

## Abstracts

**Sarah Abbott** (Royal Roads University and University of Regina)

**Academic field:** Film studies, film production, drama, art, media arts and social sciences

**Title:** Tree Talking: Vulnerability in Nonhuman Inquiry and Representation

**Abstract:**

The proposed presentation considers vulnerability in the context of research with nonhumans and interspecies communication, with a specific focus on trees as individual, agentic beings with sentience, intelligence, perception, and consciousness. Trees in this holistic perspective are related to as “biosocial becomings,” an understanding conceptualised by Tim Ingold that views nonhuman and human life as evolving equally and intrinsically through both social and biological influences. Nonhumans, just as humans, are conative entities, deeply embedded in their own life force, purpose, and interconnections with the environment(s) they interact with as home and community. As Abram asserts, other beings are also “listening, speaking.” Western anthropocentric, reductionist, and consumerist stances that inform and limit the ways modern humans understand nature evolved from animistic and relational sensibilities that explicitly recognized kinship between all living beings. These ancient sensibilities are alive in Indigenous worldviews that know, respect and incorporate interrelations with nonhumans in their cultures. To inquire and write honestly within this framework is to push the edge of respectable and sane academic and scientific research defined by such figures as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Popper. As Lien and Pálsson discuss, historically, ethnographic “attention to the ‘other-than-human’ has been ... sidelined by human-centered theoretical pursuits.” My presentation emerges from my doctoral research, “An Ethnography of Trees: Sensuous Scholarship in Plant Ontologies and Environmental Empathy,” which is based in interdisciplinary social sciences, plant science, and the paradigm-shifting, metaphysical, and vulnerable territory of communication between humans and trees. My findings, represented both as a film and written material, include the practice, as method, of embodied engagement with sensual, intuitive knowing that can become the ground for interspecies telepathic communication; seeking permission from trees for communication and research, with the caveat that permission may be denied; the act of talking with trees; and messages from trees regarding their health, being, and collaboration with humans.

**Reshef Agam-Segal** (Virginia Military Institute)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** The Pot Paradox: Wittgensteinian Availability in Philosophy and Ethics

**Abstract:**

I discuss the application of Wittgenstein’s views to ethics. I argue that there is an internal connection between the resolute understanding of our task in philosophy in general (not only in reading Wittgenstein) and the kind of view of morality given expression to in Wittgenstein’s “Lecture on Ethics.” To achieve that, (1) I discuss the form of a general dilemma for philosophical criticism: when a criticism is logical—when, for instance, some idea is declared logically incoherent—the criticism may undermine itself, and leave itself nothing to criticize. Reminiscent of a short story by the Yiddish storyteller Sholem Aleichem, I call such dilemmas “Pot Paradoxes.” (2) I identify such critical dilemmas in the literature on Wittgenstein’s early and later philosophy. (3) I diagnose such a dilemma for Alice Cray in her application of Wittgenstein’s ideas to ethics. (4) I discuss three ways to deal with that dilemma. (5) I suggest that Wittgenstein’s appreciation of the difficulties of dealing with apparently incoherent claims—his resoluteness—leads him to a conception of moral thought very different from Cray’s.

**Jonas Ahlskog** (Åbo Akademi University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Where do philosophical problems come from? Wittgenstein and Collingwood on the continuity between philosophy and life.

**Abstract:**

This paper investigates the relation between philosophy and life through a critical assessment of a key question in Wittgenstein's philosophy: where do philosophical problems come from? The fundamental status of this question is easy to understand. Every investigation about the ways in which philosophy and life relate to each other must, it seems, start from an investigation of why philosophical problems arise in the course of our lives at all. The reason is that by investigating the origin of philosophical problems one is, simultaneously, posing a decisive question about whether philosophy is something internal to the human condition, or, whether philosophical problems are mere symptoms of other, more basic, factors in human life. This paper has two connected aims. Firstly, I will address a view that is often associated with Wittgenstein's philosophy; namely, that philosophical problems have their ultimate origin in linguistic confusion. On this view, all philosophical problems are dissolved if one is able to attain an *übersichtliche Darstellung* (perspicuous representation) of our language in the actual contexts of its various uses. If one is able to get rid of linguistic confusion, then one will also be able to get rid of philosophy. Thus, there is no continuity between life and philosophy; instead, clarity in life is measured by how far one is able to stay away from philosophical thought. Secondly, I will show why Wittgenstein did not share this view and elaborate on Wittgenstein's actual view through a comparison with R. G. Collingwood. I will argue that both Wittgenstein and Collingwood shared a Socratic view of philosophy in which philosophical thought and life are inseparably connected. In conclusion, I will show that, on a Socratic view, a human life free from philosophy is not something anyone ought to desire.

**Anna-Klara Bojö** (University of Gothenburg)

**Academic field:** Literary studies

**Title:** Honesty and Ethical Questions Concerning the Poetry of a Suicide Note

**Abstract:**

In this paper I discuss moral questions concerning academic honesty and vulnerable writing in relation to such sensitive material as a suicide note. I address these issues in relation to my ongoing work on resemblances and echoes in the literary works of American author Sylvia Plath (1933-1963) and Swedish writer Åsa Nelvin (1951-1981). What at the outset looks like a textbook example for comparative literary analysis, has turned into a study where questions of life and death, literature and suicide are constantly veering the project toward vulnerable and ethically difficult grounds. The reason is the discovery of Nelvin's suicide note, reading "Nu får det vara nog". Those words, uncannily enough, are the exact same words that closes Plath's famous suicide poem "Daddy", in Swedish translation.

There are many resemblances in the lives and works of Plath and Nelvin. Both writers lose a parent at an early age, and later turn that dead parent into a literary muse. Both write novels about young women and madness, and poetry about death and suicide. Although there is no archival material to support it, it can be argued that Nelvin's turn to poetry in the late 1970's, was at least in part influenced by Plath. Furthermore, there are some more disquieting areas of resemblance such as the fact that both authors gassed themselves to death at the age of 30, leaving behind poetry manuscripts that would later be regarded as their best work. The division between life and poetry, still strong in literary studies, allows the researcher to disregard from those similarities. However, having discovered the intertextual connections in Nelvin's suicide note, the division collapses, and makes the academic work ethically more difficult. Does academic honesty mean reading the suicide note as material open to intertextual analysis? Or does the vulnerability attached to a suicide note rather require it to be left uncommented?

**Stephen Burwood** (University of Hull)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** *Möchte man sagen: Wittgenstein's Vulnerable Meditations*

**Abstract:**

In *Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument*, Henry W. Johnstone, Jr. argues that, “A conclusion has no philosophical use if it is not reached freely.” If Johnstone is correct and philosophical argument must be, as he says, bilateral and open, then there is an inherent vulnerability built into the very fabric of philosophical discussion. This is because, if a conclusion is to have any philosophical value, the philosopher must always argue in such a way as to respect the autonomy of her audience. While persuading our audience is a legitimate goal in philosophy, this must not be the overriding goal, as it may be in less ‘ideal’ forms of argumentation. Persuasion might be a sign that one’s arguments are good arguments; but it must be achieved by appropriate means that allows space for disagreement. “Thus philosophical discussion is,” he concludes, “in effect, a collaborative effort to maintain the conditions under which disagreement is possible.” Although this is undoubtedly true, does this view over-emphasise difference and polemic, as well as the role of the rational in philosophical persuasion? Also, is there not a legitimate role in philosophy for making a ‘strategic move’ in a debate, the rhetoric force of which is not entirely transparent and may rely on a broader set of persuaders?

As Paul Horwich has noted, many philosophers nowadays find Wittgenstein’s writing style “self-indulgently obscure,” a dismissal that suggests his heuristic and often fragmentary thoughts, presented in different voices, do not live up to Johnstone’s bilateral requirement. And yet, his increasingly dialogic writing has the quality of a non-didactic meditation that explores philosophical puzzles, written with undisguised tentativeness, temptations, and tensions. Given that it is not always clear exactly what the nature and substance of these puzzles are, Wittgenstein’s strategic move is to invite us to look at things in a different way. Wittgenstein’s approach is therefore more bilateral and open to disagreement—indeed it is more honest—than philosophy tempted by the lure of false clarity and false rigour.

**Aron Ericson** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Nietzsche’s Autobiography and How to Write Who You Are

**Abstract:**

Nietzsche's philosophical autobiography *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, the last book he wrote before his mental collapse in January 1889, is an oddity. The chapter titles – “Why I Am So Wise,” “Why I Am So Clever,” “Why I Write Such Good Books,” and “Why I Am A Destiny” – already reveal the comic and somewhat ridiculous style of the prose. Why does Nietzsche employ this style?

My claim in the talk is that it is part of his strategy to address the problem of self-knowledge. Freud said about Nietzsche that he had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was ever likely to live. For Nietzsche himself, however, this self-knowledge was a problem. He wrestles with this problem in his *Ecce Homo*. To become what one is, Nietzsche says, one must not have the faintest idea of what one is.

“Know thyself,” says the inscription at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, and in the Platonic dialogues it became the motto of philosophy. In the *Philebus*, Socrates says that he who lacks self-knowledge is ridiculous. Nietzsche, in a well-known phrase, describes his philosophy as an inversion of Platonism, and this seems to be the case also when it comes to the question of self-knowledge. Ridiculousness, for Nietzsche, becomes a tool with the help of which an all too penetrating self-knowledge might be endured. In the talk, I try to make good on this claim by considering a number of references Nietzsche makes in the book to Shakespeare, and particularly *Hamlet*.

**Stefan Giesewetter** (Åbo Akademi University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Bringing the speaker back into the philosophy of language

**Abstract:**

A focal point in the philosophy of language of the last decades has been the debate over semantic compositionality – over the question whether the meaning of an utterance is determined solely by the meanings of the constituent parts of the sentence uttered, and the way these are combined. Many well-known philosophers of language, among them Charles Travis, John Searle and Francois Recanati, have criticized compositionalist theories for how they conceive of these constituent parts and of their relation to the meaning of the whole utterance – often referring to the work of the later Wittgenstein in support of their criticism. In my talk, I wish to take a look at the underlying question from the perspective of how we, as actual language users, speak about language. The debate over semantic compositionality revolves around the question: Do the meanings of the parts of the utterance determine the meaning of the whole, or do they not? I will take guidance from Wittgenstein’s remarks on rule-following, specifically his reaction to the interlocutor’s question “But are the steps then not determined by the formula?” I will attempt to take this as a model for a mode of philosophical criticism that remains at each step fully aware of the philosopher as a speaker – of our own situatedness in the very language we are philosophizing about.

**Nora Hämäläinen** (University of Pardubice)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** A self in the text

**Abstract:**

To be scientific is to be neutral and to exercise professional judgment. But as most philosophers and social scientists know, this is a formative ideal rather than an exact description of what is done. When engaged in complexly interpretive tasks of understanding human life, neutrality is extremely difficult to attain, and professional judgment is not clearly distinguishable from the capacities of discernment one has as an individual. Different disciplines have different ways of containing and acting upon this knowledge. Yet it sometimes appears crucial for the intellectual viability of one’s work to “confess one’s difficulties”, as R. G. Collingwood put it, and to bring some aspects of one’s person, history or conditions into the text, in ways which exceed current conventions of one’s discipline. I will here discuss two very different, both now classical cases of doing this. The first one is Paul Rabinow’s *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), where he interrogates the practice of anthropological fieldwork by highlighting the haphazard character of his first introduction into “the field”, the idiosyncratic personalities who become his informants, as well as himself as an observer. The second one is Stanley Cavell’s way of weaving his intellectual biography into his writing, highlighting the ways in which philosophical thinking is situated, the thinking of an individual who together with others seeks paths through the cultural materials that are given to us as members of a community and subjects of a certain kind of education. I reflect over the continuing relevance of these moves, the differences they bring out between philosophy and anthropology, and also what the politics of sincerity involved in them can teach young scholars, who are struggling to establish themselves in an academic profession.

**Viktor Johansson** (Södertörn University)

**Academic field:** Educational studies and philosophy

**Title:** Sámi Children as Thought Herders: Philosophy of Death and Story Telling as Radical Hope in Early Childhood Education

**Abstract:**

This article follows a story played out by children at a Sámi early childhood centre in north Sweden. It does so by reflecting on the children’s story as a form of critical indigenous philosophy. In particular it explores what it could mean for child to be a philosopher in a Sámi context through developing the concept of *jurddavázzi*, or thought herder, in conversation with Wittgenstein’s method of “leading”, and Cavell’s of “shepherding”, “words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use”. The children’s play story, involving themes of death, struggles with natural surroundings, and interconnectivity through seeing life in nature, is read in relation to questions about traditional stories

raised by the Sámi poet, artist, and thinker, Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, or Áillohaš. The article ends by discussing how the children's invitation to follow their story can be seen as a decolonizing pedagogical gesture of the child that requires a particular kind of philosophical listening of the teacher or elder. The article is in its style an attempt to demonstrate a form of philosophical story telling the children are engaged in.

**Maria Karlsson** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** Literary studies

**Title:** Tactics of vulnerability in the begging letters to the Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf (1858–1940)

**Olli Lagerspetz** (Åbo Akademi University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Peter Winch: Some Limitations of his Political Philosophy

**Abstract:**

In his political philosophy, Peter Winch wanted to present a kind of 'grammar of the political' – to outline the general place of political authority in human life and the underlying issues about the nature of practical rationality.

As a starting point, Winch constantly returned to the apparent 'paradox of voluntary obedience'. It arises within classical 17/18<sup>th</sup> Century contract theory, which, however, lacked the resources to resolve it. At this juncture, Winch brought in a perspective from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, demonstrating that some idea of authority is constitutive of rational agency. However, it involves an analogy between parental and political authority, which is probably not as helpful as Winch had hoped.

Perhaps Winch's frequent engagement with the contractarian tradition in some sense hampered his thinking – a case of inadvertently adopting the conceptual framework of the thinkers one is criticizing. That tradition involves a vision of the nature of 'the political'. Ever since Plato and including Hobbes, political life is conceived in terms of a 'timeless' organizational structure characterized by relations of subordination.

Perhaps this concept is really a kind of artefact created by the requirements of theory – as argued by political theorist Christopher Robinson. Politics today is to a large extent played out outside traditional state structures. It involves people engaging themselves for some agenda or other, sometimes in total disjunction from the administrative apparatus.

Winch was to some extent aware of the limitations of his approach. In a posthumously published lecture, he notes that perhaps the most interesting contributions to political philosophy have been written in the course of arguing for specific political causes – a hands-on approach or a street view as opposed to a hilltop view. In his last years, he increasingly engaged with such thinkers – e.g. Havel and Weil.

**Nicholas Lawrence** (Åbo Akademi University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Of Soliloquy in Philosophy

**Abstract:**

What is the philosophical significance of writing one's own ambivalence into a philosophical text? David Hume's passionate soliloquy in *Treatise* acts by fashioning the results of his dissection of human nature, and philosophy itself, into an affective narrative. Via a reading of Hume that is sensitive to the anatomo-poetic manner in which he does philosophy, and the dialectic at play in his works between both Reason and Taste, I argue that, by reflecting philosophically upon his own philosophical reflections, Hume allows himself to be affected by the fact of his own thought. This self-affection manifests itself in the form of what have otherwise been referred to as Hume's "egotisms." While the subject matter of these ruminations – i.e. the melancholic state in which a sceptical philosophy inevitably left him – was indeed taken seriously by Kant, and all interpretations of Hume which merely follow his lead, I claim that the philosophical significance of the radical manner in which Hume's soliloquy is performed has been heretofore ignored. By taking Hume's problem to be a threat to the veracity of philosophy, without first questioning the philosopher's role in doing this

philosophy, these interpretations understand it as a call to secure the possibility of metaphysics as science. By de-personalising philosophy – by failing to tackle the question of the intensity with which the philosopher is struck by philosophical objects – they pose Hume’s problem in a way that is essentially meaningless outside of philosophy. Objective validity is secured at the cost of potency – philosophy is precluded from affecting the philosopher’s life. In this way, this presentation aims to show that by writing oneself into one’s own philosophical text, and by exposing, through soliloquy, the drama of one’s own uncertainty, it becomes possible to do philosophy in a more sincere – life-affecting – manner.

**Ingeborg Löfgren** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** Literary studies and Philosophy

**Title:** Vulnerable Writing – or do we need a Hermeneutics of Vulnerability instead of a Hermeneutics of Suspicion?

**Abstract:**

In his interpretations of Shakespearean drama, the American philosopher Stanley Cavell (1926–2018) argues that other-minds skepticism should be seen as tragedy merely disguised as epistemology; at the heart of the lived skepticism of Othello lies the avoidance of the vulnerability of love. In this paper I argue that a kindred avoidance of vulnerability and love animate certain varieties of the hermeneutics of suspicion. This avoidance comes at the price of a skeptical attitude towards reading, one that alienates reading and deprives it of its most interesting and fruitful potentials. Interestingly, Cavell is someone who, in his interpretive practice, challenges skeptical worries about interpretive validity – not least in his Shakespeare readings, of which he writes:

In looking for words for Shakespeare’s interpretations of skepticism I may [...] in my experimentation [...] speak incredibly or outrageously. [...] This [...] is a kind of negation of an idea of reading as a judicious balancing of all reasonable interpretations. My reading is nothing if not partial. (Cavell (1987) 2003,5)

This is not Cavell arguing that any reading goes. What he contests is reading structured by an epistemological fear: the fear of reading-in, of being too partial. This fear expresses a skeptical attitude according to which partiality and affection – and especially love – are inimical to critical validity. Recently, Rita Felski and Toril Moi have challenged the hermeneutics of suspicion within literary criticism. In dialogue with their work, I argue that Cavell can help us furnish an alternative to the negative aspects of the hermeneutics of suspicion: a hermeneutic that does not just allow for the vulnerability of reading, but acknowledges it as an important and valuable prerequisite, rather than a threat, to literary criticism.

**Ryan Manhire** (Åbo Akademi University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** The Difficulty of Death and the Difficulty of Honesty

**Abstract:**

In a series of remarks published in *Culture and Value*, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein reflects on the importance of the spirit in which one approaches one’s writing. For Wittgenstein, it is important when writing to avoid deceiving oneself in relation to one’s topic, as this will lead to a superficial text. This attitude could also be connected to Wittgenstein’s remark to Rush Rhees that one must “go the bloody *hard* way”, which Rhees took to refer both to the writing of philosophy and the way in which one approaches one’s life. Such an approach seems to be something that is never mastered and can always be improved upon.

One way in which these notions can touch one’s philosophical writing is to use one’s life as a source for gathering examples. To this end, it could be said that the more deeply affected by an experience one is attempting to discuss in one’s writing, the more difficult it will be to provide an adequately honest picture of it. In two previous attempts to reflect on the way in which the notion of death could be said to shape an understanding of life, I encountered certain difficulties when trying to do justice to a clear description of the events surrounding the death of someone I knew personally.

I intend to reflect on these difficulties and on the embodied experiences that I struggled to overcome in order to provide a philosophical account of the notion of death as it can confront one in life. I argue that the need to overcome these difficulties and to provide an honest account of my experiences could be referred to as one of the ways in which philosophy could be said to be, in Wittgenstein's sense, a work on oneself.

**Nimrod Matan** (Beit-Berl College)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Anecdotes as Ethical Method in Wittgenstein

**Abstract:**

Bouwsma tells a story about an incident that had taken place in Cambridge right after WW1, as it was told to him by Wittgenstein:

There had been at Cambridge a Hungarian student who when war broke out was sent home. He was killed as a Hungarian soldier. When now the war was ended a plaque was to be erected, set in the wall, with the names of all those who had died for their country [...] there was a meeting about it. And who now should protest this name in the list but the Professor of Ethics! So there is now at Cambridge, in Christ Chapel, a plate bearing the name of this Hungarian student, set off by itself, away from all the rest. In death! (Bouwsma 1986).

In his 1929 Lecture on Ethics, Wittgenstein expresses his objection to the inutile attempt to discuss ethics in a scientific way. My talk aims at presenting the story of the plaque as a model for conveying an ethical point – for expressing an ethical stance – in a non-scientific way, as well for criticizing professional ethics or ethics-as-a-science. Moreover, I claim that the literary form of the anecdote is used by Wittgenstein – here and elsewhere - as an expressive tool “by the existence of language” as opposed to expression “by means of language”, in Lecture on Ethics terms.

A major feature of this mode of expression is blurring the traditional distinction between the universal and the individual - or in textual terms, that between the philosophical and the biographical. I will therefore demonstrate my claim by examining other examples of anecdotal argumentation taken both from Wittgenstein philosophical and biographical corpus, and sketch an outline for a method of ethical expression using anecdotes and examples.

**Aloisia Moser** (Katholischer Privatuniversität Linz)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Mere Guesswork?

**Abstract:**

Is it all just guesswork? In this paper I suggest that we can productively engage a concept of "guessing" in theoretical method. Instead of giving guessing the negative connotation of something obtained in a way not rightful (deductive or inductive), I will suggest that guessing is intrinsic to all thinking and thus also to method, that it is heuristic and leads to new knowledge. Milton Friedman says in his *Essays on Positive Economics* that “Truly important and significant hypotheses will be found to have 'assumptions' that are wildly inaccurate descriptive representations of reality, and, in general, the more significant the theory, the more unrealistic the assumptions” (14). The underlying idea is that we have to guess at something about which we can never be certain. In theory, however, we are never supposed to make such guesses. Reasoning is to be the central tool for knowledge acquisition, while guesswork, intuition, etc. are antithetical to rational knowledge. I want to show that this preconception leads to a misconception of what knowledge is and how knowledge is acquired. In my paper I will use the work of Mary Hesse (her argument that we have to think the role of models anew in the light of a reconceptualization of how the deductive-nomological model for scientific explanations work) to show that all our theoretical endeavors are guesswork, inasmuch as they are new descriptions of old domains. What is most interesting in scientific explanation and models is that they allow prediction. Prediction seems to stand in direct opposition to guesswork. But a closer look at Hesse's discussion of the deductive-nomological model shows that her reinterpretation of models in terms of metaphorical new descriptions gets us very close to what we understand by guessing.

**Torsten Pettersson** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** Literary studies

**Title:** Wounds and Shields: The Writer's Vulnerability in Academic Discourse, Fiction and Poetry

**Abstract:**

The vulnerability of writers arises from the potentially perilous revelation of their world views and values which is endemic to all writing – starting from implicit preferences enshrined in the choice of subject over obviously exposed explicit statements to tell-tale linguistic particles (as witness “he was married *but* happy”). I shall also consider one of the antidotes to vulnerability: the generic conventions which shield writers by establishing a set of rules for what counts as respectable subjects and vantage points in a given field. My discussion will at some length compare and contrast academic discourse, fiction, and poetry in this respect.

The downside of generic conventions is the risk that allegiance to them breeds insincerity when writers are tempted to shy away from insights which are individual and creative but generically awkward or proscribed. I start by commenting on the shackling effects of theoretical frameworks, as well as the striving for consistency in the monograph form. I go on to identify forms of insincerity in fiction and poetry, respectively.

There is also another risk arising directly from vulnerability: that of writers becoming aggressive and manipulative, as exposed and potentially threatened people frequently do in order to deal with their apprehension. Writers may then abuse the control over the reader which, at least temporarily, writing affords them: the alien software which it installs on the harddrive which is the reader's brain. “Labouring an argument” is an academic example, emotional manipulation a literary one. How can we, as writers in various fields, cope with our vulnerability without becoming bullies?

**David Rozema** (University of Nebraska at Kearney)

**Academic field:** Philosophy and Literature

**Title:** Being True: Honesty in the Art of Writing

**Abstract:**

In modern academies there is a widening chasm between the *arts* of literature, history, and philosophy and the *sciences* of literary criticism, historicism, and theoretical philosophy. Many modern critics, historians, and philosophers have welcomed the scientification of their arts and have thereby bowed to the modern pantheon of the sciences of human behavior, following a false faith in the principle that people are what they are because the forces of nature or society have made them so. This has led to a misunderstanding of the purposes of reading and writing literature, history, and philosophy. The result is a fundamental illiteracy and the loss of art. In short, the loss of culture and value.

My usual response to this danger is to defend the arts and humanities, warning against their demise, in the form of an argument. But this sort of response is usually taken to be just another piece of “theoretical philosophy.” I need a truer approach, a form of expression that is more fitting with my concerns. If I am to express my passion and concern *for* the proper nature and value of the arts and humanities, I ought to do so in the *form* of a humane art.

Fortunately, I have literary ancestors who have faced the same dilemma and have masterfully overcome it. I propose to look at certain works of three of them from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *In the First Circle*. I hope to show that it is by following the lead of those who know the uses of “understanding,” “meaning,” “reading,” “culture,” and “literacy” as they apply to a way of life that we not only become literate, but also will find inspiration in creating honest and refreshing ways to communicate that way of life.

**Andreas Rydberg** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** History of science and ideas

**Title:** The vulnerable writing of Samuel Gotthold Lange

**Abstract:**

In the 1740s, the German poet Samuel Gotthold Lange published, together with a colleague, an extensive text entitled *Friendly Letters*. The text constituted a vast number of anonymous letters. In the introduction, the authors stated that the work had been composed in order to present a new intimate way of writing friendly letters. In contrast to the at the time dominating formal writing style, these

letters were indeed an exercise in the expressions of intense feelings of joy, love, fear, sorrow and the like. As such they took form as an experiment connected to the new poetic ideal and to the specific brand of aesthetics that developed in early eighteenth-century Germany.

What makes the case of Lange especially interesting, however, is that he roughly two decades later would himself have plenty of reasons to feel and express strong emotions. In 1765 he first lost his wife in sudden sickness and then his son after a prolonged struggle with disease. The devastating experience of loss led Lange to publish two elegies – one over his wife and one over his son – where his closest friends contributed with touching portraits and poems. The main question of this paper is to discuss how we should understand the fact that Lange was a key player in the introduction of a new intimate way of expressing strong emotions at the same time as he was also struck by the worst of tragedies. How did Lange deal with the loss of his wife and son in writing? Did the new intimate way of expressing emotions aid him in his sorrow or did they rather become obstacles to authenticity? Are there signs in the sources that Lange found other alternative ways of expressing his grief? These are the main questions that I will discuss in this paper.

**Thor Rydin** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** History of science and ideas

**Title:** Composing Decomposition: Huizinga's Historical Self-Inquiry

**Abstract:**

Together with authors like Burckhardt and Bakhtin, the Dutch philologist-historian Johan Huizinga (1872 – 1945) is commonly associated with the emergence of classical cultural history. Huizinga himself, however, found that he “had never become a true researcher of history.” He understood his investigations into historical symbols and language rather as an exploration of human ‘games’ [*spel*] with ‘therapeutic’ potential [*therapie*] for his times. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951) was not the only author of this period to discuss the relation between language, games and therapy.

In 1919, in a letter to fellow-historian H. T. Colenbrander (1871 – 1945), Huizinga described human language as a “continuously decomposing, incessantly self-repairing and self-completing, yet forever incomplete tool.” His ‘The Waning of the Middle Ages’ [*Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*] was published the same year, and offered a similar depiction of medieval language: the rhetoric of medieval art and literature had become overly metaphorical, codified and “decadent” [*decadent*] through its ceaseless and frantic attempts to make meaning of the world. Medieval language’ had lost its ability to ‘play’ [*spelen*]. Against this background, it is interesting that Huizinga’s book itself made ample use of elaborate metaphorical descriptions, extensively employing romantic tropes from the Dutch *fin-de-siècle*. In a few passages he even directly compared medieval cultural decay to that of his own times and WWI.

This paper asks: *could the rhetoric and style of Huizinga’s book on medieval decadence be performative of precisely the decadence with which the author diagnosed his own times and culture?* If yes, the rhetoric of *Herfsttij* could be read as an exercise in self-diagnosis, as a particular *fin-de-siècle* way of speaking about one’s cultural condition. By exploring this particular question, the present paper offers a window unto a more general relation between: (1) *fin-de-siècle* conceptions of decay, (2) late-nineteenth-century philology, and (3) auto-ethnographical technologies of self-inquiry.

**Salla Aldrin Salskov** (Åbo Akademi University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy and Gender studies

**Title:** Critique as a matter of truth: on honesty and vulnerable writing in critical gender studies

**Abstract:**

In this paper I discuss vulnerable and honest writing in relation to the philosophy of critique and criticism within the field of gender studies. To illuminate my argument, I discuss my previous research with a colleague on racialization and homonationalism in LBGTIQ work in a Finnish context. Analyzing panel discussions aiming to raise awareness about queer/lgbtiq refugees, spurred a critical dialogue between me and my colleague. Did our analysis of the panels despite, our critical aim of highlighting processes of racialization re-center hegemonic whiteness or not? How far did our attention to intersecting power differentials in our analysis take us in challenging whiteness as a position of power and privilege? Reflecting over these questions, I found myself troubled by the way

their “criticality” suddenly had lost their urgency. They seemed routinized, academic gestures, habitually formulated, signposting a critical and reflexive, postcolonial feminist attitude to our own work, but not really *doing* the critical work they were supposed to. I was prompted to reflect further on the nature of critique as a matter of honest writing, as “work on oneself” to paraphrase Wittgenstein. The aim of this paper is to think through and investigate how critique is crucial to the politics of knowledge production when issues of racism and research ethics are discussed, but also how honesty is inevitable to the praxis of critique beyond habitual and routinized ways of thinking of power, race gender and their intersections. I also discuss the costs of honest writing, and the vulnerability one might find oneself in, when departing from accepted doxas of humanities and critical research.

**Naomi Scheman** (University of Minnesota and Umeå University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy and Gender studies

**Title:** In Praise of Vulnerability and Disorientation: Moving from Knowledge to Acknowledgement

**Abstract:**

“what skepticism suggests is that since we cannot know the world exists, its presentness to us cannot be a function of knowing. The world is to be accepted; as the presentness of other minds is not to be known but acknowledged.” Stanley Cavell

In working through this Wittgensteinian shift from knowledge to acknowledgment, Cavell draws our attention to how the one-sidedness of the knowing subject’s unreciprocated gaze at the object of knowledge is an evasion of the need for mutuality and the accompanying vulnerability that attend acknowledgment. The primacy of knowing encourages a conception of the subject both as the arbiter of intelligibility and as the paradigmatic exemplar: something makes sense insofar as it makes sense to me, and something counts (e.g., as a person) insofar as it resembles me. By contrast, in acknowledging the other who doesn’t (yet) make sense to me, my sense of myself is unsettled.

I explore two sites where this dynamic plays out: challenges of some radical feminists to the gender identity of trans women, and challenges of some analytic metaphysicians to the existence of composite objects. Both sets of people take themselves to be in a position to lay down demands, setting the terms of intelligibility, granting or withholding admission to their ontologies. I want to explore the productive disorientation (in Wittgenstein’s terms, not knowing my way about) that comes from acknowledging those whose ways of being challenge my understandings of identity and intelligibility. What do I learn about gender if I start with those who are trans or non-binary? What do I learn about identity and integrity if I start with stones? My ontological commitments are revealed through my vulnerable enmeshment in a web of relationships, through my need for acknowledgment by those persons and things in relation to which I make sense.

**Kim Solin** (Uppsala University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Honesty in Rush Rhees’s Writing

**Abstract:**

Rush Rhees, one of Wittgenstein’s three original trustees, did not publish many academic papers or take part in the academic discussion in the usual way, but he did write countless letters and, it seems, almost daily worked on manuscripts on recurring topics. These letters and manuscripts were later edited and compiled into books by Rhees’s student D.Z. Phillips. The first compilation, *Without Answers*, done while Rhees was still alive and in dialogue with Rhees himself, treats topics from science, politics and society, ethics and moral philosophy to religion and theology, education and learning, and to the nature of philosophy itself, in particular in connection to Wittgenstein. After Rhees’s death, these topics appear as whole books, again edited and compiled by Phillips, with titles like *Rush Rhees on Religion and Philosophy*, *Moral Questions*, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, and *In Dialogue with the Greeks*.

Common to Rhees’s writings on the topics mentioned above is an existential vein or tone. This permeates his writings on all the topics and is to a significant extent characterized by: (1) an emphasis

on wisdom and “the growth of understanding” in contrast to a mechanical-technical view on philosophy, (2) a non-scholarly attitude to philosophy and to the history of philosophy, in particular to Wittgenstein’s *Nachlass*, and (3) a challenging honesty and candour, which some perceive as humility, others as arrogance.

In this I talk, I will focus on the third aspect mentioned above, and discuss it in connection to the other aspects, and in relation to Rhee’s style of writing. The discussion will be based on Rhee’s books, in particular on *Without Answers*, as well as on archival research at The von Wright and Wittgenstein Archives in Helsinki and at the Rush Rhee Archive in Swansea.

**Elliot Sturdy** (Newcastle University)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Language at the Limit - Making Sense of the Reception of Ludwig Wittgenstein in the Critical Writings of Ingeborg Bachmann

**Abstract:**

It has already been well documented that Ludwig Wittgenstein had a profound influence upon the writings of the poet and novelist Ingeborg Bachmann (see Lennox, 1985; Roth, 2010 and Weigel, 1999). This influence is also explicitly expressed in Bachmann’s own critical writings, which include two essays on Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) and his relationship to The Vienna Circle. Yet, when it comes to demonstrating the extent of Bachmann’s reception of Wittgenstein, it seems that there is a tendency to either over-emphasise the influence of Wittgenstein on Bachmann, or to underplay Wittgenstein’s importance for Bachmann’s writings.

In order to better understand the nature of the relationship between Wittgenstein’s philosophy and Bachmann’s writings, this paper will take a closer look at the philosophical commitments that Wittgenstein and Bachmann make in their statements about the limits of language and demonstrate the points at which their philosophical projects converge and diverge. This will be carried out through an analysis of statements 6.4-7 in the *Tractatus* and Bachmann’s reception of them in her critical essays on Wittgenstein.

This paper will focus upon the following questions: Does Wittgenstein commit himself to a theological and transcendent notion of that which is outside language? How does Bachmann understand Wittgenstein’s expression of notions such as “silence”, “the world” and “the sayable and the unsayable”? In what ways does she develop Wittgenstein’s philosophy according to her own thinking? Do their statements on the limits of language demonstrate a common idea, or is their thinking irreconcilable?

This paper will make an important contribution to our understanding of the reception of Wittgenstein in the work of Bachmann and offer reflections on the relationship between transcendent and immanent conceptions of language with reference to deconstruction (Nancy, 1997 and Blanchot, 1986).

**Jānis Taurens** (Art Academy of Latvia)

**Academic field:** Philosophy of language, art and architecture

**Title:** A Room of One’s Own – A Room of Asja Lācis’

**Abstract:**

To write one sentence and become famous — perhaps it is possible only for a fictitious hero (the best example is Grand in *The Plague*, the celebrated novel by Albert Camus). You can also become famous with one novel, as Sylvia Plath (posthumously, after her suicide). But the best path to fame for women, especially if your mother tongue is not one of the great Western literary traditions (by the term I mean both — fiction and non-fiction), is to have an acquaintance or friendship (better, more than one) with some famous men.

This sounds ironic, but it is the case of Anna Lācis, better known as Asja Lācis. Most of her articles were published in Latvian; her book on the revolutionary theatre in Germany was written in Russian, published in 1935 and is a rarity; her three memoirs (in Latvian, Russian and German) are known due to the recollections about Walter Benjamin, Bertold Brecht and Erwin Piscator, to mention only some names. Her authorship on the article about Naples (written together with Benjamin) was even denied by Theodor Adorno.

Metaphorically we can say that Asja Lācis had no room of her own, neither in terms of language and native land, nor in political and theoretical position. She was more concerned with practical and experimental work in the theatre, especially with children's theatre in Oryol, Russia. Her left political views determined her emigration to Soviet Union, then her deportation to the Gulag in 1938. Vulnerability is the term which can be used to cover her marginalisation based on gender, language, forced migration, Soviet censorship and fragmentary writing and from today's perspective it enables a new reading of her pivotal, yet little acknowledged textual output.

**Jasmin Trächtler** (University of Bergen)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Against the Idolatry of the Inner: Wittgenstein's Profanation of the Inner by the Ordinary

**Abstract:**

The idea of the mind as something hidden inside the body has persistently been tackled by Wittgenstein, especially in his later writings on the philosophy of psychology. Manifestations of this idea of an "inner" and "outer" loom in philosophy as well as in ordinary language. In his last years however, Wittgenstein was not so much concerned with the mere *description* of the relation between mind and body as an "inner" to an "outer". Rather, as I will delineate, his criticism aims at the transcending conception of the respective "inner" as the really important that lies "behind" and *enlivens* the outer in the first place, that is: the uttered words or the bodily expressions in mimic, gesture and behaviour. This conception becomes apparent by the propensity to say that "[p]ain is what is important – the complaining is unimportant" (LW I 1998: 950) or that the inner seems like a "big hinterland" of the visible facial expression (Ms 132: 138), the "immaterial that enlivens the face (like shivering air)" (Ms 137: 110b f.).

In this paper I will show how Wittgenstein strives against this "idolatry" of the inner by opposing such mystifying circumscriptions of mental phenomena with ordinary, sometimes almost vulgar expressions, often in the form of dialogs. He thereby draws rhetorically a sharp contrast between abstract, world-enraptured philosophical and everyday-life enunciations concerning the mental. In particular, I will discuss how this rhetorical contrast is deployed by Wittgenstein to profane the inner and how, at the same time, the sharpness of the contrast between the idolatry of the inner on the one hand and Wittgenstein's attempts at profaning the inner by ordinary language on the other raises the suspicion of insincerity, insofar as Wittgenstein himself struggled with the temptation to transfigure the inner into the enlivening, important behind the outer.

**Annelie Bränström Öhman** (Umeå University)

**Academic field:** Literary studies and Gender studies

**Title:** Archive tears: reflections on emotional leakage, vulnerable writing and wounded academic senses

**Abstract:**

It is said that "nobody enters the archive naked". But how, when do you enter? And where do you go? Where did I go, during those years when I started out every morning noting "gone to the archive" on the message board outside my office at Umeå university?

In my paper I want to present a personal narrative about the archive not only as an intellectual site for knowledge but also a highly vulnerable and emotional experience – taking my point of departure from my own work with the editing and publishing of the Swedish novelist Sara Lidman's diaries (*Stilens munterhet. Sara Lidmans författardagböcker från Missenträsk 1975-1985*, published in 2014).

During the course of work I sensed a strange "archive fever" which I had not foreseen. I was deeply touched, moved and affected by the encounter with the handwritten pages of the diaries. There was something in the mere tactile dimension, skin in contact with paper sheet, as well as in the spectrum of feelings embedded in Sara Lidman's notations. I felt an urge to document the experience, in some way. But could not find out in what context, in which academic room there would there be a place for that – outside the archive. What could I do with the overwhelming and shattering insight that Lidman in her writing moment had been exactly the age I was now, in the moment of transcription? How should I handle the recognition of pain and melancholy in her reflection on her own middle-aged face

in the mirror, in the middle of the loneliness of a creative crisis? More than once I cried during the reading of the diaries, asking myself how to transcribe tears?

Nothing in my research education or previous professional experience had prepared me for this demanding balance exercise; for the mastering of in-betweens and frictions between genres of texts and thinking and the “emotional leakage” generated from it – which, inevitably, started running, spilling out on my notebooks, clothes, body... *Don't forget your rubber boots!*

**Bernt Österman** (Wittgenstein and von Wright Archives, University of Helsinki)

**Academic field:** Philosophy

**Title:** Avoiding the jargon: G. H. von Wright's struggle with Wittgensteinianism

**Abstract:**

When the young Georg Henrik von Wright at the end of February 1939 arrived in Cambridge to work on his dissertation on inductive logic he did not know that Ludwig Wittgenstein was teaching there. In any case he could not have anticipated the impact the meeting with Wittgenstein would have on himself – “I felt that I had to start again from scratch in philosophy”, he would later write. Still, von Wright did not become a Wittgensteinian. On the contrary, he was always known as the pupil of Wittgenstein who kept the greatest distance to the master – never, however, doubting that Wittgenstein was the philosophical genius of his time. How was this possible?

In my paper I propose to examine the various stages of von Wright's philosophical relationship to Wittgenstein. I will argue that a decisive element in von Wright's seemingly paradoxical attitude to Wittgenstein's philosophy is his desire to avoid a thinking that has “deteriorated into a jargon” – a way of speaking he, somewhat ironically, probably adopted from Wittgenstein. The danger he sees, however, rather concerns the level of methodology than the philosophical aims as such. It is also the conception of different methodologies that lies at the core of von Wright's contention that his “style of thought” is different than Wittgenstein's. Towards the end of his career, however, von Wright would occasionally call himself a neo-Wittgensteinian, who independently had worked his way into the “neighbourhood of Wittgenstein's thinking” – but perhaps not without dislocating it a bit. A tentative conclusion of the paper is that, special as it may seem, von Wright's relationship to Wittgenstein contains elements that are recognizable also to other thinkers in their struggles with the great masters of thought.