Andrew R. Platt

Department of Philosophy
Stony Brook University
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Area of Specialization

History of Early Modern Philosophy

Areas of Competence

History of Ancient Philosophy, History of Medieval Philosophy, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics

Education

Ph.D. in Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; September 2010.
A.B. in Philosophy, Magna Cum Laude, Lafayette College; May 2001.

Academic Appointments

Assistant Professor, Stony Brook University - SUNY, 2013-2020
Instructor, Central Michigan University, 2011-2013
Instructor / Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Delaware, 2009-2011
Visiting Assistant Professor, St. Cloud State University, 2007-2009

Books

One True Cause: Causal Powers, Divine Concurrence, and the Seventeenth Century Revival of Occasionalism (Oxford University Press, 2020)

This monograph offers a new account of the seventeenth century revival of Occasionalism. I develop an analysis of Occasionalism by situating it against the background of medieval discussions of divine providence; and I respond to scholars who argue that Occasionalism is a logical consequence of Descartes' physics, or a response to worries about the problem of mind-body causal interaction in Descartes' metaphysics. I make the case that the earliest Cartesian Occasionalists – Arnold Geulincx, Geraud de Cordemoy and Louis de la Forge – adopted Occasionalism as a way to offer original arguments for core features of the Cartesian system. Thus I argue that Cartesian Occasionalism was neither an ad hoc solution to the mind-body problem, nor a logical consequence of Descartes' own views, but rather an attempt to extend and better systematize Cartesian philosophy.

Transforming Freedom: The Birth of the Modern Free Will Problem in Early Modern European Philosophy (in progress)

Contemporary philosophers often express the problem of free will in terms of the concept of a law of nature: How can human actions truly be free, if every state of the world is the result of prior events, together with the laws of nature? The modern conception of a law of nature emerged in the first half of the seventeenth century -- most notably in the works of Descartes. Yet when seventeenth and early eighteenth century authors, such as Descartes, Malebranche and Leibniz, discuss freedom of the will, they think about human free action in different terms. In particular, they discuss freedom of the will in the context of late Scholastic debates about the nature of God's providence and grace. The "classical" formulation of the free will problem in terms of deterministic laws of nature does not emerge until the mid-eighteenth century, in the work of Hume. This book explores the evolution of the modern problem of free will from the late sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century. It argues that seventeenth and eighteenth century discussions about theological and psychological determinism encompass a broad range of concerns about embodiment, moral psychology and social interconnection that came to excluded from later formulations of the free-will problem. These therapeutic concerns are highlighted in the work of some early modern women philosophers, such as Margaret Cavendish and Mary Astell. I argue that the conception of "relational autonomy" found in these authors is rooted in the work of Descartes and Malebranche.

Articles

"Divine Activity and Motive Power in Descartes' Physics – Part I", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 19(04) 2011: 623-646.

"Divine Activity and Motive Power in Descartes' Physics – Part II", *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 19(05) 2011: 849-871.

"Defending a "Compatibilist" Reading of Descartes on the Will" (under review, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*)

Book Chapters

"Cordemoy and the Motives for Cartesian Occasionalism," in Nazif Moturoglu (ed.), *Occasionalism Revisited: New Essays from the Islamic and Western Philosophical Traditions*, Kalam Research & Media (Abu Dhabi, UAE: 2017), pp. 139-166.

Book Reviews

Book review. Delphine Antoine-Mahut and Sophie Roux (eds.), *Physics and Metaphysics in Descartes and His Reception* (Routledge, 2019). *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, published online July 25, 2019.

Book review. Sandrine Roux, *L'Empreinte cartésienne: L'interaction psychophysique, débats classiques et contemporains* (Classiques Garniers, 2018). *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 58(1) 2020: 175-177.

Papers in Progress

"Free Agents and the "Realm of Nature" in Descartes' Physics"

"Malebranche's Compatibilism"

"Idealism and Occasionalism in Geulincx and Berkeley"

Presentations

"Free Agents and the "Realm of Nature" in Descartes' Physics" at the Fifteenth Biennial Homecoming Conference, Philosophy Department, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, October 2019.

"Free Will, Determinism and the Laws of Physics in Descartes," invited talk, Philosophy Department, Nassau Community College, April 2019.

"Knowledge and Causation in Geulincx and Malebranche" at the conference *Causa Sive Ratio: Causality and Reason in Modernity Between Metaphysics, Epistemology and Scienc*e, University of Milan, November 2017.

"Models of Efficient Causation in Geulincx and Clauberg" at the British Society for the History of Philosophy Annual Conference, University of Sheffield, April 2017.

"Reexamining Malebranche's Case for Occasionalism" at the Atlantic Canada Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Dalhousie University, July 2016.

"Free Agents and the "Realm of Nature" in Descartes' Physics" at the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, April 2015.

"Defending a "Compatibilist" Reading of Descartes on the Will," Descartes Society Meeting at the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, December 2014.

"Causal Powers in Cartesian Physics: Descartes' Laws of Nature in La Forge and Clauberg" at The International Society for the History and Philosophy of Science Congress (HOPOS 2014), Ghent University, July 2014.

"Cordemoy and the Motives for Cartesian Occasionalism" at the First Conference of the International Society for the Study of Occasionalism, Harvard Divinity School, May 2013.

"Johann Clauberg's Account of Mind-Body Interaction" at the American Philosophical Association, Central Division, February 2012.

"In Defense of Occasionalism," Philosophy & Religion Department Colloquium, Central Michigan University, November 2011.

"Malebranche's Compatibilism," at the South Central Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Texas A&M University, November 2011.

"Malebranche and Compatibilism," Philosophy Department Faculty Seminar, University of Delaware, November 2010.

"How Johann Clauberg Solved the Mind-Body Problem," Philosophy Department Colloquium, University of Delaware, March 2010.

"The Evolution of the Concept of an Occasional Cause: Clauberg and La Forge on 'Occasions' for Sensation" at the 1st Quebec Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Sherbrooke, Quebec, October 2009.

"Descartes on the Causes of Motion: Reevaluating the Evidence for an Occasionalist Reading of Descartes' Physics" at the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division, April 2009.

"Active Powers and Passive Extension: The Roles of Devine Activity and Motive Force in Descartes' Physics" at the Midwest Seminar in Early Modern Philosophy, Marquette University, November 2008.

"The Place of Analytic Geometry in Descartes' Philosophy and the Role of "Determination" in Descartes' Philosophy of Mind", Mathematics Department Colloquium, St. Cloud State University, November 2007.

"God in Motion: Occasionalism (or the lack thereof) in Descartes' Physics," Philosophy Department Graduate Student Colloquium, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, December 2006.

Other Professional Activities

Convener, Book Symposium on Tad Schmatlz, *Early Modern Cartesianisms: Dutch and French Constructions* (Oxford University Press, 2017), for *Syndicate Philosophy* (forthcoming)

Commenter, Jerilyn Tinio, "The Mind's Figurative Force: On the Compatibility of Mind-Body Interaction and Descartes's Principle of the Conservation of Motion," American Philosophical Association, Central Division Meeting, March 2017.

Commenter, Dan Kaufman, "Cartesian Substances, Individual Bodies, and Corruptibility," Twelfth Biennial Homecoming Conference, Philosophy Department, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, October 2013.

Commenter, Marci Lascano, "The Theodicean Elements of Anne Conway's *Principles*," Eleventh Biennial Homecoming Conference, Philosophy Department, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, October 2011.

Panelist, "Women Philosophers in the Curriculum: Teaching Non-Canonical Texts" at the *Women, Philosophy, and History: Conference Celebrating Eileen O'Neill and her Work*, Barnard Center for Research on Women, Barnard College, October 2009.

Responder at the Minnesota Philosophy Society Annual Meeting, Inver Hills Community College, October 2007.

Teaching

Courses taught at Stony Brook University:

Summer 2020

PHI 336: *Philosophy of Religion*

Spring 2020

PHI 277: *Political Philosophy*
PHI 104: *Moral Reasoning*
ACH 102: *First-Year Seminar (Early Utopian and Science Fiction)*

Fall 2019

PHI 602: *Early Modern Women Philosophers*
PHI 108: *Logical and Critical Thinking*

Summer 2019

PHI 336: *Philosophy of Religion*

Spring 2019
PHI 320: *Metaphysics*
PHI 220: *Introduction to Symbolic Logic*
ACH 102: *First-Year Seminar (Early Utopian and Science Fiction)*

Fall 2018
PHI 332: *Theories of Knowledge*
PHI 108: *Logical and Critical Thinking*

Summer 2018
PHI 336: *Philosophy of Religion*

Spring 2018
PHI 320: *Metaphysics*
PHI 306: *Modern Philosophy*

Fall 2017
PHI 401: *Individual Systems of the Great Philosophers (Spinoza)*
PHI 332: *Theories of Knowledge*

Summer 2017
PHI 277: *Political Philosophy*

Spring 2017
PHI 320: *Metaphysics*

Winter 2017
PHI 336: *Philosophy of Religion*

Fall 2016
PHI 604: *Freedom and Agency in Spinoza and Descartes*
PHI 395: *Junior Seminar* (*Fate and Determinism)*

Fall 2015
PHI 220: *Introduction to Symbolic Logic*
PHI 206: *Introduction to Modern Philosophy*

Summer 2015
PHI 336: *Philosophy of Religion*

Spring 2015

PHI 620: *Advanced Problems in Philosophy (Descartes)*
PHI 489: *Undergraduate Independent Study (Thomas Aquinas)*
PHI 104: *Moral Reasoning*

Fall 2014

PHI 489: *Undergraduate Independent Study (Thomas Aquinas)*
PHI 332: *Theories of Knowledge*
PHI 206: *Introduction to Modern Philosophy*

Spring 2014

PHI 306: *Modern Philosophy*
PHI 104: *Moral Reasoning*

Fall 2013

PHI 332: *Theories of Knowledge*
PHI 277: *Political Philosophy*

Courses taught elsewhere:

Introduction to Philosophy
Critical Thinking
Moral Problems
Biomedical Ethics
Social & Political Philosophy
Existential Philosophy
Philosophy of Art
Philosophy of Religion
History of Western Philosophy - Modern Period
Gender, Science and 17th Century Philosophy (Undergraduate Honors Course at SCSU)

Thesis Committees

Edoardo Bellando (PhD. Dissertation Committee, in progress)
Christopher Fremaux (Chair, PhD. Dissertation Committee, defended April 2020)
Matthew Rodriguez (Undergraduate Honors Thesis Committee, defended May 2017)
Harrison Fluss (PhD. Dissertation Committee, defended December 2016)
Oli Stephano (PhD. Dissertation Committee, defended November 2016)

Service

In the Philosophy Department at Stony Brook:

Search Committee (Open Rank Search), Fall 2016-Spring 2017.
Search Committee (Distinguished Professor / Chair Search), Fall 2015-Fall 2016.
Graduate Program Committee, Fall 2013-Spring 2017.
Doctoral Admissions Committee, January 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.
History Exam Committee, January and May, 2013-present.
Task Force on Undergraduate Course Assessment and Learning Outcomes, Fall 2013.

In the College of Arts and Sciences at Stony Brook:

Undergraduate Council, Humanities and Fine Arts Representative, Fall 2019-present.
Humanities Institute Advisory Board, Fall 2018-present.

Service in previous appointments:

Faculty Senate Representative (St. Cloud State University), 2007-2009.
Task Force for Critical Thinking Assessment Test (St. Cloud State University), 2008-2009.

Journal / Conference Refereeing

Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie
Canadian Journal of Philosophy
Journal of Modern Philosophy
Journal of Speculative Philosophy
Atlantic Canada Seminar on Early Modern Philosophy

Foreign and Classical Language Skills

Latin: reading proficiency
French: reading proficiency
Ancient Greek: basic reading ability

Professional References

Thomas Lennon, Professor Emeritus, Western Ontario University, London, ON
tlennon@uwo.ca (519) 661-3453

Jeffrey Edwards, Professor, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY
jeff.edwards@stonybrook.edu (631) 632-7570

Amy Schmitter, Professor, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB
amy.schmitter@ualberta.ca (780) 492-9030