

SBSI Brown Bag

Wednesday, October 9, 2019

12:00pm - 1:15pm

Solomon B50

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The Psychology of Philosophy

ABSTRACT: Do psychological traits predict philosophical views? I administered the *PhilPapers* survey (Bourget & Chalmers, 2014), which consists of 30 views on central philosophical topics (e.g., epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language) to a sample of professional philosophers (N = 314). I extended the *PhilPapers* survey to measure a number of psychological traits, such as personality, numeracy, well-being, lifestyle, and life experiences. I also included non-technical ‘translations’ of these views for eventual use in other populations. I found limited to no support for the notion that personality or demographics predict philosophical views. I did, however, find that some psychological traits were predictive of philosophical views, even after strict correction for multiple comparisons. Findings include: higher interest in numeracy predicted physicalism, naturalism and consequentialism; lower levels of well-being and higher levels of mental illness predicted determinism in regards to free will; using substances such as psychedelics and marijuana predicted non-realist and subjectivist views of morality and aesthetics; having had a transformative or self-transcendent experience predicted theism and idealism. I discuss whether or not these empirical results have philosophical implications – while noting that 68% of our sample of professional philosophers indicated that such findings would indeed have philosophical value.

The presentation will begin at 12:00pm. Food and drinks will be provided.

