

Being a Human Being, Being a Person

Tuesday

16th July 2013

Blackfriars Hall Oxford

**Richard Conrad | John Cottingham | Peter Hacker
Jonathan Price | Roger Scruton | Raymond Tallis**

The aim of this one-day conference is to consider the relation between the concept of a human being and that of a person, to explore the philosophical consequences of this distinction and to address the problems arising with the application of these concepts as the framework for scientific research and the basis for the formulation of ethical dilemmas.

For further information and to register please email m.slawkowski-rode@uw.edu.pl

Conference website and call for papers:

<http://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/events>

<http://www.ianramseycentre.info/blog/conference-being-a-human-being-being-a-person.html>



IAN RAMSEY CENTRE FOR
SCIENCE & RELIGION



**Blackfriars Hall
University of Oxford**

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Welcome to the 2013 Being a Human, Being a Person Conference

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<http://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/events>

Conference Timetable

9:00 a.m.	Welcome and introduction Mikołaj Sławkowski-Rode
9:30 a.m.	Me, my Mind, and my Body, not to mention a self, a soul and a person Peter Hacker
10:30 a.m.	Break with tea and coffee
11:00 a.m.	Why we are not “persons” John Cottingham
12:00 p.m.	Human beings as “persons” in law Jonathan Price
1:00 p.m.	Lunch, tea and coffee
2:00 p.m.	Parallel short papers (see overleaf)
3:30 p.m.	Break with tea and coffee
4:00 p.m.	Can neuroscience cast light on personhood? Raymond Tallis
5:00 p.m.	Aquinas on the human organism’s complexity Richard Conrad OP
6:00 p.m.	Break with tea and coffee
6:30 p.m.	Responsibilities and rights Roger Scruton
7:30 p.m.	Drinks reception and conference end

Short Papers Timetable

Tier 1 Blackfriars Hall Aula	
2:00 p.m.	Persons, acts and omissions Olia Arustamyan
2:30 p.m.	Moral personhood from Shaftesbury to Frankfurt Rafe McGregor
3:00 p.m.	Following moral rules Agata Łukomska

Tier 2 St Cross College	
2:00 p.m.	Why am I not someone else? Erdinc Sayan
2:30 p.m.	The unity of a person: a Medieval story Magdalena Bieniak-Nowak
3:00 p.m.	Being human in groups: in defence of the group-mind theory of group agency Adam Tuszński

Keynote Speakers



P. M. S. Hacker is Emeritus Research Fellow at St John's College, Oxford. He is a world renowned scholar of Wittgenstein with interests in the history of analytic philosophy, philosophy of mind, and philosophy and cognitive neuroscience. His most recent work is *Human Nature: the Categorical Framework* (Blackwell, 2007), the first of a trilogy on human nature. The sequel, *The Intellectual Powers: a Study of Human Nature* (Wiley-Blackwell) will be published in the autumn, as will a volume of his recent essays: *Wittgenstein: Comparisons and Context* (Oxford University Press).



John Cottingham is Professor Emeritus, University of Reading, Professorial Research Fellow, at Heythrop College, University of London, and an Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford. He is a leading Descartes scholar with interests in early modern philosophy, the philosophy of religion, and moral philosophy. His recent books include *Cartesian Reflections* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and *Why Believe?* (Continuum /Bloomsbury, 2009).



Jonathan Price is PhD fellow and lecturer at the Leiden University Law School, as well as tutor for Blackfriars Hall and Studium, University of Oxford. He is writing on the 'Philosophical Fundamentals of Modern Law: the will, person, and equality', especially focusing the origins of the modern forms of those concepts within 16th and 17th century legal and theological debates (Hobbes, Grotius, Salamancan School et al.). He has given tutorials and lectures in the philosophy of law, and ancient philosophy for both the University of Leiden and the University of Oxford.



Raymond Tallis was Professor of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Manchester until 2006. He has published over 200 articles in leading journals such as *Nature*, *Medicine*, and *Lancet*. In 2000 he was elected Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences. In addition to literary works, he has published many books on the philosophy of mind, philosophical anthropology, literary theory, the nature of art, and cultural criticism. His recent books include *Aping Mankind: Neuromania, Darwinitis and the Misrepresentation of Humanity* (Acumen, 2011) and *In Defence of Wonder and Other Philosophical Reflections* (Acumen, 2012).



Richard Conrad obtained a PhD in chemistry in Cambridge before joining the Dominican Friars and studying philosophy and theology in Oxford. Since 1988 he has been teaching the thought of Aquinas, and the history of dogmatic theology, at Oxford and at Maryvale Institute in Birmingham. After serving as Prior at Blackfriars, Cambridge he became Vice-Regent of Studies at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford. His most recent publication is *The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*. (London: CTS, 2009).



Roger Scruton is visiting professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Oxford, Senior Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, a Fellow of the British Academy, and Professorial Fellow in Moral Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. He is the author of more than 30 books that have been widely translated, including *Art and Imagination* (Methuen, 1974), *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (Methuen, 1979), *Sexual Desire* (Continuum, 1986), *Modern Philosophy* (Penguin, 1994) and *The Aesthetics of Music* (Clarendon, 1997).

Short Paper Authors

Olia Arustamyan is Lecturer in Law at the School of Law of Birmingham City University. She obtained her undergraduate degree in law from National University of Kiev, and LL.M and PhD from the University of Nottingham. Her main research interests are in philosophy of law and moral philosophy more generally.

Rafe McGregor is a final year philosophy PhD student at the University of York, where he is supervised by Professor Peter Lamarque. His thesis, entitled *The Value of Literature*, proposes a new argument for literary autonomy. His publications include papers on the philosophy of film and applied ethics, and he has a particular interest in the work of Francis Hutcheson.

Agata Lukomska is a PhD student from Warsaw University, Poland. Her main research interests are in metaethics and epistemology. Her dissertation project, which won her a Fulbright scholarship in Berkeley last year, focuses on exploring possible models of practical reasoning with Bernard Williams's ethical thought, as an excuse to think and write about it.

Erdinç Sayan is Associate Professor at the Middle East Technical University. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the Ohio State University in 1994. His areas of interest include philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, and analytic metaphysics (especially the problems of causation, space, time, motion, personal identity).

Magdalena Bieniak is Assistant Professor at the University of Warsaw. She read for the PhD in Philosophy at the University of Padua and the Université de Sorbonne – Paris IV (co-tutelle) in 2008, Doctor Europaeus. Besides several critical editions and studies in Medieval Philosophy, she has published *The Soul-Body Problem at Paris, ca. 1200-1250* (Leuven University Press, 2010) and prepared with Riccardo Quinto a critical edition of Stephen Langton's *Quaestiones Theologiae* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming) .

Adam Tuszynski is a PhD student at the University of Warsaw. In 2010 he graduated from the University of Edinburgh with the Master of Science in Philosophy diploma. During his doctoral studies he chose to take up the topic of group agency and examine whether we can treat groups as the genuine agents and/or subjects of intentional attitudes. His current research focuses on defending such a view.

Keynote Abstracts

Peter Hacker, *Me, my Mind and my Body, not to mention a self, a soul and a person* – A human being has a mind and has a body. He also has a soul, is often said to have a self, and sometimes said to have an 'I' or an 'Ego'. On top of this he is said to be a person. This proliferation of personal property suggests double counting on the manifest. A human being is a substance – a living being of a certain kind (*homo sapiens*). The mind a human being has is neither a substance nor a substantial part of a substance, but an array of capacities of intellect and will, and their exercise. The body a human being has is distinct from the body (the animate self-moving substance) a human being is. There is no relation between the mind and the body a human being has, although he may have a variety of attitudes towards his intellectual powers and somatic properties. Because human beings are free agents answerable for their deeds, they are persons – moral agents that are bearers of rights and duties. The self and the 'I', as understood by philosophers, are fictions.

John Cottingham, *Why we are not "persons"* – This paper examines the technical use of the term 'person' that has become common among philosophers, and argues that it is best avoided. Not only does it depend on dubious assumptions in the philosophy of mind, but it paves the way for a suspect and potentially dangerous way of thinking about our human status and the basis of human dignity.

Jonathan Price, *Human beings as "persons" in law* – It seems that not so long ago something happened to the concept 'person' as the result of which it has become difficult for it to connote what was legally and historically one of its most common senses: a corporate person (for instance, that of Hobbes's Leviathan). I shall trace some of the movements of the concept of 'person', from its Greek theatrical beginnings, its Roman law days, its theological developments in Boethius and Thomas Aquinas, Grotius's and Hobbes's dealings with it and up to the present day. This sketch will identify certain ideas and concepts that have been rolled into what we now mean by 'person', as well as where they may have come from.

Raymond Tallis, *Can neuroscience cast light on personhood?* – In this paper, I shall argue that neuroscience, and in particular the investigation of the workings of the human brain, have little to add to our understanding of personhood. In support of this argument, I shall point out that there are many key aspects of personhood that are not amenable to a neuroscientific explanation. The most fundamental of these is consciousness. In addition there are higher levels aspects of personhood, most notably unity of consciousness at a particular time and the extension of personhood over time into past and future, and voluntary action that are also beyond the reach of also neuroscience. This position leaves those who oppose neural explanations of the person with the task of defining and making sense of the central role of the brain in permitting the possibility of personhood.

Richard Conrad, *Aquinas on the human organism's unity and complexity* – To understand Aquinas on the human organism's unity and complexity requires awareness of his "neo-Platonic" cosmos in which things have differing degrees of being and therefore of unity. Thus the tension between unity and complexity in the human being is only to be expected. The human person is a single being; on that basis, we can enquire fearlessly about the limited hold soul has over body, the organic cooperation among our faculties, degrees of psychological and moral integrity, and inter-personal communion. Our present limited unity is to be overcome supernaturally in the final resurrection, when personal communion with God will enable a greater participation in his unity.

Roger Scruton, *Responsibilities and Rights* – The concept of the person is fundamental to legal and moral thinking and is inseparable from that of accountability. All the arguments about the Other, beginning from Fichte and Hegel and leading to much French philosophy today, are really about this aspect of personhood. In recent analytical philosophy, however, a more individualistic concept of the person has gained ascendancy, according to which individual rights are the fundamental factor in distinguishing persons. I explore the tensions that result from this.