

Call for Submissions

Royal College of Psychiatrists

Fourth UK Conference on Philosophy and Psychiatry



PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN PSYCHEDELIC DRUG USE

Thursday 5 – Friday 6 October 2017
RCPsych, 21 Prescot Street, London, E1 8BB

The Philosophy Special Interest Group invites submissions for oral and poster presentation at their Fourth UK Conference on Philosophy and Psychiatry in October 2017. Submissions should be in the form of an abstract of a maximum of 300 words and submitted by email by **15:00 on Friday 14 April 2017** (see instructions below). Applicants will be informed whether they have been accepted or not in early July.

Professor Roland Griffiths, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore and Dr Robin Carhart-Harris, Imperial College, London will be keynote speakers.

How to send abstracts:

- Email your abstract to emma.jacobson@rcpsych.ac.uk with the subject reference '**Philosophy 2017 your surname then forename**'
- Attach your abstract as a Word document
- Please also include the following information at the end of your abstract:
 - Name of main presenting author
 - E-mail address
 - Name of author's work organisation and information on academic or professional affiliations

Instructions on the preparation of abstracts:

1. Abstracts should be typed single spaced, font size **10** in Word format using standard text, or text-only format.
2. Please specify if your submission is for an **oral and/or poster presentation**
3. The title should be in **bold**, followed by the full name(s) of the author and all co-authors, including titles (e.g. Dr) and their affiliations (e.g. University of Birmingham)
4. Hand-written abstracts will **not be accepted**.
5. The title must contain no abbreviations and must be written in sentence case.
6. The abstract should be between 200 and 300 words.
7. Submissions should clearly summarise the content of the presentation.
8. Bibliographic references, tables and appendices are not to be included in the abstract.
9. Please make sure you check all spellings carefully

We invite submissions under the following headings although this list is not exhaustive:

Mind-Brain Relationship

Neuroimaging studies are revealing how changes in brain function can lead to the particular changes in emotional and cognitive experiences produced by psychedelic drugs. These findings may be relevant to our understanding of psychoses and other abnormal mental states. They are also relevant to the discipline of philosophy of mind in the way the relationship of mind and brain and the way they affect each other is explored.

Treatment or Psychological Enhancement?

Administration of drugs such as Psilocybin and LSD can produce lasting improvements in emotional wellbeing. In some cases, these are still present more than a year after a single dose of drug. These drugs have been used on a trial basis in a range of psychiatric disorders including depression, PTSD and 'existential anxiety' in people with terminal illnesses.

It has been suggested that LSD creates a temporary "entropic state" in the brain. As the acute effect wears off, this leads to modulation in the quality of cognition in the direction of increased flexibility. It has been suggested that this might be conducive to improved psychological wellbeing and may explain why the drug can achieve benefits in patients. What are the ethical concerns in allowing people to change

themselves in this way? Are there any risks to individuals or society from this form of psychological enhancement?

Neuroscience and Phenomenology

The changes reported by experimental subjects who are given psychedelics include altered experiences of the self and the place of the individual in the wider scheme of things in ways that are felt to be positive and beneficial. It may be that psychedelics offer a pharmacological 'probe' that could enhance our knowledge of how states of the brain relate to identity and its context.

Restrictions on the Use of Psychoactive Drugs

There is widespread concern in society about the non medical use of psychoactive drugs. In response to this there are legal prohibitions and punishments applied to those who use and sell such substances. The positive effects and rarity of serious adverse effects when drugs such as LSD and Psilocybin are used in controlled settings are well established. Is there a case for relaxation of legal restrictions on use? If so, how far should this go?

Spirituality and Neuroscience

The experiences quoted by users of LSD and other psychedelics are often similar to spiritual experiences which arise in other settings such as profound meditation and religious ecstasies. Is spiritual experience no more than an illusion created by certain brain states? (Is nothing sacred?) Or is it possible that psychedelics do in fact allow their users access to realms of experience that are otherwise rarely disclosed? If so, is it possible to provide a naturalised, non-reductive account of spiritual experience?

Use in Forensic Settings

The impact of psychedelic drugs often includes an enduring sense of benevolence towards one's fellow human beings. These drugs have been occasionally (and controversially) used in the past in forensic populations. Is there potential to use psychedelics to ameliorate certain forms of criminality? Is this potential one that should be explored? If so, what ethical problems may arise and what constraints should be applied?

Others

Proposals in any other area related to the philosophy and clinical use of psychedelic drugs will be welcome.

CLOSING DATE: 15:00 on Friday 14 April 2017

Contact before the conference regarding poster submissions:

Emma Jacobson, Event & Exhibition Coordinator

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Instructions for poster presentations:

- Poster should be printed in **A1 size, portrait** and poster board size will be **2 metres high x 1 metre wide**
- Please do not print your poster until you have received confirmation of acceptance.
- The top line(s) of your poster should give the title of your abstract; the next line(s) should indicate the author(s) and their affiliations; continue with the introduction, methods, results and discussion as appropriate. The poster should end with conclusions.

Note for oral presentations:

- Speakers will be allocated 30 minutes plus 15 minutes for discussion for their presentations

Please note that we are unable to return posters to presenters if they are left behind at the end of the meeting