



# 14<sup>TH</sup> NORDIC WORKSHOP IN EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

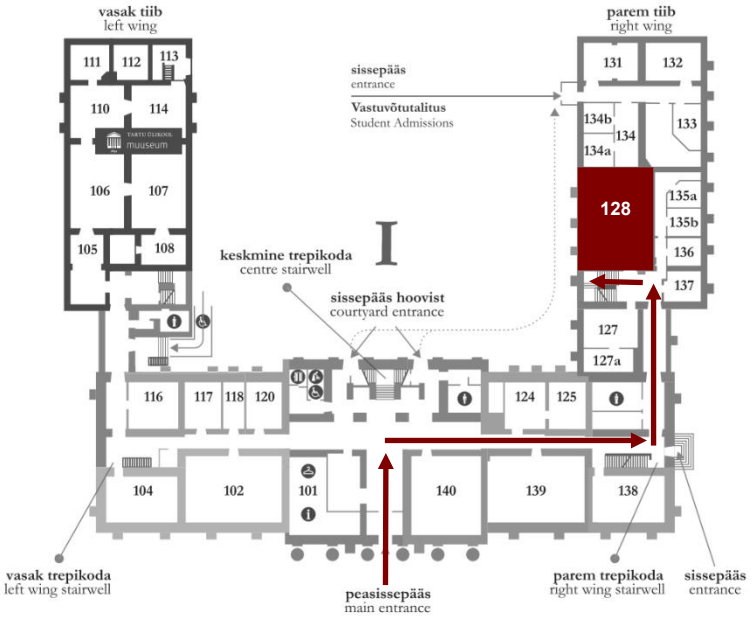
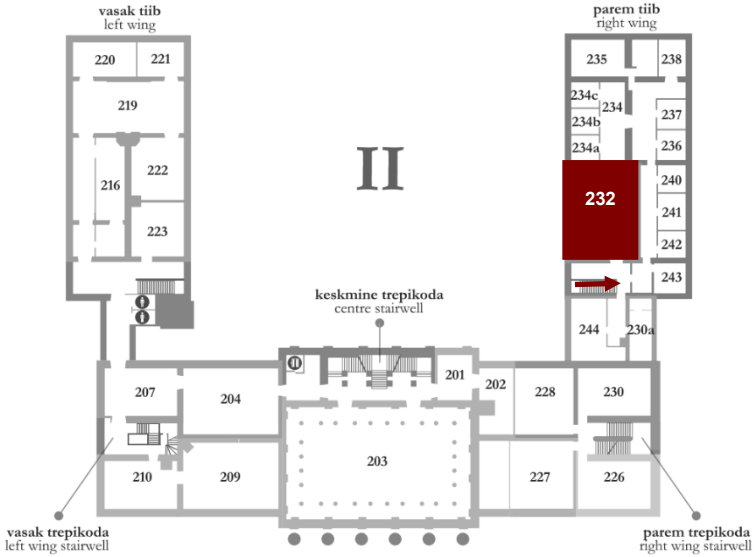
SEPTEMBER 28–29, 2024

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

ÜLIKOOI 18

ROOMS 128, 232

# MAIN BUILDING PLAN



# INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2008 in Tartu, the Nordic Workshop in Early Modern Philosophy (NWEMP) is an annual workshop rotating among the philosophy departments in the Nordic and Baltic regions. With the tagline “cool and scholarly”, it aims to further cooperation and dissemination of ideas among scholars of early modern philosophy in the area. As such, both high-level researchers and accomplished students are welcome to share their research.

## ORGANISERS

Roomet Jakapi

[roomet.jakapi@ut.ee](mailto:roomet.jakapi@ut.ee)

---

Ove Averin

[ove.averin@ut.ee](mailto:ove.averin@ut.ee)

---

Henri Otsing

[henri.otsing@ut.ee](mailto:henri.otsing@ut.ee)

---

# WORKSHOP PROGRAM

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28**

**10.00 ARRIVAL**

---

**10.35 WORDS OF WELCOME** (room 128)

---

**10.45 KEYNOTE** (room 128)

**Henrik Lagerlund:** Francisco Suárez on Free Will and doing Evil for the sake of Evil

*chair: Roomet Jakapi*

---

**11.45 COFFEE BREAK**

---

**12.00 PANEL I** (room 128)

*chair: Corey W. Dyck*

**Jan Forsman:** Teresa of Ávila and Descartes on Intellectual Clarity

**Semyon Reshenin:** Why Beauty Matters: Friedrich Schiller on the Practicality of Aesthetic Normativity

**PANEL II** (room 232)

*chair: Valtteri Viljanen*

**Christopher Kluz:** Spinoza on the Illusion of the Free Will of Others and the Idea of Human Being

**Emanuele Costa:** Limited Being: Spinoza's Forgotten Definition

---

**13.00 LUNCH BREAK**

28<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup> September, Tartu

---

**14.30 PANEL III** (room 128)  
*chair: Emanuele Costa*

**PANEL IV** (room 232)  
*chair: Riin Sirkel*

---

**Markku Roinila:** From Atomism to Panpsychism – Leibniz's Earliest Views of the Mind (1664–1671)

**Adi Efal-Lautenschläger:** Mental Habit and its Challenges in John Locke's *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*

---

**Åsa Carlson:** Identity in Hume's Treatise: A Medium betwixt Unity and Number

**Roomet Jakapi, Uku Tooming:** Early Modern A-aphantasia

---

**15.30 COFFEE BREAK**

---

**16.00 PANEL V** (room 128)  
*chair: Markku Roinila*

**PANEL VI** (room 232)  
*chair: Dietrich Schotte*

---

**Kristijona Čerapaitė:** The Dilemma of Leibniz's Universal Characteristic: an Instrument of Science or an Instrument of Thought?

**Margherita Giordano:** "Die unendliche Masse des Urseins": Sophie Mereau's Novel in Light of the Pantheism Controversy

---

**Carlos Portales:** The Role of Evil in Leibniz's Metaphysics of Value

**Daniel Špelda:** Bernard de Fontenelle on Scientific Curiosity

---

**17.00 BREAK**

---

**17.15 BOOK PRESENTATION** (room 128)

**Francesco Orsi,** *The Guise of the Good*, 2023  
In conversation with **Henrik Lagerlund** and **Riin Sirkel**

---

## SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

10.00 MORNING COFFEE

---

10.15 TOUR OF THE MAIN BUILDING

---

11.45 COFFEE BREAK

---

12:00 KEYNOTE (room 128)

**Eva Piirimäe:** The Politics of Metamorphosis versus Palingenesis in the German Enlightenment

---

13.00 LUNCH BREAK

---

14.30 **PANEL VII** (room 128)  
*chair: Christopher Kluz*

**Valtteri Viljanen:** The Early Kant's Dual Layer Theory of Power

**Corey W. Dyck:** Maria von Herbert and Kantian Moral Pessimism

**PANEL VIII** (room 232)  
*chair: Jan Forsman*

**Dietrich Schotte:** What, If Anything, Do We Owe Ourselves? Pufendorf, Thomasius and Wolff on the Duty *ad seipsum*

**Kadi Kähär-Peterson:** A Political Philosophy of History: Garlieb Merkel's Changing Ideas of History and Future

---

15.30 COFFEE BREAK

---

16.00 **BOOK PRESENTATION** (room 128)

**Eva Piirimäe:** *Herder and Enlightenment Politics*, 2023

---

17:00 CLOSING REMARKS

# ABSTRACTS

## DAY 1

<b>Henrik Lagerlund</b> Francisco Suárez on Free Will and doing Evil for the sake of Evil	6
<b>Jan Forsman</b> Teresa of Ávila and Descartes on Intellectual Clarity	7
<b>Semyon Reshenin:</b> Why Beauty Matters: Friedrich Schiller on the Practicality of Aesthetic Normativity	8
<b>Christopher Kluz</b> Spinoza on the Illusion of the Free Will of Others and the Idea of Human Being	9
<b>Emanuele Costa</b> Limited Being: Spinoza's Forgotten Definition	10
<b>Markku Roinila</b> From Atomism to Panpsychism – Leibniz's Earliest Views of the Mind (1664–1671)	11
<b>Åsa Carlson</b> Identity in Hume's Treatise: A Medium betwixt Unity and Number	12
<b>Adi Efal-Lautenschläger</b> Mental Habit and its Challenges in John Locke's <i>Of the Conduct of the Understanding</i>	13
<b>Roomet Jakapi, Uku Tooming</b> Early Modern A-aphantasia	14
<b>Kristijona Čerapaitė</b> The Dilemma of Leibniz's Universal Characteristic: an Instrument of Science or an Instrument of Thought?	15
<b>Carlos Portales</b> The Role of Evil in Leibniz's Metaphysics of Value	16
<b>Margherita Giordano</b> " <i>Die unendliche Masse des Urseins</i> ": Sophie Mereau's Novel in Light of the Pantheism Controversy	17
<b>Daniel Špelda</b> Bernard de Fontenelle on Scientific Curiosity	18

## DAY 2

<b>Eva Piirimäe</b> The Politics of Metamorphosis versus Palingenesis in the German Enlightenment	19
<b>Valtteri Viljanen</b> The Early Kant's Dual Layer Theory of Power	20
<b>Corey W. Dyck</b> Maria von Herbert and Kantian Moral Pessimism	21
<b>Dietrich Schotte</b> What, If Anything, Do We Owe Ourselves? Pufendorf, Thomasiaus and Wolff on the Duty <i>ad seipsum</i>	22
<b>Kadi Kähär-Peterson</b> A Political Philosophy of History: Garlieb Merkel's Changing Ideas of History and Future	23

# DAY 1. KEYNOTE

## Francisco Suárez on Free Will and doing Evil for the sake of Evil

### Henrik Lagerlund

*Director of Graduate Studies, Theoretical Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Stockholm University*

*henrik.lagerlund@philosophy.su.se*

In this talk, I will develop a view of free will that Suárez seems to defend in his earlier commentary on Aquinas' Prima secundae of the *Summa Theologiae*. It is entitled: *De vitiis atque peccatis* ("On Vices and Sins") and is part of his *Tractatus quinque ad primam secundae D. Thomae*. It seems to differ from the view he defends in later more mature works like *De legibus* and *Disputationes metaphysicae*.



# Teresa of Ávila and Descartes on Intellectual Clarity

**Jan Forsman**

*Tampere University*

*jan.forsman@tuni.fi*

Since Mercer’s groundbreaking article (2017), several researchers have demonstrated striking similarities between Descartes’s *Meditations* (1641) and Teresa of Ávila’s (1515–1582) *Castillo Interior* (1588) (e.g., Underkuffler 2020; Forsman 2023; Griffioen and Phillips 2024). Much of this discussion has concentrated on the meditative form and the examples of demonic deceivers in the two works. In this paper, I will argue that Descartes’s influence from Teresa goes further than the meditative exercise form and demon scenarios and includes even his famous theory of *clarity and distinctness*, through Teresa’s description of so-called ‘intellectual visions’ (e.g., *Castillo* vi, v, 10). Teresa’s visions were suspected to be of demonic origin, which motivated her to distinguish true visions from those originating from imagination or demons. The distinctions which Teresa offers for knowing when a vision is true are rather similar to the ways which Descartes attempts to distinguish clear and distinct perceptions as reliable, relying on examples and the strength of the experience instead of definitions or formal rules. Typically, Descartes’s quest for clarity and distinctness has been seen, especially after Popkin (1960; 2003), as rising from skeptical influence by Neo-Pyrrhonism. However, I argue that Teresa’s attempts at defending her intellectual visions likewise inspired Descartes in his own attempts at distinguishing clear and distinct perceptions as reliable.

## Why Beauty Matters: Friedrich Schiller on the Practicality of Aesthetic Normativity

**Semyon Reshenin**

University of Tartu

semen.reshenin@gmail.com

In this paper, I show that Friedrich Schiller, while building on Immanuel Kant's aesthetics, offers a drastically different understanding of aesthetic normativity. Whereas Kant offers us rather the perspective of the art connoisseur, thereby modeling aesthetic normativity as quasi-theoretical, Schiller takes the perspective of the creator, viewing beauty not as something we discover in the world but as a practical imperative that moves us toward ennobling the world and ourselves. To prove my thesis, I focus on three pieces of evidence. First, in the deduction of aesthetic judgments in *Kallias Briefe*, Schiller directly ties aesthetic judgments to practical reason, and beauty to freedom conceptualized as self-determination. Second, in the deduction of beauty in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, Schiller argues that aesthetic experience is a necessary condition of humanity, that is, of a healthy human agency. Third, in *Augustenburger Briefe* and *Über den moralischen Nutzen ästhetischer Sitten*, Schiller deals with concrete examples of how the pursuit of beauty shapes actions, showing that aesthetic normativity can replace or ennoble moral normativity.

# Spinoza on the Illusion of the Free Will of Others and the Idea of Human Being

**Christopher Kluz**

*Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen*  
*christopherkluz@cuhk.edu.cn*

While commentators have long pointed out the significance Spinoza places on his teaching concerning the illusion of free will in order to overcome the passions and much has been made of his analysis of this illusion, less attention has been paid to why we ascribe free will to other human beings. In a rare mention, Yitzhak Melamed attempts to provide an answer by appealing to Spinoza's argument for the imitation of affects (136). However, I argue the ascription of free will to other individuals cannot be explained through the mechanism of the imitation of affects, because such an the imitation of affects could not ascribe a false belief we hold *of ourselves* as an illusion *to others* given the way Spinoza understand the origin of this illusion. Instead, I argue that the illusion of free will, because it results from an imaginative universal, namely of the will, is ascribed to others through another imaginative universal, namely that of human being (*homo*), that is informed by our own self-understanding. Consequently, overcoming the error involved in the illusion of free will requires both an adequate idea of the will and an adequate idea of human being. In this paper, firstly, I provide an overview of the illusion of free will as a necessary experience based on ignorance of the true nature of the will as a created universal notion from the affirmations involved in singular volitions. Then, I explain how the Spinozist mechanism of universal formation explains the ascription of the illusion of free will to other human individuals. Finally, I provide some framework for understanding the adequate idea of the will as a general feature of the attribute of thought (often called an infinite mode in the literature) and the adequate idea of human being (Spinoza's controversial reference to the essence of human beings).

Melamed, Yitzhak. "The Causes of our Belief in Free Will: Spinoza on Necessary, "Innate," yet False Cognition", in *Cambridge Critical Guide to Spinoza's Ethics*, ed. Yitzhak Melamed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

## Limited Being: Spinoza's Forgotten Definition

**Emanuele Costa**

Vanderbilt University

emanuele.costa@vanderbilt.edu

In recent years, scholarship on Spinoza's philosophy has devolved considerable attention to the importance of relations in the functioning of the metaphysical system of the *Ethics*. In particular, following authorities such as Della Rocca and Melamed, most scholars identify three fundamental relations at work in the metaphysical system of Spinoza, namely causation, conception, and inherence. Each of these metaphysical relations is instrumental to affirming the metaphysical difference that separates the in-itself, through-itself, by-itself being of substance from the in-another, through-another, by-another being of modes. Hence, significant effort has been devolved to verifying the suitability of those relations for mutual reducibility, since they seem to be congruent and coextensive. However, such efforts ignore the fact that in the same lines where he establishes these three metaphysical relations, Spinoza introduces a fourth one, limitation. Specifically, in E1d2, Spinoza affirms that "That thing is said to be finite in its own kind that can be limited by another of the same nature. For example, a body is called finite because we always conceive another that is greater. Thus, a thought is limited by another thought. But a body is not limited by a thought, nor a thought by a body". In this essay, I argue that limitation, insofar as it intersects with notions of essence ("nature") and existence, is a missing piece of Spinoza's metaphysical system that warrants as much investigation as the fundamental three relations classically identified. Moreover, I argue that limitation carries out a fundamental role in Spinoza's metaphysics insofar as it establishes the possibility for self-limitation that guarantees the plurality of God's infinite attributes, and ultimately secures Spinoza's philosophy against acosmist interpretations.

## From Atomism to Panpsychism – Leibniz's Earliest Views of the Mind (1664–1671)

**Markku Roinila**

*Adjunct Professor, Department of Philosophy, History and Art Studies, University of Helsinki*

*mroinila@gmail.com*

Leibniz did not really have a philosophy of mind in his early career, but there are related passages in his youthful writings on physics, metaphysics, law, and theology which suggest that his efforts to explain substance were full of new openings and sudden rejections.

First, he tried a synthesis of Aristotelian and mechanistic views, rejecting Cartesian extension and adopting atomism, while relying on God's concurrent mind to ground the motion of bodies. Soon he grew dissatisfied with this view and gave a role to human mind in metaphysics, returning to substantial forms. Finally Leibniz considered the bodies to be "momentary minds", a view akin to panpsychism.

I will present Leibniz's intellectual adventure of influences from Aristotle, Gassendi and Hobbes through several texts, including a small note on *Philosophica practica* of Jacob Thomasius (1664), correspondence with Thomasius, *Confessio naturae contra atheistas* (1668), *De Transsubstantione* (1668) and *Theoria motus abstracti* (1671). I will consider the reasons for Leibniz's quick change of positions on the mind in the different texts and argue that while Leibniz's early views were not systematic, they were consistent in their metaphysical and theological context and reflect his willingness and skill to reconcile between conflicting views.

## Identity in Hume's *Treatise*: A Medium betwixt Unity and Number

**Åsa Carlson**

Stockholm University, Department of Philosophy  
asa.carlson@philosophy.su.se

In *Treatise* 1.4.2, Hume explains how we acquire the idea of identity. Identity in the sense of “*an object is the same with itself*” is uninformative: by that “we really shou’d mean nothing, nor wou’d the proposition contain a predicate and a subject... One single object conveys the idea of unity, not that of identity” (T 1.4.2.26). Several objects convey the idea of *number*, no matter how resembling they are (T 1.4.2.27), and so does adding a time difference to the identity statement. Either we have to conceive of *x* at both points of time at once, or in succession (T 1.4.2.28). Hume concludes that the idea of identity is the impossible medium “Betwixt unity and number” (T 1.4.2.28). Using a fiction, he solves the problem. But how are we supposed to understand the solution? What is the fiction? In opposition to influential interpretations, I argue that Hume formulates an idea that actually *is* a medium, not between unity and number but between those statements of identity that are trivial and those that are potentially uncertain, namely statements of identity that are true and informative. This is not how *Hume* describes the solution, but a way of making it intelligible.

## **Mental Habit and its Challenges in John Locke's *Of the Conduct of the Understanding***

**Adi Efal-Lautenschläger**

*Department of Philosophy, Ben Gurion University of the Negev  
efallaut@bgu.ac.il*

Locke's posthumous "Some thoughts on the conduct of the understanding" (written in 1697, published 1706) incorporates a full-blown theory of method. It constitutes a detailed enumeration of the essential activities that human understanding can perform, and it draws a system of guidelines for the practice of those activities in the manner of habituation most useful for the development of reason. It is accepted to refer to the "Conduct" as complimentary to the "Thoughts concerning education" (1693), the latter concentrating on concrete, sometimes very physical procedures to be followed in the education of the young. My paper aims however to examine the "Conduct of the understanding" as a treatise dealing with the construction of a proper *method*. As such, one should, in the first place look rather at how the "Conduct" stands to the side of the epistemology of the *Treatise concerning human understanding* (1689). In as much as the basis of the discussion of the *Treatise* tends to be essentially descriptive, the "Conduct of the understanding" is a prescriptive text, aiming at an artificial construction of a knowhow for the education of the understanding, and hence to establish a proper mental habit.

## Early Modern A-phantasia

### Roomet Jakapi, Uku Tooming

*University of Tartu, University of Tartu  
roomet.jakapi@ut.ee, uku.tooming@gmail.com*

There are people who lack the ability to form (conscious) mental images. This condition is called 'aphantasia'. Although already documented by Francis Galton, it is now empirically well-established.

In our paper, we consider the repercussions of the phenomenon of aphantasia for theories of general ideas advanced by such Early Modern philosophers as Locke, Berkeley and Hume. We argue that aphantasia poses a serious challenge to those theories.

Specifically, our focus is on what we call 'Necessity of Image Thesis' (NIT) about the formation of general ideas. According to NIT, having and manipulating mental images is necessary for processes of generalization. We argue that the philosophers in question were committed to NIT because generalizations in their sense require particular ideas out of which general ideas are formed and particular ideas as materials for generalizations can be identified with mental images in the contemporary sense. Given that aphantasiacs are incapable of forming mental images, NIT entails that they are incapable of forming general ideas out of particular ones. This is a highly unpalatable consequence because general ideas are required for thinking as such.

We then consider some responses that could have been given to this argument by the Early Modern philosophers. For instance, they could have argued that the processes of generalization typically occur unconsciously, while aphantasia only concerns the capacity for conscious imagery.



## The Dilemma of Leibniz's Universal Characteristic: an Instrument of Science or an Instrument of Thought?

**Kristijona Čerapaitė**

Vilnius University

kristijona.cerapaitė@fsf.stud.vu.lt

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's idea of *characteristica universalis* constituted one of the central projects of his philosophy, aimed to facilitate understanding and explicate the domain of knowledge. Despite various plans of implementation, Leibniz's dream of the universal characteristic imposes a mystery as the scope of the project has remained ambiguous. According to some, it suggests a sort of universal writing in the form of a language of thought (Mugnai 2018). Yet there is also some indication within Leibniz's writings that the universal characteristic is closely related to *scientia generalis* and should be understood as the main instrument for its implementation (Dascal 2008).

This context of the universal characteristic raises fundamental questions about the relationship between science and thought within Leibniz's philosophical framework. It suggests a unity between the structure of sciences and human reasoning, positioning the universal characteristic as crucial for formulating, communicating, and advancing ideas within the general science. Thus, this paper explores how Leibniz envisioned the universal characteristic as both a scientific and a cognitive instrument, and the two-fold implications for understanding his broader philosophical discourse.

Mugnai, M. (2018). *Ars characteristica, logical calculus, and natural languages*. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Leibniz*, ed. M. R. Antognazza. New York: Oxford University Press, 177–207.

Dascal, M. (2008). *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. The Art of Controversies*. Dordrecht: Springer.

## The Role of Evil in Leibniz's Metaphysics of Value

**Carlos Portales**

*Universidad de Chile (University of Chile)*

*carlosportalesg@gmail.com*

Leibniz's solutions to the problem of evil can be split into two groups: first, those that seek to explain how this is the most perfect possible world *despite* containing evil and, second, those that affirm that this is the most perfect possible world, partly, *because* of evil. My presentation focusses on the latter group. I have encountered four different theses that explain the paradoxical idea that evil contributes to the world's metaphysical value: (1) evil as a divine expression of retributive justice, (2) evil as an expression of the mechanical rationality of nature, (3) evil as an expression of diversity and (4) evil as an expression of the process of harmonious resolution. In my presentation I evaluate the development of these theses throughout the author's work and analyse their consistency in relation to each other and to Leibniz's views on metaphysical perfection. I conclude that the thesis most consistent with the others is (4), since it manages to explain all the previous ones. However, this thesis requires us to understand the metaphysical perfection of the world as a process, which challenges some of the conventional views on the topic.

## **"Die unendliche Masse des Urseins": Sophie Mereau's Novel in Light of the Pantheism Controversy**

**Margherita Giordano**

*FINO – Northwest Italy Philosophy PhD Program, Università del Piemonte Orientale  
margherita.giordano@unito.it*

Sophie Mereau is a fascinating figure in Early German Romanticism: active in Jena during its peak cultural ferment, she was at the center of its literary and philosophical circles and became one of the most successful women writers of her time. While her production is distinctly literary, it nevertheless reveals a wide range of themes deeply rooted in the contemporary philosophical discourse.

The proposed presentation will focus on Mereau's debut novel, *Das Blütenalter der Empfindung* (1794), and an unpublished fragment, where Mereau didn't shy away from metaphysical questions concerning the ground of reality and its relationship to finite beings and humans. I will argue that her exploration of these metaphysical problems hints at her familiarity and engagement with the debates surrounding vitalism, mechanism, and the interpretation of Spinoza during the *Pantheismusstreit*. Mereau's narrative fiction becomes the means to explore the various conceptual alternatives within this controversy, as she takes the materialist and fatalist interpretation of Spinoza very seriously, while also trying to chart a path towards a vitalist perspective. Through such intellectual exercise, Mereau appears to take the initial steps toward a vision in which love is seen as the metaphysical force that guarantees unity and harmony within the cosmos.

## Bernard de Fontenelle on Scientific Curiosity

**Daniel Špelda**

*Masaryk University in Brno (Czech Republic), Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy*

My contribution concerns the notion of scientific curiosity in the texts of Bernard de Fontenelle. In the history of philosophy and theology, curiosity has been a label for inquiry that had the ambition to go beyond the limits set to human knowledge. Often curiosity meant the knowledge of things that God has not revealed to humans - or the knowledge of things that are useless to humanity. In the long run, early modern culture saw the rehabilitation of curiosity from a vice to a virtue. In my article, I want to focus on how Bernard de Fontenelle, secretary of the Royal Academy of Sciences, worked with the concept of curiosity. From 1699 on, Fontenelle published volumes of the *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences*, which summarized the work of the academics. I argue that in these volumes Fontenelle defended scientific curiosity as a free exploration that need not be justified by immediate utility. He was thus defending natural philosophy/science against positions that considered scientific knowledge of nature to be a vanity (Christian apologetics) and that demanded from scientists legitimizing their activities and their pensions with some sort of utility (state administration). Fontenelle insisted that utility always comes only as an effect of an unrestricted pursuit of understanding nature, which at first sight may appear to be merely an aimless curiosity.

# DAY 2. KEYNOTE

## **The Politics of Metamorphosis versus Palingenesis in the German Enlightenment: Kant on the Self-Determination of Peoples and the ‘Unjust Enemy’**

**Eva Piirimäe**

*Professor of Political Theory Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies University of Tartu*

*eva.piirimae@ut.ee*

In the late 18th century, biological metaphors began to permeate the language of politics, mingling with those borrowed from mechanics. Sometimes, a ‘natural’ agent—a people—was found to exist within current ‘state-machines’. In other cases, states themselves were seen as being born, growing, evolving, dying, and being reborn. A remarkable example of the latter is Immanuel Kant, who introduced the metaphors of ‘metamorphosis’ and ‘palingenesis’ when discussing constitutional change. The aim of the lecture is to elucidate why he did so, and to compare his thinking to that of some of his major adversaries and creative followers (Johann Gottfried Herder, Johann Benjamin Erhard). It will argue that although Kant was a defender of metamorphosis over palingenesis in constitutional change, he suggested that the French Republican palingenesis had eventually given way to a salutary politics of metamorphosis in both the domestic and international realms. Thereby, he helped to coin a specific understanding of the ideal of the self-determination of peoples consistent with the goal of international peace. However, this politics was not entirely pacific. He believed that the new Republic was justified in calling for the creation of an international defensive military league against an ‘unjust enemy’ seeking to annihilate the novel processes that had begun not only within itself, but significantly also at the international level. Such an enemy could even be forced to change its constitution. At the same time, Kant’s politics was radically future-oriented, disputing the legitimacy of attempting a restoration of a formerly existing but militarily conquered state.

## The Early Kant's Dual Layer Theory of Power

**Valtteri Viljanen**

University of Turku

valvil@utu.fi

In this paper I argue that the early Kant's *Physical Monadology* (1756) – which attempts to solve the philosophical problem of reconciling the infinite divisibility of space with the substantial status of material bodies – is best understood within the framework of substance–accident ontology. I begin by showing how Kant relies on that ontology when arguing that composition as a relation can be taken away, leaving us with simple substances or monads. After this, I discuss apparently conflicting two interpretative camps considering the “force by which the simple element of a body occupies its space” (1:482). Given that neither of them is satisfactory, I explain the way in which Kant's theory of grounds, positing, and determinations draws on the Aristotelian theory of substances, essences, and necessary and non-necessary accidents. In causal terms, this framework amounts to a theory of powers in which both the internal determinations constitutive of a substance and the accidents they posit are causally efficacious. This enables us to see that the existing interpreting camps result from highlighting different aspects of Kant's quite nuanced theory of monadic powers. To express that theory economically, it can be called a dual layer theory of power: monads are (1) essentially powerful substances that bring about (2) three kinds of powers – repulsive, attractive, and inertial – as accidents; from these accidents, in turn, result such properties as impenetrability, volume, shape, and cohesion. In virtue of the latter type of powers, a monad most importantly has a determinate sphere of influence by which it occupies space and prevents other things penetrating the space it fills – thereby entering in the mechanical world of bodies. The defended interpretation can thus reveal the full nature of the early Kant's fine-grained theory of monadic powers and show it to be quite understandable in its ingenious use of a time-honored ontological framework in a post-Newtonian setting.

## Maria von Herbert and Kantian Moral Pessimism

**Corey W. Dyck**

Western University  
cdyck5@uwo.ca

It is an odd circumstance that Maria von Herbert's letters to Kant are often approached through the framework originally proposed by Johann Benjamin Erhard, a mutual friend (and misogynist). According to Erhard, the "key" to her letter lies in the personal circumstances—the breaking of her friend's trust in confessing her previous relationship—that preceded her reaching out to Kant and led to her "fanatical" state of mind. To approach the letters solely from this perspective, however, is profoundly uncharitable to a woman who was an active member of an intellectual milieu devoted to the careful study of Kantian philosophy. Moreover, the themes that crop up in her letters to Kant—the permissibility of suicide, the significance of boredom, and the meaninglessness of existence—all point to a deeper, pessimistic, philosophical outlook on Herbert's part which, one would presume, antedates the soured relationship that precipitated her first letter to Kant (and in any case continues to be invoked after that relationship's repair) and which in all likelihood already informed her reception of and engagement with Kant's philosophy.

In my presentation, I will attempt to reconstruct the pessimistic line of thought that Maria von Herbert was, to my knowledge, the first to discern in Kant's works. In order to do this, I will consider Kant's own reception of thinkers who are today identified as key figures in the early modern pessimistic tradition (namely J.-J. Rousseau and Pierre Bayle), but also draw on later representations of the Kantian philosophy by self-identifying pessimistic thinkers (especially Arthur Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann). As I will suggest, what might have originally drawn Herbert to Kant's thought was that she found within it a sympathetic pessimistic thinker, one who likewise regarded human existence as out of place in the natural world and all efforts to attain lasting satisfaction through our distinctive capacities as doomed to failure. It was, additionally, precisely on account of what she took to be a shared pessimistic view of the affairs of this world that she reaches out to Kant for an explanation of his (to her mind) inconsistent prohibition on suicide. In the end, reading Kant through Herbert's eyes will show that she is hardly a *Schwärmerin* but rather a highly original thinker within the early Kantian tradition, and indeed something of a missing link between Kant and Schopenhauer.

## What, If Anything, Do We Owe Ourselves? Pufendorf, Thomasius and Wolff on the Duty *ad seipsum*

**Dietrich Schotte**

University of Regensburg  
dietrich.schotte@ur.de

In his *De officio hominis et civis* Samuel Pufendorf established the distinction between duties „towards God“, „towards oneself“, and „towards others,“ that shaped many Enlightenment natural law doctrines up to Kant. While the duties “towards God” and “towards others” are intelligible as *duties*, the duty “towards oneself” seems to be less so – because in what sense can I “owe myself” any kind of action or good? Even more so, in Pufendorf the duty “towards oneself,” i.e. to cultivate one’s talents for the benefit of society, seems to be something I owe *to others* that not only benefit by it, but who are also the ones allowed to enforce it.

In my paper I want to (1) highlight the ambiguity of Pufendorf’s concept. Following this, I will discuss two alternative formulations of this duty: while (2) Thomasius decisively opted for it to be a duty *owed* to others but *exercised* against oneself, (3) Wolff formulated a comprehensive account of this duty as one I owe myself since I am obliged to strive for “perfection,” which includes the cultivation of my talents etc. It is only in Wolff’s ethics, therefore, that we find a full-fledged and convincing account of the duty to cultivate one’s talents as a duty “towards oneself.”



## **A Political Philosophy of History: Garlieb Merkel's Changing Ideas of History and Future**

**Kadi Kähär-Peterson**

*University of Tartu*

*kadi.kahar@gmail.com*

Garlieb Merkel was a Baltic German political thinker and journalist, who was keen to support his political or social proposals with a philosophy of history. For example, he called for the abolition of serfdom based, among other factors, on the idea of 'alternation and return', which he believed governed the history of peoples and the universe. However, in the first decade of the 19th century, Merkel began to advocate the progress of humanity, partly due to the threat he saw in Napoleon, who he believed was hindering progress by universalising European nations.

Some scholars suggest that Merkel's philosophy of history was merely a tool to support his political arguments, while others claim that he did not understand politics because he was influenced by Enlightenment philosophy. This paper explores whether there is a third way to interpret his philosophy of history. Perhaps, in his case, the intertwining of politics and philosophy is inevitable, making it more appropriate to ask what kind of weaknesses and strengths this connection brings to his interpretation of his contemporary society and his view of the philosophy of history.





