in providing correct moral guidance for sustainable development (i.e., it serves as a reasonable decision procedure for current ethical action toward future generations—those persons who will be affected by our economic development and its attending consumption of resources). In laying out my arguments, the essay proceeds as follows: first, a very basic, oft-privileged definition of sustainable development is put forward; second, I make clear how sustainability's golden rule is formulable from basic moral considerations that explain why sustainable development should be pursued at all; and lastly, I deduce some of the general implications sustainability's golden rule has for sustainable development. Among the problems the paper confronts are (1) the lack of intergenerational reciprocity that seemingly plagues any use of a golden rule variation to guide conduct toward future generations; and (2) the problematics associated with right action towards future generations, given the supposed unknowability of what those generations will value.

**Robert Guerin, University of Kentucky**

### **“Presuppositions and Grounds: Maimon and Fichte on the *Quid Facti* of the Transcendental Deduction”**

This essay is an attempt to understand the immediate receptions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Specifically, I turn to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century skeptic Salomon Maimon and his interpretation of the Kantian philosophy that garnered so much respect from Kant, on the one hand, and had an immense influence upon J. G. Fichte, on the other. First of all, then, I here take a close look at Maimon's analysis of Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is in this analysis, I argue, where we can see Maimon's primary contention with the *Critique*, and yet also his own solution to the

problem, which had an immense impact on author of the 1794-95 *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte. Second of all, and in order to see the Maimonian influence in the early Fichte, I argue that Fichte's *das Ich*, insinuated as early as the *Aenesidemus Review*, is a direct response to the problems inherent within Kant's deduction, problems which Maimon was first so keen to point out. The early Fichte was more than familiar with Maimon's analyses of the Kantian philosophy, and this essay is an attempt to see why.

**Robert Carry Osborne, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

### **“Why Death Is a Loss: The Asymmetry of Pre-Natal and Post-Mortem Non-Existence”**

There are philosophers who hold that death should not be conceived of as a loss. These philosophers suggest that if we see non-existence after death as a loss, we must also see our non-existence before birth as a loss, since it also robs us of a time that we could have been alive. Thus, they argue that there is a symmetry between pre-natal and post-mortem non-existence, and that since we don't consider the former a loss, we should not consider the latter to be one. In this paper, I will argue against this view. In doing so, I will consider Stephen Rosenbaum's argument that death is not a loss, and Frederik Kaufman's notion of a “thick” conception of identity. I will show that there exists a genuine asymmetry that separates pre-natal and post-mortem non-existence, making the latter a loss while the former cannot be construed as such.

**Anita Superson, University of Kentucky**

**◆Keynote Address◆**

### **“Moral Bindingness”**

Philosophers have understood the metaethical topic of moral bindingness in different ways. Some take it to mean that moral obligations necessarily give rise to or entail overriding reasons for action, and that a rational person will necessarily act on moral reasons that she believes to exist and believes to override other reasons for action. Others understand it to mean authoritativeness, the view that moral reasons are requirements of reason: they have rational authority such that it is irrational for an agent to fail to act morally. Others understand it to mean that if a rational person believes she has a moral reason or obligation to do something, she is thereby motivated to do it and thereby disposed such that, were she to deliberate about what to do, she would take into account this reason or obligation to count in favor of it. Still others understand it in terms of inescapability, the view that moral reasons are objective in the sense that their application is independent of the agent's desires. This view is held by Kant: moral reasons are categorical imperatives, binding independent of our desires. Philippa Foot famously challenged Kant's view, arguing that if

moral reasons are like Kantian categorical imperatives, there are no moral reasons. I want to try to understand what makes moral reasons binding on us, as rational agents. I examine an argument offered by James Dreier in a recent article. Dreier denies that morality is categorical, but believes that means-ends, or instrumental, reasoning binds categorically. I aim to locate where the bindingness of instrumental reason lies, for Dreier. I then aim to explore what moral reasons must be like, according to Dreier's account, for them to be categorical. I examine some cases—by John McDowell, Margaret Little, and Laurence Thomas—that suggest that moral bindingness might be a matter not just of being compelled by rational argument, by having a certain kind of relation to an argument through which you make a moral reason “your own” not just through rationality, but with emotions.

## **REGISTRATION**

The meeting is open to the public. A \$5 registration fee is required, for both KPA members and nonmembers.

## **DIRECTIONS AND PARKING**

For directions and parking, please visit <http://kentuckyphilosophy.blogspot.com/>.

## **HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS**

For hotel accommodations, please visit <http://kentuckyphilosophy.blogspot.com/>.

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## **ABOUT THE KPA**

For the most updated version of the program and more information about the KPA in general, please visit <http://kentuckyphilosophy.blogspot.com/>.

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- ✚ Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Mansoh, Immediate Past KPA President.
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