

May 2021

ND Philosophy

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Philosopher in Print

This month's 'Philosopher in Print' is post-doc, Ellen Lehet. Her article, "Mathematical Explanation in Practice", is available in a forthcoming issue of *Axiomathes*.



Abstract

The connection between understanding and explanation has recently been of interest to philosophers. Inglis & Mejia (2019) propose that within mathematics, we should accept a functional account of explanation that characterizes explanations as those things that produce understanding. In this paper, I start with the assumption that this view of mathematical explanation is correct and consider what we can consequently learn about mathematical explanation. I argue that this view of explanation suggests that we should shift the question of explanation away from why-questions and towards a "what's going on here" question. Additionally, I argue that when we recognize the connection between understanding and explanation then naturally see how more than just proofs can be explanatory. I expand this point by detailing how definitions and diagrams can be explanatory. In all, we see that when we take seriously the connection between understanding and explanation, we get a better sense of how explanation arises within mathematics.

May

Have a great summer!!

Get to know our Philosophers!

[Isabel Canfield]

1. What would you sing at Karaoke night? *"Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go by Wham!. I can't explain why this song is so catchy, but it is consistently playing on a loop in my mind.*
2. What did you want to be when you were small? *I wanted to be an astronomer. I wanted to know what it was like in outer space, but I didn't want to leave all of my friends to become an astronaut. Becoming an astronomer seemed like a good compromise.*
3. If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be? *I wish I could survive by consuming nothing but milkshakes and french fries.*
4. What's the worst gift you've received? *I had a very kind Uber driver once give me a sack of potatoes. She insisted that I take them with me and wouldn't take no for an answer. Unfortunately, I was going to the airport and the large bag of potatoes didn't make it onto the airplane with me.*
5. Who would you want to play you in a movie? *Anya Taylor-Joy — mostly because I really loved The Queen's Gambit.*

01

CIF's begin

IrishFest

11:30-4:30 pm

32nd Annual Notre Dame Student Film Festival: Quarantined

May 1-2

[more info](#)

11

Last Class Day!

12

Reading Days

May 12-13

14

Final Exams

May 14-19

23

Commencement

[events.nd.edu](#) for full list

• Arts and Letters Diploma Ceremony

The conferral of degrees will take place during the Notre Dame Commencement exercises Sunday morning, but students will be recognized individually during the Arts and Letters Diploma Ceremony on May 23rd at 2 p.m. For more information, including a schedule of events for commencement weekend, please visit the [University's commencement website](#).

• Notre Dame Day 2021

Thank you to everyone that helped promote ND Day for our department. If you would like to help with next years fundraiser, please let Christine know!

• Undergrad and Grad Students!

Want to tell the world why you love our department? Drop Christine a short video (we're talking just a couple seconds) on why you do! She is collecting them to make into a Reel.

• Congratulations to our Senior Thesis writers!

The Philosophy Department would like to recognize the following seniors for completing their senior theses!

Andrew Biondo

Yuanmeng He

Elaine Chen

Elijah Grammer

Xinran Jiang

Vincent Mallett

Abu Mian

James Murphy

Conrad Palor

Jorge Plaza

Christian Torsell

Robert Ziegler

• Love Memes?

Interested in creating funny philosophy memes for our social media pages? Contact [Christine](#)! And be sure to follow us on social media!

• Philosophy Merch!!!

Womens size XS-L and Men's S-M are available. We also have phone wallets for \$1! They make great graduation gifts!

- Do you have any suggestions for our newsletter or have news that you want featured? Fill out [this form](#) to tell us!

THE ELYSIAN CAFE

THE BAR OF LOST SOULS

Outside of space and time, outside of history, in a pocket dimension accessible from any time or place in human history, lies the Elysian Café. Found only by the fortunate chosen few, this bar will serve any beverage one can imagine, except the "three forbidden drinks" known only to the barkeep, Hesperus Cerberides.

PHILOSOPHER IN QUESTION: BEN SCHOLL

Which three philosophers would you invite to the bar?

1. Laurie A. Paul (*Transformative Experience*)
2. Thomas Nagel (*"What's it like to be a bat?."*)
3. Sartre (*Existentialism*)

What drink do you imagine each of them ordering?

1. Paul: *Something classic, but done with great attention to detail. A hot black coffee but brewed well, probably pour over.*
2. Nagel: *Hot tea, something home-y for relaxed mornings. Earl grey with cream.*
3. Sartre: *A cup full of pure void*

What topic would you wish to see them debate?

I'd love to hear them discuss L.A. Paul's thought experiment on whether they each would like to become vampires.

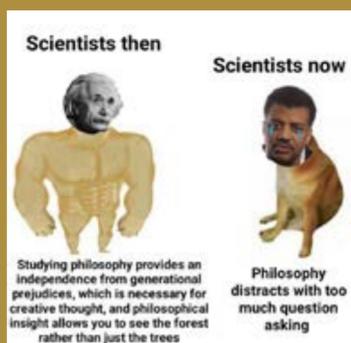
Why this topic?

Paul and Nagel write about the difficulties imagining another way of life (as a vampire or a bat), since your experience of reality now is entirely different from what it would be after the change. Sartre argues existence precedes essence, however, which suggests our identities aren't complete until after we make decisions—under his model, a lot of the decisions we make would be like choosing to become a vampire, since only after we make them can we account for our identities

How does it all end?

I think Sartre would argue you should decide to become a vampire or not based on your perspectives now, even though they will be different as a vampire. Going off of the curiosity evidenced in his essay, I think Nagel would take the vampire option, use his vampire powers to become a bat, and then author a follow-up essay describing his experience.

Meme of the Month



[GRAD CFP'S](#)

[UNDERGRAD CFP'S](#)

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