

THE FORUM
FOR PHILOSOPHY

Annual Report 2017-18



ABOUT THE FORUM

Since its launch in 1996, the Forum for Philosophy has gained widespread recognition for its work as an initiator and sponsor of engaging and thoughtful events open to the general public. Today, in all of our activities, we aim to encourage wider participation and promote thought-provoking discussion on issues connected with contemporary cultural and intellectual life. Our full and varied programme of events showcases the work of contemporary academic philosophers from all philosophical traditions, often in conversation with each other and with academics from other disciplines. Our events are always open to everyone, free to attend, and do not require registration. Along with our events, our website hosts a rich archive of podcasts and writing from contemporary philosophers on a wide variety of topics.

The Forum is based in the Department for Philosophy, Logic, and Scientific Method at the LSE. It has an Executive Committee, the members of which constitute *ipso facto* its board of trustees and who come from both academic and business backgrounds. We have a Director, Dr Elizabeth Hannon, and a number of Fellows: Dr Shahidha Bari who is Senior Lecturer in Romanticism in the Department of English, Queen Mary, University of London; Dr Jonathan Birch who is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method at the LSE; Dr Sarah Fine, who is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy

at King's College London; Dr Clare Moriarty, who is Teaching Fellow at University College Dublin; and Dr Danielle Sands who is Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Thought at Royal Holloway, University of London.

The Forum is non-profit organization, and we are extremely grateful for the support of its long-standing sponsors, Stephen and Caroline Butt, Stephen Lewis, Tim Sanderson, and The Grut Trust, and to new friends Jacques Boissonnas, the Clarence Westubry Foundation, and Robert Falzon. Our thanks are also due to the British Society for the Philosophy of Science, the Royal Institute of Philosophy, the Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, LSE, the Centre for the Philosophy of the Natural and Social Sciences, LSE, and the British Society for the History of Philosophy, for both their academic endorsement and financial support.

We are also especially grateful to the many academics who have given up their time to participate in Forum events.

In order to be able to continue and, hopefully, expand its work, the Forum is actively seeking to secure financial support from interested individuals and grant-awarding bodies. For further information about our fundraising efforts and ways to get involved, please contact the Forum's Director, Dr Elizabeth Hannon.



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SUPPORT FOR THE FORUM

Praise from Philosophers

For over twenty years the Forum has been the pre-eminent agent of public engagement with philosophy in the UK, with every word of that mission counting. It doesn't just open its doors to the public, it reaches it; it doesn't just give them philosophy, it engages them with it; and it offers is the real deal, not watered down pop-philosophy.

– Dr Julian Baggini

The Forum is, quite simply, one of the most important spaces for thoughtful, informed, and engaging debates, essays, and podcasts that we have. In these turbulent times of facile soundbites, unchecked claims and artificial divisions, they are an increasingly vital force for good.

– Prof. Angie Hobbs

The discussion was excellent, both amongst the panel members themselves and also from the large and attentive audience. It's crucial to have these sorts of interactions between academic practitioners and the interested general public. The widespread love of ideas and of passionate but informed debate need to be nurtured now more than ever, and the Forum makes a significant contribution to the conversations that we need to have with one another.

– Prof. Helen Steward

Praise from Our Audience

Having not been in an environment like this in years I lapped up every word. Very refreshing for me to hear such an academic discussion about a topic I hadn't thought of in that way before.

Wow! Good discussion. What an event!

Always a privilege and a pleasure to hear new perspectives.

Best lecture that I have attended at LSE or elsewhere! Interested to read round the subject following this lecture.

Caused me to reconsider my own ideas on the topic.

Please continue giving these lectures.

Fantastic talk! Thank you for putting on this event.

Great talk, great chair facilitation!

Absolutely brilliant and hugely enjoyable, thank you for the wonderful work you do.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I look back over the past year I am happy to be once again able to report that the Forum's programme of essentially philosophical public debate of a remarkably wide range of issues has continued to attract an evidently appreciative and seemingly ever-increasing audience, an audience which has shown itself eager to take a notably active part in the general discussions following on the contributions of the main speakers. Only too often, in fact, we have found more people wishing to attend one or other of our events than we have been able to accommodate in the available space; but we are, happily, able to make podcasts, and these too are being picked up in impressively large numbers.

The Forum, as we all know only too well, depends for its very existence on the outstandingly generous contributions of its hearteningly loyal supporters—supporters, it is important to stress, not only through their (for all practical purposes crucial) financial support, but also, and equally importantly, through their very active interest in and concern for the Forum's intellectual mission. One of the most pleasing aspects of the Presidential Reports is the opportunity that they provide to thank in the name of all of us involved in the Forum our supporters for their enabling of the Forum in this way. But before I do so, I should like to pick up on the more personal note on which I ended my Report of last year.

It ended then by saying that it had 'been my pleasure and privilege to have been associated with the Forum as its President since it was first founded over twenty years ago. But [that] the time [had] now surely come to recognize that I [had] already gone well past the age at which Presidents should undergo a transformation into something that might not implausibly go by some such name as that of President Emeritus'. And I expressed the hope that by the following year I should 'have the semi-retirement pleasure of not having to write my own, but rather that of being able to read his or her President's Report for 2018'. In the event it has taken the Forum just slightly longer than I then anticipated

to enable this transformation. But I am delighted to be able now to report that Dr Paul Flather has accepted our invitation to take over from me.

The Forum is, I should stress, extremely fortunate to have someone as well qualified as Paul, by long-standing and widely varied practical experience of the international university world as well as of that beyond it, willing and ready to take over as its President. I will not attempt to recount the details of that experience here. But anyone reading this Report who might wish to know more about it has only to turn to the Internet.

As I look back on the by now long list of my past Presidential Reports, I see that they consist in large—and very natural—part of repeatedly grateful acknowledgement and thanks both to our supporters and to those who have shared the main responsibilities for the actual running of the Forum, including the detailed planning and oversight of its programmes. In this, the last Report of my term of office, I should like above all to emphasize the fact that this repetition should in no way be taken as a ritual of mere routine. So let me—and not 'merely' repeat—our genuinely heartfelt thanks to the two Stephens (Butt and Lewis), to Tim Sanderson, and to all those others whose continued support has been so indispensable not just to the underpinning of the Forum's work, but, as I have stressed, to its very existence. 'All those others', whose names are indeed to be found in my Reports of previous

Let us not forget, however, at this moment of looking back, how much we owe to that very committed financial and intellectual supporter of the Forum, the much missed late Ralph Oppenheimer. Let us remember too how it was that the Forum might never have got off the ground without the enthusiastic and very practical support of the equally missed late Maurice Fraser.

As I take this last opportunity here to record our thanks, my own personal thanks very much included, I

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

should like to give especial mention to both Prof. Simon Glendinning, Dr Elizabeth Hannon, and indeed to Dr Juliana Cardinale, former Associate Director and, in practice, a mainstay of the Forum's working over a good number of years. Juliana has now gone on to a full-time research and teaching post in the University of Singapore. Since the time of my Report for 2017, Simon has been appointed Head of the European Institute at the LSE. He, faced with the many new responsibilities that this involves, has felt obliged to give up the Directorship of the Forum, and to this he has been succeeded by Elizabeth—or Beth, as we all know her. Simon, I am glad to say, is nevertheless still very much with us. Now that he is no longer our Director, and so no longer employed by the Forum as such, we have been able to welcome him as a full member of the Executive Committee and as one of the Forum's Trustees. Beth has been acting as very committed and effective Associate Director to Simon, and we are very lucky that she was immediately available to assume the Directorship in her own full right. As I put it already when she first joined us and then repeated in my Report of last year, 'it is difficult to

think of the Forum without Beth's all-round and re-invigorating input'.

I ended my Report of last year with the hope that 'this time next year, I shall have the semi-retirement pleasure of not having to write my own, but rather that of being able to read his or her President's Report for 2018'. It is true that, strictly speaking, this was a hope that remains unfulfilled. But it hardly needs saying that the short extra wait has proven more than worthwhile, and that I am more than happy to find myself now in a position to welcome Paul Flather as my successor.

As I put it already last year, 'it is difficult to think of the Forum without Beth's all-round and re-invigorating input'. To get some sense of the Forum as a hub of intellectual life, one has only to look at what I then called our 'Beth-renewed web-site'; while the interest aroused by most of its events is now such that anyone wishing to attend is well advised to come in Our programme has gone through almost annual developments since the Forum wa

Alan Montefiore
President

TREASURER'S REPORT

More than two years after the result of the Brexit referendum was declared, the general economic and financial outlook is hardly more certain than it was in June 2016. With the future continuing to be more than usually hard to predict, potential donors can be forgiven for feeling reluctant to make fresh financial commitments. Fortunately for the Forum, our regular supporters have not faltered but have maintained their generous contributions to our success.

Our long-term aim has been to establish an endowment fund to meet most of our expenses. This remains our objective. However, we have been frustrated by the ultra-low interest rates the central banks have pursued for the past decade in order to keep the global economy on a recovery track following the 2008–09 global financial crisis. We saw some light at the end of this tunnel in 2017 when the US central bank, the Federal Reserve, embarked on a policy of gradually raising short-term interest rates back towards normal historical levels. The Federal Reserve has continued the process of rate normalization but other central banks, most notably the Bank of England, have been extremely cautious in following this lead. Indeed, sterling money rates suggest there is no market consensus on how the Bank of England might react to the wide range of possible Brexit outcomes. In any case, sterling interest rates, including those on long-term risk-free assets, remain well below the rate of

inflation and the levels that would render a newly established endowment fund feasible.

The Benefactors' Dinners have continued to be the focus of our fund-raising drive. To these dinners, the Forum's existing supporters are encouraged to invite others who might make a contribution towards meeting the Forum's costs. As I noted in my last report, we have changed our policy in this regard, to have fewer dinners that are more focused on the specific interests of invitees. Initial indications are that this change of policy will bring favourable results.

The stipendiary Fellows scheme continues as a cost-effective means of meeting our objectives. Our policy is to maintain sufficient cash balances and firm pledges of financial support to cover at least one year's projected expenses. We continue to meet that target. In that regard, special thanks are due to the Calleva Foundation, Tim Sanderson, the Clarence Westbury Foundation, the Grut Trust, Robert Falzon, and Alan Bekhor. I should also like to renew my thanks to our Director, Dr Beth Hannon, who, among her many other tasks, efficiently manages our finances on a day-to-day basis.

Stephen Lewis
Honorary Treasurer

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Calls to raise the level of public discourse have become commonplace. Of course, philosophers are rarely shy in arguing that philosophy has a good deal to offer public life. Increasingly, though, there is wider appreciation of the work that philosophy can do. The introduction of critical thinking skills into some school curricula, for instance, is one way the benefits of a philosophical training has been acknowledged.

But even while recognizing this increasing appreciation for philosophy, we are constantly impressed by the number of people who attend our events and subscribe to our podcast, many with no background in philosophy whatsoever. And the feedback we receive from our audience is heartening, even moving. Anyone who doubts the value of a space for deep engagement with complex ideas, or the joy that can be felt when provoked to think in new ways, is invited to read the small but representative sample of audience feedback included in this report.

If there's an absence of philosophy in the public sphere, then, it's a problem of supply not demand. While huge effort and funding is (rightly) devoted to increasing scientific literacy, the same cannot be said for the humanities in general, and philosophy is particularly badly served in this regard. The most pressing issue for the Forum now is to secure funding so that we can continue to provide maximally accessible events for non-specialist audiences.

Despite these problems around funding, I am extremely proud of the work the Forum over the last year. I stepped into the role of Director following Simon Glendinning's long and successful tenure at the helm, and his are very big shoes to fill. However, he leaves the Forum in remarkable shape.

One of Simon's most successful innovations was our Fellows programme. The skill and ingenuity of our Fellows—Shahidha Bari, Jonathan Birch, Sarah Fine, Clare Moriarty, and Danielle Sands—has allowed the Forum to do what is often assumed to be the impossible: garnering wide interest outside the academy in academic philosophy, without sacrificing

academic credibility.

All of our Fellows are academics in their own right, whose interests represents the breadth of philosophy. Their expertise means that our events showcase the most exciting new work in philosophy. And the endorsement of our events by various learned societies and academic institutions speaks to their academic credibility.

Likewise, because our Fellows work with us over periods of years, they learn the skills required to ensure our events are accessible, both through their work with the speakers in advance of the event and their artful chairing of discussion on the night. Testament to this achievement is the ever-growing numbers of people engaging with our work, either through attending the event itself or via the podcast later. The work of our Fellows is the crucial ingredient in the Forum's success.

As this is my first report as Director, I must take this opportunity to thank the many people who have made the Forum what it is and whose support continues to enable our important work. Simon Glendinning has been a pleasure to work with and I can only hope to continue his good work. I am delighted that he has become a trustee of the Forum and that we retain his invaluable input. The Forum will always be Catherine Audard and Alan Montefiore's baby, and I know we will all miss Alan's steady and wise hand on the tiller as he steps back to become President Emeritus. Throughout my time working for the Forum, their support on both the personal and professional level has been unfaltering. But I am very excited to begin work with our new President, Paul Flather. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Forum, and we are lucky to have him. Last but by no means least, Nenna Chuku has been at the heart of the successful operation of the Forum. Her wide ranging talents, from event management and coding to calm efficiency and good cheer have been a boon to the Forum.

Elizabeth Hannon
Director

FORUM ACTIVITIES 2017-18

AUTUMN 2017

Unrequited Love

Tuesday 26 September

Speakers

Ulrika Carlsson

Assistant Professor in Philosophy,
National Research University,
Higher School of Economics,
Russia

Stephen Grosz

Psychoanalyst and author

Erin Plunkett

Teaching Fellow, RHUL

Chair

Danielle Sands

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature
and Culture, RHUL

The history of art and literature is a history of unrequited love, which reminds us both of the tragic nature of human experience and of the extraordinary human capacity to transform suffering into beauty. Should we mourn or celebrate unrequited love? What can it teach us about ourselves? Is anyone to blame? We explore responses to unrequited love from philosophy, psychoanalysis, and art.

Is Post-modernism to Blame for Our Post-truth World?

Monday 2 October

Speakers

Mark Currie

Professor of Contemporary
Literature, QMUL

Alison Gibbons

Reader in Contemporary Stylistics,
Sheffield Hallam University

James Ladyman

Professor of Philosophy, University
of Bristol

Hilary Lawson

Director of the Institute of Art and
Ideas

Chair

Shahidha Bari

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Romanticism,
Department of English, QMUL

Did Derrida make us do it? Is our current situation the inevitable outcome of the intellectual adventuring of the twentieth century that critiqued grand narratives and challenged absolute truths? Or should we call upon the critical scepticism of post-modernism and post-structuralism with renewed vigour, to better see through the smoke and mirrors of contemporary culture? We ask what the relationship is between facts, alternative facts, and fiction, and explore the precarious status of truth in the twenty-first century.

Invasive Species

Tuesday 10 October

Speakers

Fred Pearce

Science journalist; Author *The New Wild: Why Invasive Species Will Be Nature's Salvation*

Chris Thomas

Professor of Biology, University of
York

Emma Townshend

Author and gardening columnist
for *The Independent on Sunday*

Chair

Danielle Sands

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature
and Culture, RHUL

From parakeets to grey squirrels, signal crayfish to Japanese knotweed, with the help of human beings, non-native species have adeptly squawked, crawled, and rooted themselves in unfamiliar ecosystems. Should we welcome these invaders as a sign of cross-species cosmopolitanism or attempt to remove them? Are some non-native species friends and others foes? When does conservation become 'green xenophobia' (Fred Pearce)? In this event, we discuss theoretical and practical responses to non-native species.

Digital Selves

Tuesday 17 October

Speakers

David BerryProfessor of Digital Humanities,
University of Sussex**Legacy Russell**Writer, artist, and founding
theorist of Glitch Feminism**Laurence Scott**Senior Lecturer English and
Creative Writing, Arcadia
University; Author, *Four-
Dimensional Human*

Chair

Shahidha BariFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Romanticism,
Department of English, QMUL

How does our ubiquitous digital culture affect our sense of self? Is the self distorted, or do we now possess an invigorating digital selfhood? Should we revise our philosophical conceptions of the self in the light of social media? Our panel of writers, artists, and political theorists explore what happens to memory, emotion, and thought in the age of Google.

Parallel Universes

Wednesday 24/5 October

Speakers

Fay DowkerProfessor of Theoretical Physics,
Imperial College London**Eleanor Knox**Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
KCL**Simon Saunders**Professor of Philosophy of Physics,
University of Oxford

Chair

Jonathan BirchFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Associate Professor of Philosophy,
LSE

Is Schrödinger's cat alive or dead? This thought experiment was devised to illustrate a fundamental puzzle in quantum mechanics. A radical solution is that the cat is both alive and dead, but in different, parallel universes. This is the 'many-worlds interpretation' of quantum mechanics and our panel of philosophers and physicists discuss why it is controversial and its strange consequences.

Who Is a Refugee?

Monday 30 October

Speakers

Ahmad Al-RashidAuthor; Syrian campaigner;
Violence, Conflict and
Development Postgraduate, SOAS**Phillip Cole**Senior Lecturer in Politics and
International Relations, University
of West England, Bristol**Elsbeth Guild**Jean Monnet Professor ad
personam, QMUL

Chair

Sarah FineFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
KCL

Some people crossing borders are called refugees while others are not. But who is a refugee? What precisely is the relationship between migration and seeking refuge? Can we justify the distinction between refugees, migrants, and displaced people? Our panel discuss whether current legal definitions are need of modification, and if so, what should be altered and why.

The Politics of Mental Health

Wednesday 8 November

Speakers

Victoria Dutchman-Smith

Journalist and commentator

Emmy Eklundh

Teaching Fellow in Spanish and International Politics, KCL

Matthew Ratcliffe

Professor for Theoretical Philosophy, University of Vienna

Chair

Danielle Sands

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Culture, RHUL

At the intersection of the personal and the political, we explore the relationship between mental health and economics, politics, and society at large. Is it even possible to distinguish between mental illness that derives from an individual's physiology or childhood experience and that which has broader social or political causes? Why do particular mental illnesses appear to characterize certain eras? Could social change limit the spread of mental illness in contemporary society?

Strong Feelings

Tuesday 14 November

Speakers

Luke Brunning

British Academy Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Oxford

Luna Dolezal

Lecturer in Philosophy and Medical Humanities, University of Exeter

MM McCabe

Emeritus Professor of Ancient Philosophy, KCL

Chair

Clare Moriarty

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Teaching Fellow, UCD

Does anger impede political progress or is it essential for change? Does love make us biased or is it the foundation of ethical thinking? Might shame alter not merely our perception of the world, but the very world itself? Reason is often contrasted with emotion, but what if emotion is essential for understanding traditional philosophical ideas? And how did we end up thinking that reason could ever do without emotion?

The Minds of Birds

Monday 20 November

Speakers

Nicky Clayton

Professor of Comparative Cognition, University of Cambridge

Mark Cocker

Author and naturalist

Chair

Jonathan Birch

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Associate Professor of Philosophy, LSE

What is it like to be a bird? What do they think and how do they feel? What can comparative psychology tell us about the intelligence of birds? And what can we learn about birds, and about ourselves, from our encounters with them? In this dialogue, world-leading comparative psychologist Nicola Clayton and author and naturalist Mark Cocker give us a bird's eye view on the world, and consider how human thought and culture have been shaped by interaction with birds.

Sovereignty

Wednesday 29 November

Speakers

Serena FerenteSenior Lecturer in Medieval
European History, KCL**Carmen Pavel**Lecturer in International Politics,
KCL**David Runciman**Professor of Politics, University of
Cambridge

Chair

Sarah FineFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
KCL**Time Travel**

Wednesday 6 December

Speakers

Adam RobertsProfessor of Nineteenth Century
Literature, RHUL**Bryan W. Roberts**Assistant Professor of Philosophy,
LSE**Emily Thomas**Lecturer in Philosophy, Durham
University

Chair

Clare MoriartyFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Teaching Fellow, UCD

The Brexit debate saw a revival in talk of ‘sovereignty’. But what exactly is it, and why is it so highly prized? What are its essential features and what are its limits? In a globalized world, is sovereignty something modern states can achieve? We explore this elusive concept, and ask whether it is still a useful concept in the twenty-first century.

Born of science fiction, thinking about time travel has allowed us to visit possible and lost worlds, and rediscover the past through modern eyes. It also raises big puzzles: If you travelled back in time and killed your grandfather when he was a young man, would you still exist? Would changing the past mean you returned to a different present? What about travelling to the future? Two philosophers and a science fiction writer discuss time travel, and how thinking and writing about it has changed science and philosophy.

FORUM ACTIVITIES 2017-18

SPRING 2018

Streaming Consciousness

Tuesday 9 January

Speakers

Eimear McBride

Author, *A Girl Is a Half-Formed Thing* and *The Lesser Bohemians*

Kaye Mitchell

Senior Lecturer in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester

Chair

Danielle Sands

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Culture, RHUL

Is it possible to express the richness, variety, and depth of our inner experience, our thoughts and feelings? If so, what is the best way to do it? Should we turn to literature or to philosophy? And what can they teach each other about understanding, expressing, and performing the self? Award-winning novelist Eimear McBride discusses these questions with writer and academic Kaye Mitchell.

Culture under Fire

Wednesday 17 January

Speakers

Helen Frowe

Professor of Practical Philosophy, Stockholm University

Issam Kourbaj

Lector in Art, University of Cambridge; Syrian artist

Vernon Rapley

Director of Cultural Heritage Protection and Security, Victoria & Albert Museum

Eleanor Robson

Professor of Ancient Middle Eastern History and Director of the Nahrein Network, UCL

Chair

Sarah Fine

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, KCL

From the recent destruction of Palmyra and the looting of the National Museum of Iraq, cultural artefacts are one of the many casualties of armed conflict. What exactly is cultural property and whose property is it? How should we weigh its value against other priorities during times of conflict? What risks should be taken to protect it, and who is responsible for rebuilding and restoring when the conflict is over? We discuss the political and ethical issues around culture in war zones.

Being Alone

Wednesday 24 January

Speakers

John Burnside

Poet and novelist, winner of the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize and the Whitbread Poetry Award

Barbara Taylor

Professor of Humanities, QMUL

James Warren

Professor of Ancient Philosophy, University of Cambridge

Chair

Shahidha Bari

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Romanticism, QMUL

‘Hell is other people’, noted Jean Paul Sartre—rather rudely, it might seem to an outside observer. But is the pursuit of philosophical understanding an inherently solitary pursuit by its nature? From Augustine to Kant, philosophy has cherished the image of the deep thinker immersed in solitudinous reflection. But how does solitude differ from loneliness? And in an age of increasing social atomization, can we think about our lonely condition in ways that might allow us to overcome it? We explore the idea of loneliness as an aesthetic and socio-political phenomena, as well as an existential question.

The Politics of Marriage

Wednesday 31 January

Speakers

Clare ChambersSenior Lecturer in Philosophy,
University of Cambridge**Paul Coleridge**Chairman, The Marriage
Foundation**Peter Tatchell**Director of the Peter Tatchell
Foundation

Chair

Sarah FineFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
KCL

Marriage is an odd mix of sex, religion, and politics. We ask what marriage is and whether there is there any distinctive moral value in it. Should the state promote it? Is it possible to have an 'equal' marriage, or is marriage fundamentally an oppressive institution? Should marriage be rejected in favour of civil partnerships, or something else, or perhaps nothing else?

The Young Wittgenstein

Wednesday 7 February

Speakers

Ian GroundVisiting Research Fellow in
Philosophy, University of
Hertfordshire**Stephen Mulhall**Professor of Philosophy, University
of Oxford**Chon Tejedor**Associate Professor of Philosophy,
University of Valencia

Chair

Clare MoriartyFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Teaching Fellow, UCD

One of the twentieth century's greatest philosophers, Wittgenstein published only one book. To celebrate its centenary, we revisit *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. An unusual work of philosophy by any standard, it was written on the front lines during World War I and purported to distinguish sense from nonsense. Wittgenstein felt that in the *Tractatus* he had solved all the problems of philosophy. We take a look back at the man, his early life and work, and consider why his thinking has been of such enduring interest.

The Evolution of Altruism

Saturday 24 February

Speakers

Jonathan BirchFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Associate Professor of Philosophy,
LSE**Heikki Helanterä**Group Leader, Centre of
Excellence in Biological
Interactions, University of Helsinki**Hannah Rubin**Postdoctoral Researcher in
Theoretical Philosophy, University
of Groningen

Chair

Bryan RobertsAssistant Professor of Philosophy,
LSE

If evolution is a 'struggle for existence', why do we witness so much altruism in nature? From bacteria to baboons, the natural world is full of spectacular examples of organisms cooperating with one another. In the early 1960s, W. D. Hamilton changed the way we think about how such behaviour evolves, and his pioneering work kick-started a research programme now known as 'social evolution theory'. Our panel of biologists and philosophers of biology discuss the legacy of Hamilton's ideas, and the evolution of altruism in microbes, insects, humans, and the cells of our own bodies.

FORUM ACTIVITIES 2017-18

What's It Really Like to Be a Bat?

Wednesday 14 March

Speakers

Alison Fairbrass

Postgraduate researcher in biodiversity and the built environment, UCL

Craig French

Assistant Professor in Philosophy, University of Nottingham

Chair

Jonathan Birch

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Associate Professor of Philosophy,
LSE

Are bats conscious, and how can we tell? What is it like to use sound to navigate? In a classic paper called 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?', Thomas Nagel used the bat's capacity for echolocation to introduce philosophical problems concerning conscious experience. But the example is usually discussed in ignorance of what the lives of bats are actually like. This dialogue brings together a philosopher and a bat scientist to discuss the latest research into the minds of bats.

The Algorithmic Age

Tuesday 6 March

Speakers

Abeba Birhane

Postgraduate Researcher in Cognitive Science, University College Dublin

Neil Lawrence

Professor of Machine Learning, University of Sheffield; Director of Machine Learning, Amazon

Martin Robbins

Writer for *The Guardian*, *Vice*, and *Little Atoms* on AI

Chair

Shahidha Bari

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Romanticism,
QMUL

Looking for love? Ask your computer, since 1 in 5 couples now first meet online. Have we outsourced love to abstract algorithms? And what about elections or our summer getaways? From the targeted marketing of political campaigns to the predictive typing that preempts your Google search, machines may know us better than we know ourselves. We explore how far modern life is mediated by the computation of data, and ask whether we should trust in the algorithm or find ways to outwit it.

The Philosophy of Race

Wednesday 14 March

Speakers

Kwame Anthony Appiah

Professor of Philosophy and Law,
New York University

Priyamvada Gopal

Reader in Anglophone and Related Literature, University of Cambridge

Nasar Meer

Professor of Race, Identity and Citizenship, University of Edinburgh

Chair

Danielle Sands

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature and Culture, RHUL

Race continues to shape the political, cultural, and economic character of our societies, with communities and resources determined along racial lines. But what is race and why is it so significant? Is it simply another form of social classification grounded in inequality, conflict, and violence? If so, how are we to understand race as a resource for cultural cohesion rooted in shared histories? Our speakers consider what we understand by race, and the relationships between race, inequality, and prejudice.

The Trouble with Numbers

Monday 19 March

Speakers

Nicholas BinghamProfessor of Mathematics, Imperial
College London**Tim Button**Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
University of Cambridge**Mary Leng**Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
University of York**Adam Ostaszewski**

Professor of Mathematics, LSE

Chair

Clare MoriartyFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Teaching Fellow, UCD

How seriously should philosophical worries about mathematics be taken? And should mathematical results ever force our philosophical hands? Philosophers and mathematicians have often found plenty to disagree about throughout history, but there have been many fruitful interactions too. We indulge in a bit of group therapy, examining some key cases of philosophical and mathematical interaction. Does infinitesimal mathematics commit us to an infinitely divisible world? Do the prime mating cycles of cicadas tell us something about the existence of mathematical objects? We run the numbers...

FORUM ACTIVITIES 2017-18

SUMMER 2018

Free Will

Monday 23 April

Speakers

Matthew Broome

Chair in Psychiatry and Youth
Mental Health, University of
Birmingham

Nura Sidarus

Postdoctoral Researcher in
Cognitive Science, Institut Jean
Nicod, Ecole Normale Supérieure

Helen Steward

Professor of Philosophy of Mind
and Action, University of Leeds

Chair

Jonathan Birch

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Associate Professor of Philosophy,
LSE

Is everything we do the product of unconscious brain processes that are beyond our control? If so, what happens to moral and criminal responsibility if a defendant can always argue, 'my brain made me do it'? And if free will does exist, could other animals possess it too? A philosopher, a psychiatrist, and a neuroscientist discuss what recent research into the brain might mean for our understanding of free will.

Shakespeare

Tuesday 1 May

Speakers

Jessica Chiba

Teaching Fellow in English, RHUL

John Crace

Journalist and critic; Author, *The
Penguin Incomplete Shakespeare*
series

Tim Crouch

Playwright and theatre maker

Chair

Danielle Sands

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature
and Culture, RHUL

For Victor Hugo, 'all forms of the multiple reality, actions and ideas, man and humanity' can be found in Shakespeare. Perhaps this is the reason why, over 400 years after his death, we continue to study, perform, and re-read his plays in search of truths about ourselves and the world. Should we think of Shakespeare as a philosopher? Can reading him philosophically add to our understanding of his work, or is it simply another way of trying to contain this 'myriad-minded' (Coleridge) thinker?

Affirmative Action

Wednesday 9 May

Speakers

Elizabeth Anderson

John Dewey Distinguished
University Professor of Philosophy,
University of Michigan

Omar Khan

Director, Runnymede; Governor,
University of East London

Chair

Sarah Fine

Fellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
KCL

Women and minority groups are significantly underrepresented in politics and various other walks of life. 'Affirmative action' is one response in tackling this enduring issue. But what is it? Who is it for? And why does it generate so much controversy? We discuss these questions and explore the relationship between affirmative action and social justice.

Animals

Tuesday 15 May

Speakers

John O'MaolearcaProfessor of Film, Kingston
University**Undine Sellbach**Senior Lecturer in Philosophy,
University of Dundee**Lynn Turner**Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture,
Goldsmiths, University of London

Chair

Danielle SandsFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Lecturer in Comparative Literature
and Culture, RHUL

Humans have always co-existed with animals, using them as tools, resources, and, more recently, companions. More abstractly, animals help us to understand ourselves; they are 'good to think with' (Claude Lévi-Strauss). What roles do animals play in our understanding of issues as wide as ethics, art, friendship, and technology? And what does it mean for understanding ourselves if we seriously acknowledge our relationships with other animals? Coinciding with the publication of *The Edinburgh Companion to Animal Studies*, we will consider the relevance of animals to a wide range of contemporary concerns.

Reason

Monday 21 May

Speakers

Alexander DouglasLecturer in Philosophy, University
of St. Andrews**Peter Millican**Gilbert Ryle Fellow and Professor
of Philosophy, University of Oxford**Kirsten Walsh**Assistant Professor of Philosophy,
University of Nottingham

Chair

Clare MoriartyFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Teaching Fellow, UCD

'Reason' and 'knowledge', and the relationship between them, were major themes in Enlightenment philosophy, and drew the attention of some of the most respected philosophers of the time, including Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, often referred to as the rationalists, and Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, the so-called empiricists. Since then, the empiricists have tended to have the upper hand in intellectual life, if not always in philosophy. We discuss what was at stake in these debates, what we might say about these ideas today, and whether we've been too quick to dismiss rationalism.

Football

Monday 4 June

Speakers

Simon CritchleyHan Jonas Professor of Philosophy,
New School for Social Research,
NY**Gerald Moore**Associate Professor of French,
University of Durham**Emily Ryall**Reader in Applied Philosophy,
University of Gloucestershire

Chair

Shahidha BariFellow, Forum for Philosophy
Senior Lecturer in Romanticism,
QMUL

'All that I know most surely about morality and obligations, I owe to football', observed Albert Camus. And it is football, above all other sports, that so many philosophers revere. So there's everything to play for in this panel discussion exploring the relationship between football and philosophy. We give it 110% in our exploration of what makes for a 'good game' and whether philosophical principles can be put into play on the pitch.

OTHER FORUM ACTIVITIES

PODCASTS

The Forum's reach extends well beyond London via our online presence. Our events are recorded and released as podcasts later the same week, to an audience of over 50,000. The podcasts can be found not only via our own website, but also on iTunes and YouTube.

CONTEMPORARY WRITING

Bringing academic philosophy to a wider audience, our essay series makes cutting-edge research accessible to a intelligent, but non-specialist, audience. Each essay is based on a published, peer-reviewed article or book. Unlike these academic publications, however, the essays are neither hidden behind paywalls nor obscured by academic terms of art.

TRUSTEES AND GOVERNANCE

The Executive Committee is entitled by the Constitution of the Association to appoint one or more new charity trustees at the Annual General Meeting of the Association. Members of the Executive Committee are elected for a term of three years, and one third retire annually but are eligible for re-election. Nominees for positions on the Committee must be in the hands of the Secretary at least fourteen days before the AGM.

Reports of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2018

The Forum for Philosophy is governed by a Constitution approved on 28th May 1998, and is a registered charity (no. 1070105). If you would like a copy of the accounts for the year April 2017–March 2018, please contact the Director, Dr Elizabeth Hannon, at the address detailed below.

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 Department for Philosophy, Logic, and Scientific Method
 London School of Economics and Political Science
 Houghton Street
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What we do...

New developments in science and the arts already have well-established ways of reaching a public audience. By contrast, thoughtful reflection on contemporary life and culture—philosophical reflection, broadly conceived—is far less well supported. Since its launch in 1996, the Forum for Philosophy has gained widespread recognition for its work in this area, developing a distinctive programme of thought-provoking discussions open to the general public. In order to achieve a real change in the public culture of contemporary Britain and beyond, the Forum is actively seeking to secure further financial support from interested individuals and grant-awarding bodies. It is a fantastic opportunity to produce a step-change in our organisation and activity.

What you can do...

The Forum relies on donations. We are extremely grateful to our supporters, all of whom make our event programme possible.

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If you would like to give a donation, of any size, please complete the form on the next page and return to the address below. Alternatively, you can find our JustGiving page via our website, www.philosophy-forum.org.

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