

1. Friday September 23, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C122

“The Politics of Ontology: Why Philosophy Should Care about the Paranormal.”

Kimberly Engels, Dept. of Philosophy, Molloy University

In a recent conference at Rice University called “Archives of the Impossible,” when speaking about the new research archives on paranormal phenomena at Rice, Jeffrey Kripal stated, “Such a project is based on the wager that new theory lies hidden in the anomalous, that the paranormal appears in order to mock and shock us out of our present normal thinking. Seen in this way, psychical and paranormal phenomena become the still unacknowledged, unassimilated Other of modern thought, the still unrealized future of theory, the fleeing signs of a consciousness not yet become culture.” Paranormal phenomena, such as UFO sightings, close encounters, telepathic communication, apparitions, etc., have long been seen as unrespectable topics of academic discourse. In this paper I argue this is due to what Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack called “the politics of ontology” – in which a concentrated elite group establish what kind of things can and cannot happen in society, and what phenomena or experiences can be considered real. In the context of the Western academy, we have established that extraterrestrial encounters are things that simply do not occur, that interdimensional cryptids do not exist, that parapsychology is a “pseudoscience”, that apparitions of loved ones or revered ones are not real. I argue that the politics of ontology is a way of

5. Friday, November 18, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C122

“Idealization in Greek Geometry.”

Justin Humphreys, Dept. of Philosophy, Villanova University

Some philosophers hold that a fundamental epistemic norm is that we ought to believe our best scientific theories. What is it about a theory that rationally requires us to believe it? Focusing on the case of ancient Greek geometry, in this talk I argue that a theory can command belief through idealization, a deliberate manipulation of observed facts that increases the epistemic resources of that theory, namely its explanatory power or tractability. Drawing on three examples from Ancient Greek geometry, I argue that intentionally incorrect representations of phenomena can contribute to a correct understanding of those phenomena and allow us to make otherwise impossible predictions about them. The lesson is that questioning the epistemic norm need not be met with fist banging: offering an account of how idealization works makes the epistemic norm plausible, without directly appealing to that norm. This talk should be of interest to those working in ancient philosophy and in philosophy of science, as well as to philosophers and scientists who are open to thinking about epistemological problems from an historical point of view.

6. Friday, December 2, 2022, 3:00pm in CBC C122

“Carnap's Politically Engaged Logical Pluralism.”

Noah Friedman-Biglin, Dept. of Philosophy, San Jose State University

The thought that we can be 'pluralist' about logic – that there are many formal systems, each of which has a claim at being 'logic' properly so called – has received quite a bit of recent attention. The locus classicus of this view, since the earliest days of analytic philosophy, can be found in Carnap's 'principle of tolerance'. Clarifying the principle of tolerance is the focus of this first section of this paper. There, I will argue that the principle should be understood as widely as possible and highlight some of the more radical conclusions that Carnap draws. In section two, I discuss the reasons Carnap has for adopting this brand of pluralism and argue that they are based in the Vienna Circle's "Scientific World-Conception" – a platform of philosophical commitments which set the direction for the Circle's philosophical investigations as well as a program of social change. What emerges from this discussion is the often