

Graduate Workshop on Fiction & Philosophy II
Lund University, Department of Philosophy

Thursday October 4th 2018 Room LUX: B339

- 9.00-9.15 Welcome and introduction
- 9.15-10.15 Keynote address: Nora Hämäläinen (Centre for Ethics as Study in Human Value, University of Pardubice) - Sara Lidman's secular reading of original sin'
- In her suite of novels called "Jernbanan", "The Railway" (1977-1985) the Swedish author Sara Lidman 1923-2004 writes one of the great epics of the modernization of Sweden. Her framing is the incorporation of northern Sweden in the railway network and the massive exploitation of the natural riches of Norrland. The story, however, is that of one family, and of one man, Didrik, whose rise and fall is complexly intertwined with these historical events. On a deeper level it is also a story of guilt and sin. I will in this paper discuss how Lidman here gives a secular reading to the Christian theme of original sin, and how this reading (in line with Lidman's intent), can be used to make sense of our complex moral relation to the environmental consequences of modernity.
- 10.15-10.30 Coffee break
- 10.30-11.15 Frits Gävertsson (Lund University) – 'The Cost of Conviction in John Williams's *Stoner*'
- I argue that given a plausible reading of John Williams's *Stoner* (1965) the novel throws light on the demands and cost of pursuing a strategy for self-realisation along Platonic lines which seeks unification through the adoption of a single exclusive end in a manner that emulates the Socratic maieutic teacher. The novel does not explicitly argue either for or against such a strategy but rather vividly depicts its difficulties, appeal, and limitations thus leaving the ultimate evaluation up to the reader.
- 11.20-12.05 Tadej Todorović (University of Maribor) – 'Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*: A Case Study of Thought Experiments in Fiction'
- I will try to show how we can look at literary fiction through the lens of thought experiments (TEs). There have been some attempts in philosophy to drag fiction under the umbrella of thought experiments; the primary motivation for that is to provide an explanation for how fiction, something completely imaginary, can provide epistemic access to genuine knowledge. I will present my view on the relationship between TEs and fiction, which is the idea that some works of fiction either contain or are built upon TEs, and use Le Guin's novel *The Dispossessed* to substantiate my theory.
- 12.05-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-14.45 Diana Neiva (University of Warwick, University of Porto) – '*Scream* as philosophy: between fictional horror and true crime'
- The "film as philosophy" (FAP) hypothesis has been vividly debated in recent Anglo-American philosophy. Carroll (2006) and Wartenberg (2007) support that hypothesis by arguing that some films may philosophize through self-reflection. Wes Craven's *Scream* franchise (1996, 1997, 2000, 2011) established itself as meta-horror cinema by reflecting on the slasher genre. It could be said, then, that the *Scream* films philosophize in a self-reflective way, in Carroll and Wartenberg's lines of argument. In this presentation I will argue that these films philosophize on the nature of horror, focusing primarily on their reflections about the relationship between fictional horror and true crime.

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14.50-15.35 Matías Graffigna (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) – ‘Living in a Marxist Sci-fi world: A Phenomenological Analysis of the Power of Science-Fiction’

In her masterpiece *The Dispossessed* Science-Fiction author Ursula Le Guin invites us into the experience of an anarcho-communist society. I believe the world depicted in this novel to be a possible realization of Marx’s rather formal-empty idea of communism, understood as no more than the end-stage of human history, “a society without classes and without government”. *The Dispossessed* is a *presentification* through *phantasy* of certain *formal* concepts, by which *intuitive content* is given. Because these concepts belong to *socio-economic theory* (Marxism), content is *necessary* to fully comprehend them. Or so shall I argue with the application of this *phenomenological methodology*.

15.35-16.00 Coffee break

16.00-16.45 Thérèse Söderström (Lund University) – ‘Reading as a Moral Act’

In the philosophical debate on the relation between fiction and morality, it is sometimes argued that reading fiction can significantly aid subjects in developing their moral compass. An influential account of this view is found in Martha Nussbaum’s *Love’s Knowledge* (1990), where she also claims that the reading itself takes place in a non-moral sphere. Seeing moral demands as located in social relations, Nussbaum draws up an analogy meant to illustrate and prove that since reading is an act performed in solitude, a relevant counterpart to the reader is missing; leaving the reader located outside of morality and the act of reading a non-moral act. Accepting the main strands of Nussbaum’s account, I argue that her analogy suffers from several serious flaws. I reject her claim, and show that the act of reading and acts in real life are not significantly different to warrant that we regard them as belonging to different moral spheres.

16.50-17.35 Erin Kavanagh (University of Wales, Trinity St. David) – ‘A Moral Myth’

This presentation seeks to examine whether exposure to fiction about the past is a beneficial method for influencing behaviour in today’s world. It uses as a case study, a new mythic poem (‘Brenin Y Coed Mór’) which has been written to disseminate information about environmental change.

19.00 Workshop dinner

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Friday October 5th 2018 Room LUX: B339

- 9.00-9.15 Coffee
- 9.15-10.15 Keynote address: Maria Green (Raoul Wallenberg Institute) - 'Human Rights and the Personal Pronoun: Perspectives from Law and Literature'
- In the context of international human rights law and practice, the use of personal pronouns – the undertones of an "I", "we", "you" or "they" in formal and informal rhetoric – bears enormous weight. The words themselves may reflect a myriad of sometimes examined, but far more often unexamined, assumptions about rights, duties, advocacy, and the relative roles of different actors. This paper draws on work by Orwell, Auden and Gordimer to explore this particular aspect of language in relation to three central spheres of human rights concern: universality of rights, governmental decision-making, and the duties of non-state actors.
- 10.15-10.30 Coffee break
- 10.30-11.15 Axel Rudolphi (Uppsala University) – 'Art and Reality in Performance Art'
- In this paper I present the relatively recent art form of performance art as providing a number of interesting examples and perspectives to the philosophical discussions of the relation between engagement with art and fiction and our outlooks on practical reality. The ultimate aims of this discussion are (i) to show actual examples in which it, in my view, can be strongly argued that art intricately works with, and on, our practical and moral outlooks on reality; and (ii) to shed some light on what the social and cognitive consequences of something taking place within the context of 'art' may be.
- 11.20-12.05 Nils Franzén (Uppsala University) – 'Evaluative Sensibilism and Imaginative Resistance'
- Fiction invites us to imagine scenarios where evaluative facts are different from what they are like in the actual world, we refuse to go along. For instance, we do not accept a fiction where Nazism is presented as being the correct moral outlook, even though we know that what we are dealing with is just make-belief. The question of why this is the case is the puzzle of imaginative resistance. In this paper, I take imaginative resistance to offer an important clue to the nature of evaluative terms and concepts. I outline a sensiblist semantics for normative terms and concepts, and argue that it explains imaginative resistance.
- 12.05-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-14.45 Gloria Mähringer (Lund University) – 'Self-Constitution in the Tension between Individual Creativity and Collective Fiction'
- This talk examines the possibilities and limitations of reframing one's existence through the activity of writing fiction. Descriptions by authors reflecting about what the process of writing does to themselves range from „I only exist when I am writing“ (Ingeborg Bachmann) to „You lose yourself and sink into a state of pure being, like an animal — belonging to the world, not to yourself.“ (Karl Ove Knausgård). I connect philosophy, social psychology and neuroscience in order to argue that individual self-constitution requires a realm of collective fictions and spell out some conditions under which individual creativity may be part of transforming collective fiction.

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14.45-15.30 Michael Devlin (Linköping University) – ‘Morality and Fiction’

It is debatable to what extent fiction can impact us morally, or whether actual felt, lived experiences are necessary for undergoing psychological and moral development. Research by cognitive scientist Keith Oatley has suggested that engagement in literary fiction has prompted improvements in empathy amongst participants. Thus, if fiction can invoke emotional responses within readers, perhaps it could also invoke morally wrong actions, or conversely, morally right actions, as influenced by inspiring or captivating storylines. Therefore, if fiction impacts us empathetically, then it may be morally beneficial. The reverse, however, may also be true.

15.30-16.00 Coffee break

16.00-16.45 Francesca Rodesino (University of Zürich) – ‘A Fitting Attitude Theory for fiction’

An object *x* is fictional if it is the object of an appropriate mental attitude, that of imagining (Walton 1990; Currie 1990). This definition is strikingly analogous to the definition of a value given by fitting attitude theories of value, according to which, for example, *x* is good just in case *x* is the object of an appropriate form of desiring. FA theories are subject to a famous counterexample. The wrong kind of reasons problem (WKR). The purpose of this talk is to illustrate a similar counterexample to the definition of being fictional and to provide a solution.

16.45-17.00 Farewell and departure