

Philosophy Graduate
Student Association

21st Annual Graduate
Conference in Philosophy

March 27 & 28, 2014

Keynote Speaker:

Jamie Dreier

of

Brown University

Welcome to the 21th Annual University of Waterloo PGSA Conference

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About the UW Philosophy Department

The Philosophy Department at the University of Waterloo offers both undergraduate and graduate programs. At present, the department consists of 17 full-time faculty members and close to 25 graduate students. The department's officially recognized fields of expertise are Language, Logic and Metaphysics, Ethics and Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Science and Mathematics, and Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science.

About the Conference

At twenty years of age, the Waterloo PGSA Conference is one of the oldest running events on campus. Known and well respected throughout the Ontario region, the Conference attracts high-quality speakers on a diverse set of subjects. Past keynote speakers have included Helen Longino, Patricia Churchland, Lee Smolin, and many other accomplished philosophers.

Schedule

Thursday, March 27
Hagey Hall, Room 373

9:30 Registration and Coffee

10:00 Benjamin Wald (Toronto)

Commentary by Matt Silk

11:00 Steven Coyne (Toronto)

Commentary by Ben Nelson

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Jonathan Vanderhoek (Texas)

Commentary by Dylon McChesney

2:00 Michelle Ciurria (York)

Commentary by Ian MacDonald

6:00 Conference Dinner

at My Thai (King St.)

Friday, March 28
Hagey Hall, Room 334

10:00 Breakfast

11:00 Sébastien Laliberté (Laval)
Commentary by Dylon McChesney

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Joseph Van Weelden (McGill)
Commentary by Jody Tomchishen

2:00 Sara Weaver (Waterloo)

2:45 Coffee Break

3:30 Keynote speaker
Jamie Dreier (Brown)

Thursday, March 27
Hagey Hall, 373

Benjamin Wald (Toronto)

Normative Concepts and Normative Natural Kinds

In his paper “Alternative Normative Concepts” Matti Eklund presents a challenge to a wide range of realist theories of moral semantics. Eklund shows that, even if we provide a realist theory that gives our normative concepts a clear extension, many theories of normative semantics will still allow the possibility that other concepts could exist that play the same normative role but possess a different extension. If this is in fact possible, then it raises the question of how we could justify privileging our own normative concepts over these alternative normative concepts. This possibility threatens to trivialize our normative inquiry by rendering our normative concepts merely parochial. In this paper, I will first lay out the challenge Eklund presents, and explain why it is worrying. Eklund himself thinks that we can look to Ralph Wedgwood’s theory of normative seman-

tics to resolve this worry. I shall argue that Eklund is mistaken in this, and that Wedgwood's theory only pushes the problem back a step. However, I think that we can avoid having our normative inquiry trivialized by this result, and suggest one method to achieve this by invoking the idea that some normative concepts are more natural, and hence carve nature at the normative joints.

Steven Coyne (Toronto)

A Right-that-he-be-ruled account of authority

According to right-to-rule accounts of authority, X has authority over Y if and only if X has the right to be obeyed by Y. In this paper, I modify the right-to-rule account of authority to address recent objections by David Enoch and Joseph Raz. This account also provides the materials for a novel argument against consent theories of political legitimacy.

Jonathan Vanderhoek (Texas)

Analyzing Recalcitrance in the Philosophy of Emotion

Over the last 30 years numerous philosophers have used recalcitrance as a dialectical weapon. They argue that opposing theories of emotion cannot properly explain the phenomenon. Despite this dialectical use, no one has yet provided a clear and convincing account of recalcitrance. In this paper, I offer a detailed analysis. I argue for five necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. This analysis clarifies some of the phenomenon's theoretical significance.

Michelle Ciurria (York)

Solving Doris' Dilemma: Defending Virtue Ethics as Preferable to Utilitarianism and Kantianism

The prominent situationist John Doris argues that situationist psychology impugns Aristotelian virtue ethics because it shows stable virtues to be non-existent, or at least prohibitively difficult to achieve. Maria Merritt counters that Humeanism provides an empirically viable theory of virtue ethics, because it emphasizes the importance of social relationships, which tend to be relatively stable, for cultivating stable dispositions. Howev-

er, she refuses to answer Doris' charge that utilitarianism and Kantianism may be superior to virtue ethics, insofar as they mitigate the role of character in acting morally. Merritt's position is that these theories are not comparable, and so we do not need to choose amongst them. However, I believe that we do need to evaluate these three views, and, as a matter of practical necessity, decide which one deserves our rational endorsement, as this will inform how we decide to live and approach moral challenges. Therefore, in this paper, I provide an empirically viable account of Humean virtue ethics which pits this view against utilitarianism and Kantianism, and ultimately declares virtue ethics the winner. I hold that, contrary to initial appearances, virtue ethics is more compatible with situationist psychology than the alternatives.

Friday, March 28

Hagey Hall, 334

Joseph Van Weelden (McGill)

Immoral Deference

In recent years several philosophers have registered opposition to moral deference. Although their treatments differ in other ways, these authors all base their objections to deference on instrumental worries about its effect on the agent. I here advance a very different kind of argument against this practice. My central claim is that agents are subject to a moral process--requirement which proscribes deference as a method of moral belief--formation. On this basis, deference to moral testimony can plausibly be seen as intrinsically morally wrong. I proceed to show how a prohibition of this kind can be grounded in a broadly Kantian duty of self--respect. This way of accounting for what is wrong with moral deference boasts distinct advantages over the other strategies found in the literature.

Sébastien Laliberté (Laval)

What Action? Dissolving Some Problems About the Individuation of Action

Alan points his gun towards Bob and pulls the trigger. Bob is fatally hit. He is rushed to the closest hospital and dies of his wounds on the next morning. So it seems like we can truly say that Alan pulled the trigger, shot Bob and killed him. But how many *actions* did Alan perform? Did he perform only one that can be described in different ways or did he perform at least three distinct actions? Three main solutions have been proposed to the problem of the individuation of action and I will argue that they all fail because they all rest on what I believe to be a doubtful assumption, namely that agency can “travel” between different events. After assessing the three main accounts, I try to show that any action must end when the agent performing it ceases to have any control over subsequent events.

Sara Weaver (Waterloo)

Assessing the economic metaphor in Robert Trivers's Parental Investment Theory

Within evolutionary theory, the dynamics of evolutionary processes are thought to be metaphorically akin to the dynamics of a political or market economy. In this paper, I use Paul Bartha's normative approach to the assessment of analogical reasoning to evaluate Robert Trivers's analogical argument that likens the evolutionary processes of parenting behaviour to processes in a market economy. I argue that Trivers's analogical argument does not stand up against the assessment criteria of Bartha's model. In light of this, I discuss how Trivers's theory is an outdated and simplistic way to conceptualize the evolution of parenting and mating behaviour.

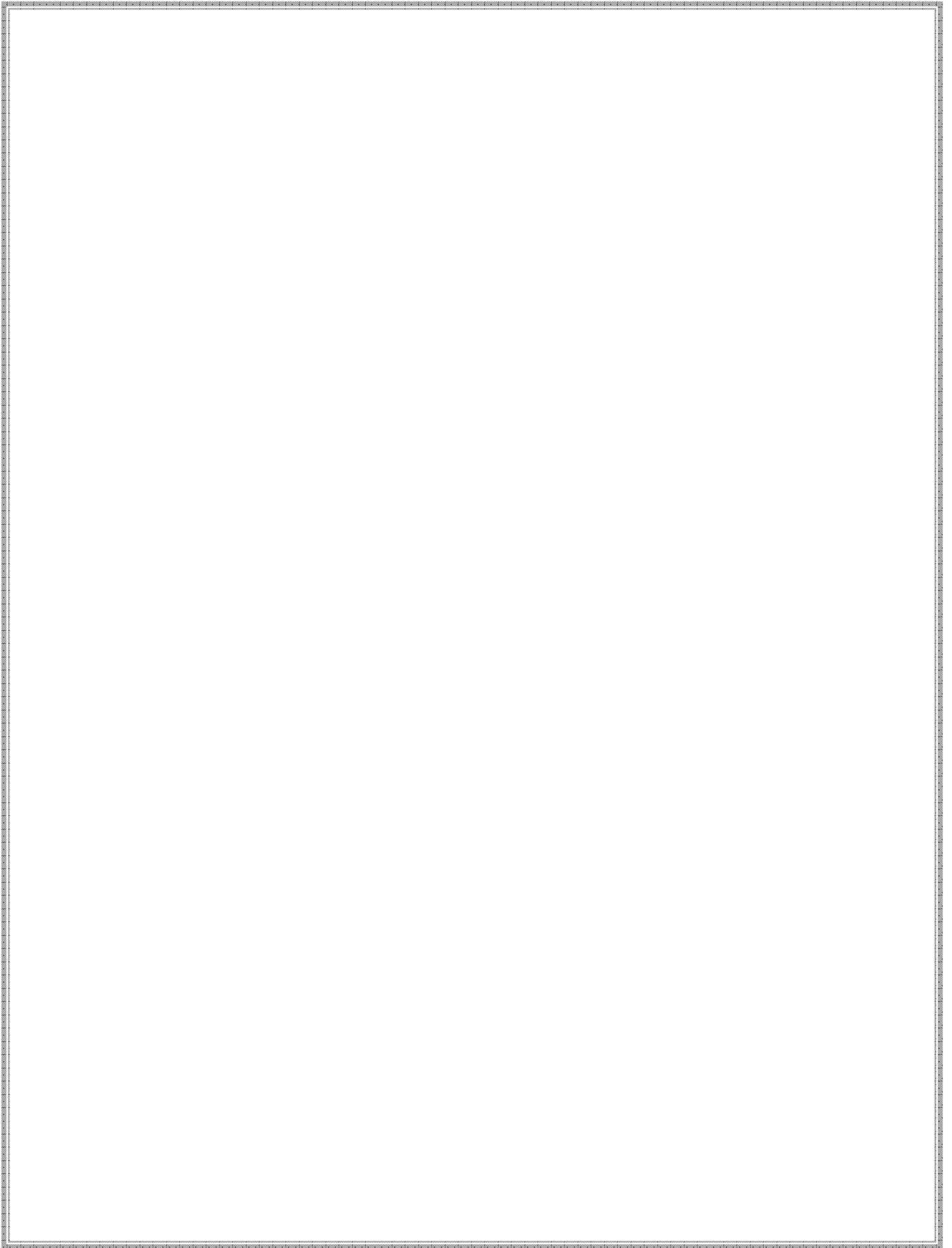
Keynote

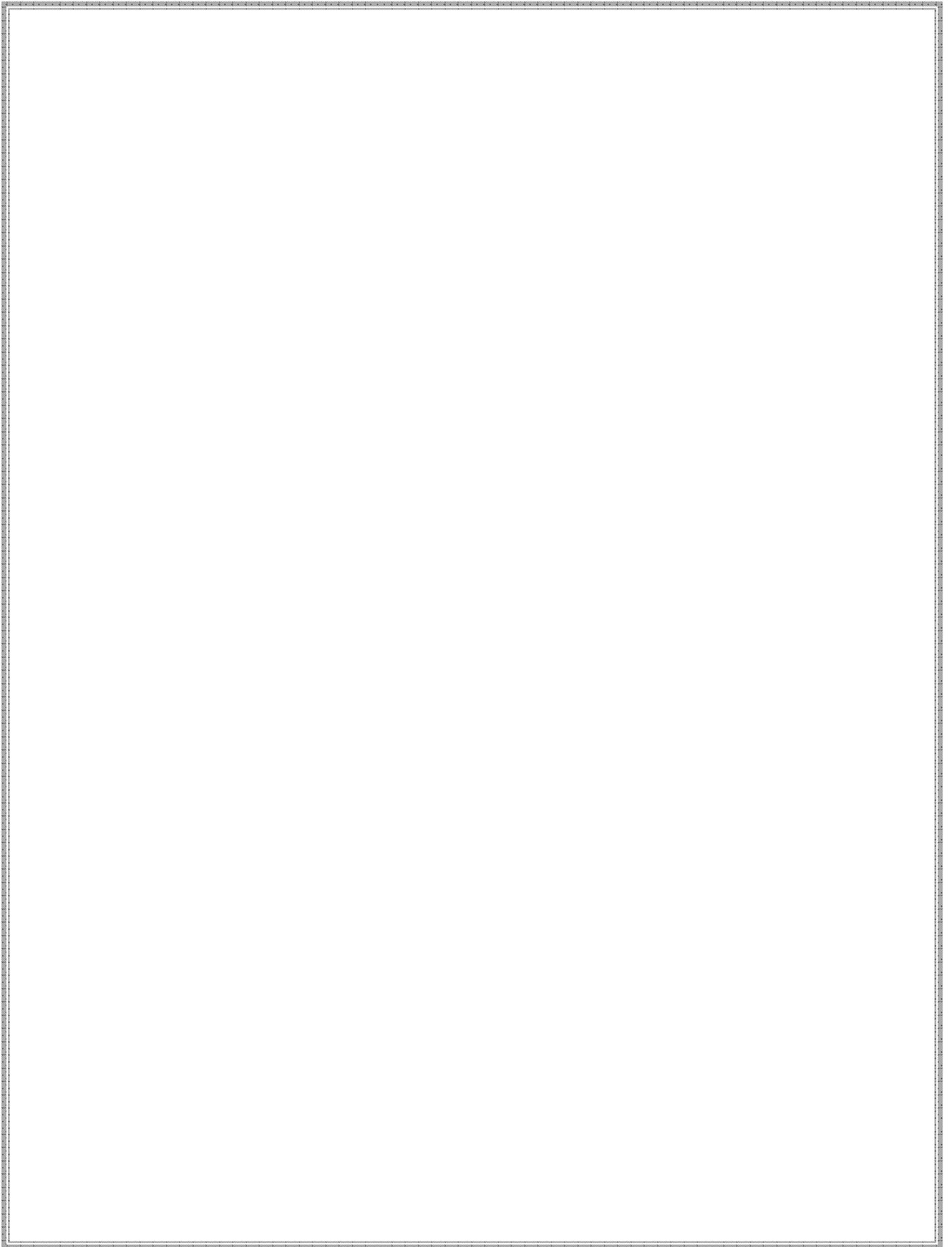
Jamie Dreier (Brown)

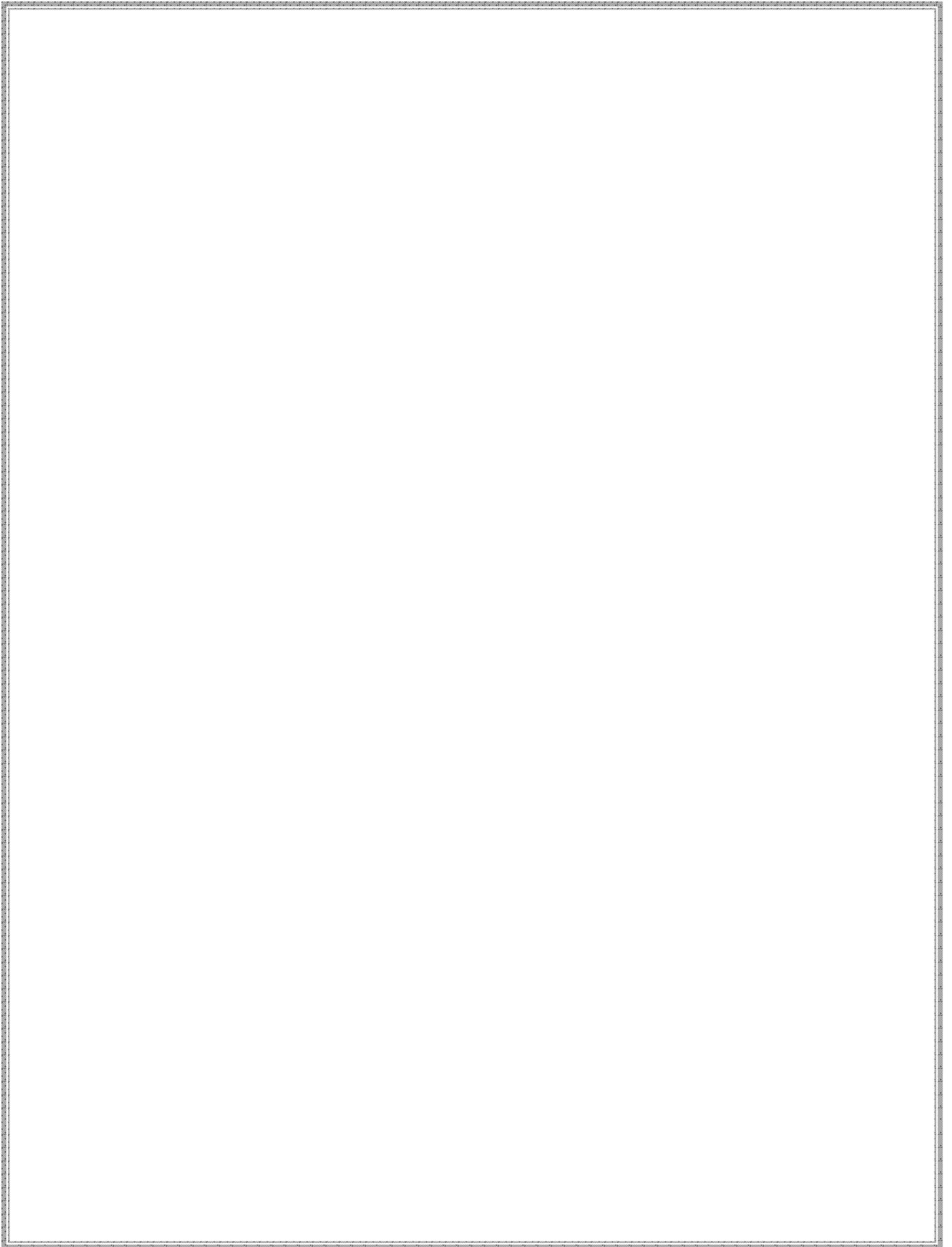
*The Normative Explanation of
Normativity*

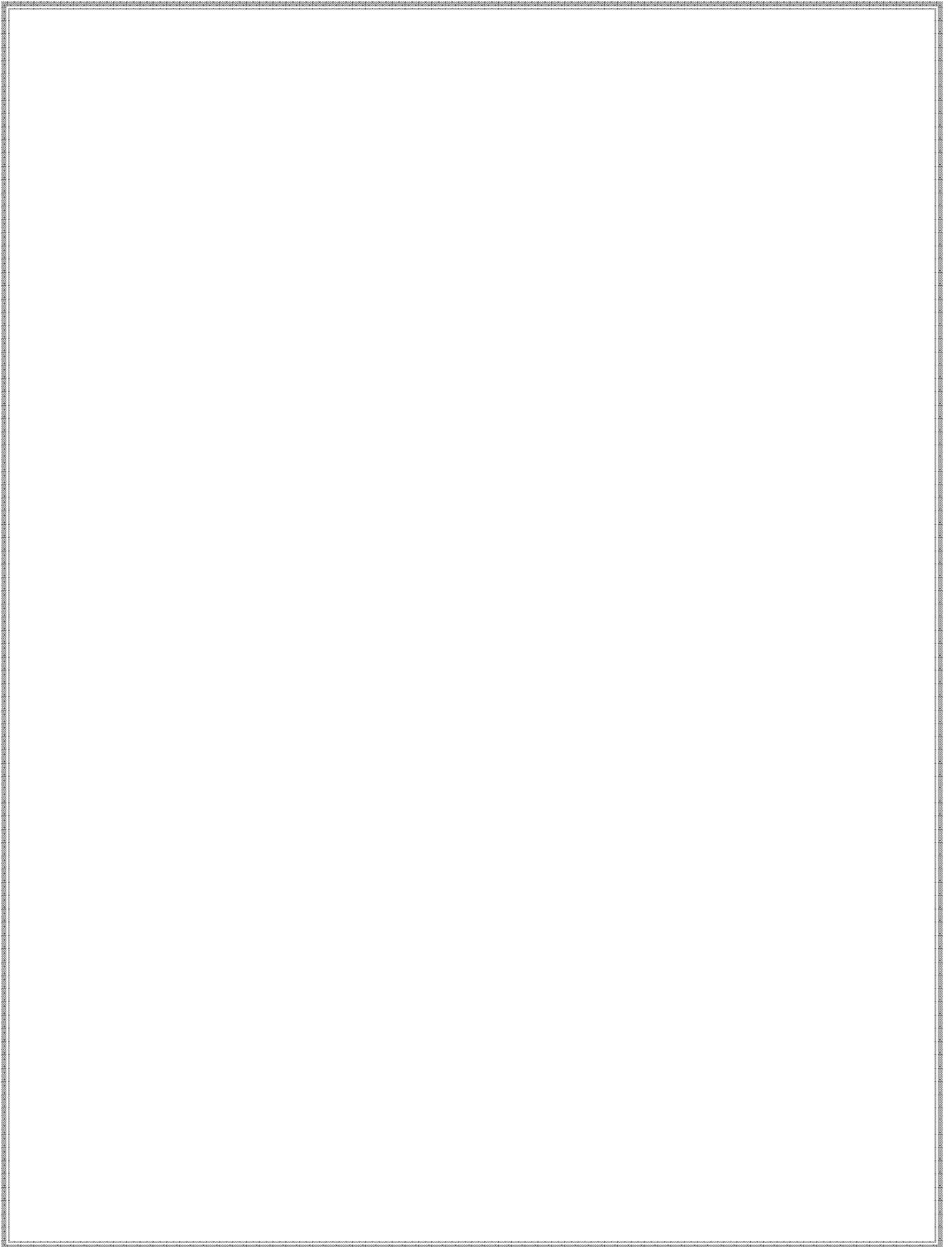
Expressivists think normativity is explained by a theory of what normative expressions mean, which in turn is explained by what state of mind we express by using them. Many philosophers think that meaning is normative, and also that the attribution of intentional states to people is normative. Is there a problem with combining these two views? Do expressivists get trapped in a circle of explanation if they accept the normativity of meaning?

Notes









The PGSA Organizing committee gratefully acknowledges the support of the following organizations, without whom the conference would not be possible:



UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
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Graduate Studies Endowment Fund



The Canadian Philosophical Association
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