

Twenty-sixth Annual Conference  
of the  
**Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary  
World**



University of Central Arkansas  
Conway, AR

July 18-23, 2019  
Twenty-sixth Annual Conference  
of the  
**Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary World**

University of Central Arkansas  
Conway, AR

**Program Chairs**

R. Paul Churchill, George Washington University (ret.)

Taine M. Duncan, University of Central Arkansas

Christian Matheis, Guilford College

**Housing Coordinator**

Taine M. Duncan

**Society Executive Committee**

Director	Christian Matheis	Guilford College
Treasurer	Eileen Churchill	Johns Hopkins University

Secretary	Robert Paul Churchill	George Washington University
Webmaster	Eric Grey	National University of Natural Medicine
Co-Moderators, Eastern Division	Andra Jensen Dominick Cooper	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill University of Pennsylvania
Moderator, Central Division	S. West Gurley	Sam Houston State University
Moderator, Pacific Division	Lindsey Whittaker	University of Washington
Journal Co-Editor	Taine Duncan	University of Central Arkansas
Journal Co-Editor	Geoff Pfeifer	Worcester Polytechnic Institute

**Institutional Sponsors:**

University of Central Arkansas

Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting  
of the  
Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary World

**“The Future of Inclusion”**

July 18-23, 2019 at the University of Central Arkansas  
Conway, AR

◇ **Thursday, July 18 (Travel Day)**

**1:00-4:00 pm**                      **Check-in and Registration in New Hall**

**4:30-10:00**                      **Welcome Reception in Hall of Fame Room**  
(Food and beverages will be available)

◇ **Friday, July 19**

**7:00-9:00AM**                      **Breakfast: Christian Cafeteria**

**10 AM-12:15 PM**                      **Opening Session (Moderator: Paul Churchill)**

- 10-10:45 Christian Matheis, ““Nobody””
- 10:45-11:30 Karen Lancaster, *Joe Frank Jones III Memorial Graduate Student Essay Award*, “The Robotic Touch: Why We Shouldn’t Prefer Human Nurses to Carebots”
- 11:30-12:15 Charlie Harvey, “Not Part: Reflections on the Very Idea of Inclusion”

**12:15-1:00**

**Lunch: Christian Cafeteria**

**2 PM-5:30 PM**

**Afternoon Panel (Moderator: Christian Matheis)**

- 2-2:45 Ralph Ellis, “Living at the Edge of Nihilism: The Phenomenology of Xenophobic Authoritarianism”
- 2:45-3:30 Paul Churchill, “Toleration, Inclusivity, and the Democratization of Knowledge”
- 3:30-4 *Coffee/Tea Break*
- 4-4:45 Latavian Johnson, *Outstanding Student of 2019 Award*, “Pop-A-Wheelie on the Zeitgeist: Hip Hop as an Institution”

**5:00-6:00**

**Dinner: Christian Cafeteria**

**6:45-7:45**

**Evening Panel (Moderator: Jack Weir)**

**6:45-7:45** Sharon Mason, “Survivor Standpoints: Evaluating Standpoint Theory Through Research on Modern Slavery”

**8:00-TBA**

**Reception**

**◇ Saturday, July 20**

**7:00-7:45**

**Continental Breakfast: Hall of Fame Room**

**8:00-6:00**

**Excursion Day:** All day trip to the renowned Crystal Bridges Museum (with box lunches)

**6:00-6:30**

**Dinner: Christian Cafeteria**

◇ **Sunday, July 21**

**8:00-10:00**

**Continental Breakfast: Hall of Fame Room**

**10:00 AM- 12:15 PM**

**Morning Panel: (Moderator: Charlie Harvey)**

10-10:45 Stanley Konecky, “The Inclusiveness of Kantian Ethics”

10:45-11:30 Peter Mehl, “Jonathan Haidt’s Moral Psychology and Possibilities for an Inclusive American Polity”

11:30-12:15 Ray Kolcaba, “Freedom, Universal Surveillance, and the Life of the Mind”

**12:15-1:00**

**Lunch: Christian Cafeteria**

**2:00-5:00 PM**

**Afternoon Workshop:** “Applied Philosophy and the Future of Inclusion,” with students from LEAD Leadership Studies PhD Program

**5:00-6:30 PM**

**Dinner: Christian Cafeteria**

**7:30-TBD**

**Social Gathering**

◇ **Monday, July 22**

**7:00-9:00AM**

**Breakfast: Christian Cafeteria**

**10-12:15 PM**

**Morning Panel: (Moderator: Taine Duncan)**

10-10:45 SPCW Planning Session: Future Conference Themes and Sites

10:45-11:30 Jeremy Wisnewski, “Criticism and Clarification: A Wittgensteinian Approach to the #Metoo Movement”

11:30-12:15 Jack Weir, “On the Limits of Inclusiveness: Social Reality, External Realism, and Truth”

**12:35-1:00**

**Lunch: Christian Cafeteria**

**2:00-4:45**

**Afternoon Panel (Moderator: Ray Kolcaba)**

2-2:45 Nick Brasovan, “Wealth, Harmony, and Inclusion in Confucian Management Philosophy”

2:45-3:30 Taine Duncan, “The Potential of Abjection: A Feminist Aesthetic Reading of *Wetlands* (2013) as an Exploration of the Power of the Corporeally Grotesque”

3:30-4 *Coffee/Tea Break*

4-4:45 Chris Davidson, “Foucault on Pedagogy: Kant’s Teaching as Governing Others Versus Wollstonecraft’s Education as Self-Cultivation”

**5:00-6:00**

**Dinner: Christian Cafeteria**

**7:00-TBD**

**Reception at the home of Charles and Jeanne Harvey**

◇ **Tuesday, July 23**

**7:00-9:00**

**Breakfast: Christian Cafeteria**

**9:00-11:00**

**SPCW Annual Business Meeting**  
(All are welcome!)

**11:00-1:00**

**Lunch (Christian Cafeteria) and Closing**

Safe Travels!

## Biographies and Abstracts

**Nicholas S. Brasovan** ([nbrasovan@uca.edu](mailto:nbrasovan@uca.edu)) Nick is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Central Arkansas, where he focuses his teaching and research on Chinese philosophies. He is the recipient of a Fulbright Senior Scholar award for research in China (2018-2019), and he is author of numerous articles and a book on Chinese

and comparative philosophy. Nick earned a B.A. in philosophy from Purdue University, and he earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Hawai‘i

### **“Wealth, Harmony, and Inclusion in Confucian Management Philosophy”**

This presentation maintains that Confucianism can be a viable management theory in the contemporary world. Confucianism, with its emphasis on ritual propriety and harmony, stresses inclusion in the market place and inclusion in the work place. Based on classical sources, this discussion shows that Confucianism is consistent with the pursuit of wealth, so long as the wealth is attained and shared in an inclusive manner. Second, it shows that Confucian concepts of ritual propriety and harmony can be adopted and adapted as a methodological ideal for cultivating inclusive experiences of flourishing.

---

**Paul Churchill** ([Robert.Paul.Churchill@gmail.com](mailto:Robert.Paul.Churchill@gmail.com)) Along with Joe Frank Jones, Charlie Harvey, Ray Kolcaba, and Jack Weir, Paul was a founding member of SPCW and served as its first director. Most of his academic career was at George Washington University, from which he retired in June 2017 as Romeo Elton Professor of Natural and Moral Philosophy. Among his published works are *Human Rights and Global Diversity* (Routledge, 2006) and *Women in the Crossfire: Understanding and Ending Honor Killing* (Oxford, 2018).

### **“Toleration, Inclusivity, and the Democratization of Knowledge”**

This paper argues for the need for a new approach to protecting the inclusivity of a liberal democracy from the intolerance of hate groups, supremacists, and nationalists. Toleration is required as a *modus vivendi* as groups contend over incompatible goals and compete for recognition, but it is even more important as a virtue among democratic citizens. Yet, line drawing is necessary, however difficult and imperfect; inclusivity, liberty the exercise of human rights, and even toleration itself cannot exist if the “intolerable” is tolerated. What counts as intolerable is not subjectively defined, nor dependent on the relative perspectives of particular groups, however. I show why conditions beyond our control, differences in race, sexual identity, and ethnicity, for example, cannot be objects of intolerance. In addition, I rely on neuroscientific research on the generation of fear and enmity, and the generation of affective biases and stereotypes, as well as the ways these processes might be regulated. Greater toleration and inclusivity will arise, so I argue, from democratizing knowledge—about how intolerance arises, of the ways it can be averted and toleration fostered. In addition, protecting inclusivity requires

that new knowledge be democratized in other ways; by limiting terms in office, for instance, or imposing controls on technology used to produce malicious computational propaganda such as “deepfake” videos.

---

**Christopher Davidson** ([cmdavidson@bsu.edu](mailto:cmdavidson@bsu.edu)) Chris teaches at Ball State University. His research interests derive primarily from his work on Foucault and Spinoza, extending to the history of ethics, Early Modern ethics and politics, concrete practices of ethical self-improvement, and aesthetics. He is currently developing a book proposal on education and ethics in Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Kant, and Wollstonecraft.

**“Foucault on Pedagogy: Kant’s Teaching as Governing Others Versus Wollstonecraft’s Education as Self-Cultivation”**

This talk applies Foucault’s reading of the Ancients to Early Modern figures. Kant’s *On Education* argues that reason (and so morality) is absent in children and must be produced by external “discipline”; that teachers must use inclinations like shame to motivate children; that habitual “character” is essential to morality; and that character, once formed, is nearly impossible to change. These ideas seem to contradict his *Groundwork*. Further, by ignoring self-directed subject formation, Kant cedes tasks of moral improvement to authorities. Contrasts are then drawn with Wollstonecraft’s self-directed, empowering, and socially beneficial pedagogy.

---

**Taine Duncan** ([tduncan@uca.edu](mailto:tduncan@uca.edu)) Taine is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of the Interdisciplinary Gender Studies Minor Program at the University of Central Arkansas. She has recently taken over as Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion. She has given over 40 presentations on philosophy, from peer-reviewed international presentations to community presentations for engaging philosophy outside academia. She is the co-editor of the *Journal: Philosophy in the Contemporary World* and serves on the board of the Asian Studies Development Program Alumni Association, which hosts an annual conference. She is currently working on two authored books and one edited book. She is committed to bringing philosophical thinking to real-world practice and engagement.

**"The Potential of Abjection: A Feminist Aesthetic Reading of *Wetlands* (2013) as an Exploration of the Power of the Corporeally Grotesque"**

Feminist thinkers have grappled with the notion of the grotesque across theoretical genres and representations. From philosopher Julia Kristeva's (1982) work on the horror of the abject feminine, to artist Ewa Kuryluk's (1987) work on the art historical importance of the feminine grotesque, to cultural theorist Mary Russo's (1994) work on modernity and the grotesque in film, feminist scholars have historically recognized that women's bodies function as sites and representations of disgust, fear, loathing, and fascination. As cultural production shifted in the postmodern age, many feminists began to deconstruct the relationships between epistemology, embodiment, and patriarchal fear in grotesque representations of femininity. Some theorists even suggested that there might be a sort of empowerment attendant with the confrontational power and suggestive mutability of grotesquerie. Philosopher Rosi Braidotti, for example, argues in her books *Metamorphoses: Toward a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002) and *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2011) that the very factors that have made the feminine body into an object of horror also push bodies beyond the limitations of static, stagnant, and anthropocentric being. Artists such as Casey Jenkins challenge us to rethink our squeamishness at the grotesque. Her performance piece "Vaginal Knitting" (2013) challenged spectators to confront why the feminine is grotesque: is it the hidden-ness, the cyclical nature of menstruation, the idea of the possibility of reproduction? The intersection of art and theory gives many feminists the space to examine the history of misogynist disgust while also challenging us to rethink the very potentiality of embodiment, with all of its attendant messiness.

Despite the theoretical importance of the feminine grotesque, and its high art representations, contemporary popular culture regularly shies away from disgust and abjection. Filmic roles for women, particularly young heterosexual women, downplay representations of embodiment that challenge audiences to confront the grotesque. In fact, much cinematic sex and explicit representation sanitize the female body, turning it into an object of sexual gratification. *Wetlands* does quite the opposite. In my paper, I argue that *Wetlands* both confronts the feminine grotesque, and owns the image. Further, the film demonstrates the grotesque as a site of metamorphoses; Helen embraces a disgusting and horrific relationship with her body as she transitions into early adulthood. Beginning with theoretical and operational definitions, I explore how the media of film provides insight into the concept of the feminine grotesque. Tracing a history of theory and art of the grotesque, I argue that *Wetlands* continues the legacy, while providing a contemporary and timely update.

---

**Ralph D. Ellis** ([Ralphellis@windspring.com](mailto:Ralphellis@windspring.com)) Ralph received his PhD at Duquesne University and a postdoctoral M.S. at Georgia State University. He has taught at Clark Atlanta University since 1985, and is interested in integrating the social sciences with the philosophy of mind. His various books in this area are listed at the Ralph D. Ellis page of Amazon.com. Ellis co-authored with Natika Newton [How the Mind Uses the Brain](#) (2010), and is Co-Editor with Peter Zachar of

the John Benjamin's Consciousness & Emotion book series (see [www.benjamins.nl/jbp](http://www.benjamins.nl/jbp)). Ellis is now trying to

integrate enactive consciousness theory with moral and social philosophy, with relevance to our current era of "alternative facts." The new book, The Moral Psychology of Internal Conflict (Cambridge 2018) is an attempted beginning in that direction.

### **Living at the Edge of Nihilism: The Phenomenology of Xenophobic Authoritarianism"**

One way to approach the phenomenology of ethnocentrism, ethnic hatred, and "othering" worldviews in general is to think of them as a kind of partial value nihilism, since the value of some others is nihilated, but not the value of all. By comparison, a more clear-cut instance of hatred is also instructive: the hatred involved in cases of "sudden murder," where the perpetrator stands to gain nothing from the crime, and makes no attempt to avoid detection; apparently, the intrinsic value of both victim *and* perpetrator are nihilated in the instant when the blow is struck. Similarly, in the case of value-nihilating "othering," the *intrinsic* value of valuing creatures *per se* fails to be felt, and instead feelings about the *instrumental* value of people (including oneself) are substituted. A further useful comparison is to clinical depression, where values can be felt strongly enough to motivate action primarily at the point when some vivid imagery is present to trigger the value feeling – late night TV ads featuring photos of starving children or abused animals. As is similar with the ethnocentrist, the value of others is felt only when the other in question is close enough at hand to offer vivid enough imagery to trigger empathy, especially the imagery of close friends and relatives. In all these instances, the feeling of the intrinsic value of valuing creatures fails to be universalized, and thus there is a more or less partial value nihilism. The partial nihilist then attempts to compensate for the failure to feel the intrinsic value of valuing creatures by positing "grand scheme" values such as an authoritarian political or religious movement, which in turn further reduces each individual to an instrumental value in the service of the overarching "grand scheme" as the ultimate intrinsic value relative to which everyone is to be evaluated. Since such evaluation involves only instrumental value, the intrinsic value of all is largely nihilated, except where vivid enough imagery can trigger specific empathy feelings.

---

**Charles W. Harvey** ([charlesh@uca.edu](mailto:charlesh@uca.edu)) Charlie is Professor of Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Central Arkansas. He has published two books and over 40 articles on phenomenology, existential philosophy and the self and social criticism, as well as a number of works of philosophy through personal narrative. His most recent essays, both presented at former SPCW conferences, are titled "Human(un)kind and the Rape of the

World” and “Insatiable: Why Everything is Not Enough.” Charlie is a founding member of SPCW.

### **“Not Part: Worries and Concerns about the Very Idea of Inclusion”**

In this essay I struggle with, and raise a problem for, the very idea of inclusion. My problem will have a transcendental, phenomenological basis that, however, has dialectical, permeable relations to social and political circumstances. I will argue that the roots of the sense of exclusion lie in human consciousness itself and that no social, political system can fully alleviate this condition, nor should it want to lest we lose what makes us uniquely human. That said, I will argue that some social, political systems are better than others at lessening the pain and misery that accompanies too strong, persistent and pervasive a sense of exclusion. Partly, no doubt, because I have been made by western, liberal, democratic values and processes, I understand “better” political systems to be systems that maximize the possibility of group assembly and individual style, that allow equal opportunity under the law, *and that* educate its citizens for minimal fear and maximal appreciation of diverse and varied forms of life (as limited by Mill’s harm principle or some variant thereof). Even in such ideal conditions, however, being *not part*, feeling *not part*, will always be part of what and who each of us is. This is extremely important to remember, I will argue, because equating the problems of political equality with those of self-identity, as if political equality would be a simple solution to problems of self-identity, distorts many peoples’ understanding of the battle for equality under the law and is the source, I think, of much resentment and resistance to inclusivity movements.

---

**Latavian Johnson** ([ljohson@cub.uca.edu](mailto:ljohson@cub.uca.edu)) Latavian is a student at the University of Central Arkansas entering his last semester in the Fall. He is pursuing a degree in Philosophy, with a double minor in Theatre and Creative Writing. He is the Outstanding Philosophy Student of 2019 with a 4.0 in his Philosophy Major. His hobbies include writing and performing. Most recently, he took part in the Youth Theatre of Central Arkansas as an assistant, mentoring students from ages 10-16 and preparing 2 hour-long plays. After graduation, Latavian wants to take some time off to pursue art, but will most likely return to school to study Philosophy.

### **“Pop-A-Wheelie on the Zeitgeist: Hip Hop as an Institution”**

In *Pop-A-Wheelie on the Zeitgeist: Hip Hop as an Institution*, I argue that Hip Hop can be used as a tool to transform and expand Black identity. Hip Hop is an institution that is susceptible to man-made flaws and prejudices, just like any other institution. It can never be removed from the

backdrop of capitalism, nor is it isolated from the racism and sexism in the world. First, I discuss how rapper Lil Uzi Vert helps reshape Black identity by rejecting gender norms, embracing the occult, and aligning himself with Rock n' Roll. Second, I explain why rapper ILoveMakonnen coming out as gay in 2017 helped reshape ideas about queer Black identity. Lastly, I'll discuss rapper Rico Nasty's impact on Hip Hop, providing a perspective that unites all women, and expands the Black woman identity.

---

**Ray Kolcaba** ([rkolcaba@gmail.com](mailto:rkolcaba@gmail.com)) I am a founding member of SPCW. I taught at Cuyahoga Community College for my career. I have been retired since 2008. Among my written pieces are two books: The Brilliant Side of Growing Up and The Human Future: Seven Philosophical Dialogs. Last year I wrote a mystery, The Backside of Thursday. It illustrates the elusiveness of historical explanation. I am presently working on the concept of wisdom--- a biggie from ancient Greece that has been oddly neglected. I enjoy traveling with wife Kathy, painting, and playing the harpsichord (although not well enough).

### **“Freedom, Universal Surveillance, and the Life of the Mind”**

Activities over the long arc of life often require solitude as well as social interaction. I argue that presently the life of the mind is in jeopardy because the new world of cyber environments threatens solitude. I discuss three forces that work to this end: Universal Surveillance, The Cyber-press, and Commercial Circles. Information technology offers new freedom but the devil's bargain imposes ominous controls. I close with Bertrand Russell's views about fruitful monotony.

---

**Stanley Konecky** ([konecgkys@hartwick.edu](mailto:konecgkys@hartwick.edu)) Stanley Konecky is Professor Emeritus, Hartwick College, New York. He presently resides in Richmond, California. Stanley is primarily concerned with any committed dialogue that moves ordinary being, thinking, acting and “teaching” to better understanding of and response to our human condition.

### **“The Inclusiveness of Kantian Ethics”**

Human beings are self-centered in their comprehension of themselves and others. It requires learning to realize that others are no more or less significant. The basic question for a humanistic philosophical ethics then concerns how to bring such naturally self-centered beings to recognize in thought and action the equal significance of their own worth and interest and the worth and interest of others, whether they or others be female or male, people of color or of pinko-grey skin, children, or the full panoply of LGBTQ human persons.

---

**Karen Lancaster** ([Karen.Lancaster@nttingham.ac.uk](mailto:Karen.Lancaster@nttingham.ac.uk)) I am a first year PhD student at the University of Nottingham, England. I have a range of philosophical interests, including epistemology and philosophy of mind, as well as social, ethical, legal and political philosophy. I have enjoyed exploring ethical issues raised by science fiction - robots in particular - for much of my life, and I have previously conducted research into sexbots. My PhD thesis is an examination of ethical relations between humans and care robots which will be used in residential homes for older people. Upon completion of my PhD I hope to pursue an academic career... unless robots have replaced human professors by then!

### **“The Robotic Touch: Why We Shouldn’t Prefer Human Nurses to Carebots”**

An elderly patient in a care home only wants human nurses to provide her care – not robots. If she selected her carers based on skin colour, it would be morally objectionable, but is selection based on species also objectionable? A common response is that it’s not, because humans provide a better standard of care than robots do, making such a choice justifiable. I argue that carebots can provide a standard of care which matches human nurses in practical levels, and they can simulate emotional care – it is thus a mistake to claim that “the human touch” is inherently valuable.

---

**Sharon Mason** ([smason@uca.edu](mailto:smason@uca.edu)) Sharon is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Central Arkansas, where she teaches Theories of Knowledge, Philosophy of Science, Modern Philosophy, and Symbolic Logic. She has diverse research interests, and has written on topics such as reflection and epistemic agency, virtue epistemology, the metaphorical bases of 'perspective'-language, and the epistemology of climate change denial. A significant thread that runs through her research is an effort to understand how to flourish as knowers, especially within the context of flourishing as diverse human beings in a shared world. She also enjoys spending time with family, gardening, and sharing cups of tea.

## **“Survivor Standpoints: Evaluating Standpoint Theory Through Research on Modern Slavery”**

A central claim of standpoint theory is that perspectivalness can be a vital epistemic resource. Rather than viewing the particularity of an individual's social location as a liability to be overcome, standpoint theory offers an account of how some social locations can provide significant epistemic advantages. Of particular importance are methodological prescriptions for leveraging these resources in a research program. Notably, the existence and character of any epistemic advantages that may result from a particular social location are not knowable a priori. Determining whether an epistemic advantage does, in fact, exist for some group requires careful examination of the particular case. In this paper, I explore some of the central claims of standpoint theory within the context of research on modern slavery from the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham, UK. I begin by articulating the core theses of standpoint theory in a way that sidesteps some well-known controversies and highlights the contributions standpoint theory makes to social epistemology. I then offer an analysis of how standpoint theory sheds light on specific instances of knowledge generation by slavery survivors at the Rights Lab. I focus on two contributions to understanding modern slavery that have resulted from survivor-generated research. The first is the development of new definitions of slavery that emphasize the impact of the lived experience of enslaved persons, rather than traditional definitions based on property ownership. The second is a challenge to a common view of therapeutic treatment for slavery survivors that identifies PTSD, anxiety, and depression as standard diagnoses for survivors. A complement and, in some cases, replacement for these diagnoses of mental illness is the recognition that survivors may have an epistemological schema that is highly adaptive for slavery, a schema in which the aim of belief is not truth, but survival.

---

**Christian Matheis** ([cmatheis@guilford.edu](mailto:cmatheis@guilford.edu)) Christian is visiting faculty in Community and Justice Studies in the Department of Justice and Policy Studies at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC. Christian specializes in scholarship and practice that bridge social and political philosophy, ethics, public policy, and direct-action organizing. In particular, his work emphasizes how philosophy of liberation and liberatory movements can play a key role in addressing contemporary ethical and political problems. His teaching and research concentrations include topics such as solidarity, refugees, feminism, race, indigeneity, power and policy, and global justice. In addition to his regular teaching and research, he provides training in areas of human relations facilitation, intergroup dialogue, grassroots direct-action organizing, and on other topics. Christian is presently serving his second consecutive term as Director of the Society for Philosophy in the Contemporary World.

**“Nobody”**

What role does “nobody” play in common sense rhetorical implications, semantics, and philosophical reasoning? Casual use of the term when making generalizations such as, “nobody really knows” or “this benefits nobody” or “she’s a nobody, forget about her” indicates rational set parameters for hypothetical populations. Yet the conceptual context of “nobody” extends to more complex reliance on other modes. Eduardo Galeano writes in his famous poem “Los Nadies”/” The Nobodies,” “[...] The nobodies: nobody’s children, owners of nothing. The nobodies: the no bodies ones, the nobodied, running like rabbits, dying through life, screwed every which way” (1989). Germán Prósperi asserts, the particular figure “nobody” appears as an eccentric form of subjectivity, a paradox that permits subversion of dominant ontological and political definitions. Moreover, Prósperi asserts, the particular figure “nobody” enables a radical re-reading of root Western metaphysics. For anyone who has ever felt like a nobody, the frame has deep importance as an explanatory resource for their societal, interpersonal, and individual experiences. This paper draws on insights by literary and philosophical figures such as Galeano, Prósperi, and others to present a descriptive phenomenology of “nobody,” primarily as a resource for those to whom nobody refers even as it obscures.

---

**Peter J. Mehl** ([peterm@uca.edu](mailto:peterm@uca.edu)) I am Professor of Philosophy & Religion and Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts at UCA. The focus of my scholarship and teaching has been in ethics, religion and culture, and especially Kierkegaard. I have published one book on Kierkegaard and contributed four chapters to edited books. My current focus is philosophy of education, social philosophy and leadership ethics. My most recent publication was “Rethinking Liberalism: Sandel, Nussbaum and the Good Society,” (JPCW, spring 2017)

### **“Jonathan Haidt’s Moral Psychology and Possibilities for an Inclusive American Polity”**

Jonathan Haidt is one of the most philosophically minded of contemporary moral psychologists. I consider his recent book, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, and what light it might shed on our deeply divisive American society, and how we might achieve a more inclusive polity. Haidt, however, often rubs philosophers the wrong way, since he derides reason as the avenue of social healing. I argue that he does not in fact completely disown reason but places it in perspective. Yet his weakness is his effort to try to appeal to all parties and thereby to give up too much of what must be affirmed on the liberal side. Liberals are more likely than conservatives to bring about a more inclusive society.

---

**Jack Weir**, ([j.weir@moreheadstate.edu](mailto:j.weir@moreheadstate.edu)) Jack is Retired Professor of Philosophy, Morehead State University in Kentucky. He earned advanced degrees at Southwestern Baptist Seminary, the University of Chicago, and Rice University. Jack served as a professor at Hardin-Simmons University in Texas before escaping to the lush liberties of Kentucky bluegrass and mountains. He was a founding member of SPCW and the first and founding editor of SPCW's journal Philosophy in the Contemporary World.

**“On the Limits of Inclusiveness: Social Reality, External Realism, and Truth.”**

I'm applying John Searle's analysis, theory, and argument in *The Construction of Social Reality* to the central issue of the conference. In earlier drafts before adding Searle, I attempted on my own to do an analysis of the inclusion-exclusion distinction, found myself making sense but little progress toward a solution, and so turned to Searle. My earlier efforts gave me presence of mind to appreciate Searle. I now intend three parts: (1) The Simple Theory, (2) Complications, or Why the Simple Theory Won't Work, and (3) Toward a Solution (Searle). What I like about Searle is the argument that socially constructed reality (and institutions) and physical reality (studied by the natural sciences) are both real, objective facts subject to epistemic standards of knowledge and truth. Searle's argument for realism (a version of Kant) is not really an argument but an explanation for why an argument is not possible. I expect the paper to inspire discussion from non-objectivists.

---

**J. Jeremy Wisniewski** ([wisniewskij@hartwick.edu](mailto:wisniewskij@hartwick.edu)) Jeremy earns his keep as a Professor of Philosophy at Hartwick College. He has authored or edited twelve allegedly non-fiction books, all of which seem suspicious in retrospect. These include: *Wittgenstein and Ethical Inquiry* (Continuum, 2007), *Understanding Torture* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), *Heidegger: An Introduction* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), and *The Politics of Agency: Toward a Pragmatic Philosophical Anthropology* (Routledge, 2016). He has also edited six books in Blackwell's Philosophy and Pop Culture series.

**“Criticism and Clarification: A Wittgensteinian Approach to the #Metoo Movement”**

While many have argued that Wittgensteinian approaches to moral philosophy can clarify central elements of our moral lives, Wittgenstein is rarely seen as relevant to our efforts to sort out specific moral controversies. Indeed, Herbert Marcuse went so far as to claim that Wittgenstein

advocated complacency and quietism (citing, among other things, Wittgenstein's remark that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is'.) In contrast to this view, in the first part of the paper, I argue that clarificatory approaches to *moral* problems are inherently critical, going beyond how we understand particular issues to the more vexed question of how we *ought* to understand them. In this respect, a Wittgensteinian approach to applied ethics works on the rough ground where the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive language gives way. In many of our evaluative language-games, the blurred line between normative and factual claims can make issues seem intractable. In moral philosophy, and perhaps always, clarification has a critical edge, recommending one way of conceiving an issue (or a value, or a term) over others. While it is true that such approaches cannot 'solve' ethical issues directly, clarifications can change our understanding of the issue itself, revealing our own aspect-blindness.

In the second part of the paper, I argue that attention to the context and evaluative character of our *descriptive* claims can help us understand what's at stake in our debates about race, gender, and sex (what is sometimes called 'identity politics' or is lampooned as 'political correctness'). I examine specifically the efforts of the LGBTQ+ community to introduce new ways of talking about gender, on the one hand, and efforts of the #Metoo movement to critically explore our ideas of 'consent' and 'harassment.' In both cases, simply applying ethical theories will do very little good: the debate is larger concerned with how we *understand the issues themselves*. In this respect, Wittgensteinian critical clarification is essential to making any progress on the issues at all.

---