

İREM KURTSAL STEEN
CURRICULUM VITAE

CONTACT INFORMATION

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University of Missouri – St. Louis
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EDUCATION

Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY, Ph.D., Philosophy, December 2007
Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey, M.A., Philosophy, July 1999
Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey, B.A., Public Relations, June 1996

AREA OF SPECIALIZATION

Metaphysics

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Epistemology, Ethics, Applied Ethics, Logic

DISSERTATION

Composition, Vagueness, and Persistence
Committee: André Gallois (supervisor), Mark Heller, Kris McDaniel,
Thomas McKay, Theodore Sider

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Missouri – St. Louis
Assistant Teaching Professor. From Fall 2007

- Philosophy of Religion
- Approaches to Ethics
- Ethics and the Computer
- Business Ethics

Middle East Technical University[†], Ankara, Turkey
Part-time Instructor. Fall 2006 – Spring 2007

- Contemporary Philosophy II (Analytic Metaphysics and Epistemology)
- Introduction to Deductive Logic

Bilkent University[†], Ankara, Turkey
Part-time Instructor. Fall 2006 – Spring 2007

- Social and Political Philosophy I
- Social and Political Philosophy II

Instructor. Fall 2005 – Spring 2006.

- Sophomore Academic English I
Content: Social and Political Philosophy

[†] Language of instruction is English.

- Sophomore Academic English II
Content: Social and Political Philosophy

Syracuse University

Teaching Associate / Instructor. Spring 2002 – Spring 2004

- Theories of Knowledge and Reality (four times)
- Logic

Teaching Assistant. Fall 2000 – Fall 2001

- Human Nature (twice)
- Logic

Boğaziçi University[†]

Teaching Assistant. Fall 1998 – Spring 1999

- Critical Thinking
- Introduction to Philosophy

PUBLICATIONS

“Russell on Matter and Our Knowledge of the External World,” *Bertrand Russell Society Quarterly* 124: 13-22, 2004.

“‘Felsefede Temellendirmenin İşe Yaramazlığı’ Üzerine” *Felsefe Tartışmaları* 23: 72-73, 1998.

[“Against ‘The Futility of Argument in Philosophy’”]

UNDER REVIEW

“Three-Dimensionalist’s Semantic Solution to Diachronic Vagueness”

There is a well-known problem of diachronic vagueness. Intuitively speaking, a car, a vase, a tree, seem to go out of existence gradually. But if they did really do that, there would be worldly, or ontic vagueness. We can avoid ontic vagueness if we adopt ‘the semantic solution’ to vagueness. However, the semantic solution demands an abundant ontology. It was thought that such an ontology is inconsistent with endurantism. Not any more; several philosophers have noticed that the abundant ontology on its own does not preclude endurantism. But the virtue of combining endurantism and the abundant ontology is disputed; as the view even has been named ‘promiscuous’ endurantism. It often meets rejection because it entails that, on a regular basis, countless objects coincide in a way that cannot be accounted by simple mereology. This paper shows that there is no problem with such a regular, principled, well-grounded coincidence.

PRESENTATIONS

Commentary on Steven Swartzter’s “The Practical Reasoning Argument for Pragmatic Encroachment” at The Central States Philosophy Association Annual Meeting, September 2008.

“Three-dimensional Objects and Coincidence”, University of Missouri-St. Louis, January 2008.

“Three Dimensionalism and Time Travel”, Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, May 2007.

“Three Dimensionalism and Time Travel”, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, May 2007.

“A Plenitude of Coinciding Endurers”, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, April 2007.

“Non-Arbitrariness of Enduring Objects”, Boğaziçi University Philosophy Conference: Thoughts and Things, Istanbul, October 2006.

“ ‘Pendurance’: A New Theory of Persistence”, Syracuse University Philosophy Department Graduate Student Speaker Series, May 2005.

Commentary on Dimitria Electra Gatzia’s “Color Fictionalism”, Syracuse University Philosophy Department Graduate Student Speaker Series, April 2005.

Commentary on Megan Wallace’s “Mental Fictionalism”, Syracuse University Graduate Student Philosophy Conference, April 2005.

“Russell on Matter and Our Knowledge of the External World”, Plymouth State University, Bertrand Russell Society 31st Annual Meeting, June 2004.

Commentary on Sarah McGrath’s “Did Gore Cause the Recount? Facts, Events and the Causal Relata”, with Europa Malynicz, Syracuse University Graduate Student Philosophy Conference, March 2001.

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

Bertrand Russell Society Student Essay Prize, 2004

Syracuse University Graduate Scholarship, Fall 1999 – Fall 2007

Syracuse University Graduate Fellowship, academic year 2002-2003

Philosophy Graduate Student Summer Grant, Summer 2001

Syracuse University Graduate Fellowship, academic year 1999-2000

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

External Speaker Committee Chief, Academic Year 2004-2005.

Organized Prof. Achille Varzi’s visit.

Graduate Student Conference Advisor, Philosophy Department, Syracuse University, Academic Year 2004-2005.

Graduate Student Conference Chief of Organization, Philosophy Department, Syracuse University, Academic Year 2003-2004.

GRADUATE COURSEWORK IN PHILOSOPHY

Syracuse University

Williamson's *Knowledge and Its Limits*[‡] (José Benardete)
God and Time[‡] (Dean Zimmerman)
Philosophy of Time[‡] (André Gallois)
Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Fred Beiser)
Independent Study [Philosophy of Time] (Ted Sider)
Early 20th Century Analytic Philosophy (Dean Zimmerman)
Understanding Consciousness (Robert Van Gulick)
Propositional Attitudes (Ted Sider)
Contemporary Epistemology (William Alston)
Hellenistic Philosophy (Bonnie Kent)
Personal Identity (Dean Zimmerman)
Philosophy of Mathematics (José Benardete)
Metaphysics (John Hawthorne)
Independent Study [Persistence] (Ted Sider)
Convention and Modality[‡] (Ted Sider)
Philosophy of Language (Ted Sider)
Logic and Language (Mark Brown)
Topics in Moral Philosophy [Metaethics] (Lynn McFall)
Vagueness (José Benardete and John Hawthorne)

Boğaziçi University

Topics in Contemporary Philosophy [A Priori Knowledge][‡] (Gürol Irzik)
Topics in Philosophy of Science [Psychoanalysis] (Gürol Irzik)
Ethics [Human Rights] (Zeynep Davran)
Theory of Knowledge [Contemporary Skepticism] (Arda Denkel)
Philosophy of Language (İlhan İnan)
Plato (Yılmaz Koç)
Topics in History of Philosophy [Leibniz and Kant] (Stephen Voss)

REFERENCES

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[‡] Audited.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT
COMPOSITION, VAGUENESS, AND PERSISTENCE

This dissertation explores the conceptual relations among composition, vagueness, and persistence; in light of those relations, it defends a three-dimensionalist ontology.

Under which circumstances do some objects that exist at various times compose a persisting object? The correct answer to this “successive composition question” should entail that every possible persisting object has precise temporal boundaries and a precise composition profile at every moment of its existence. This “precision constraint” follows from a foundational commitment of this dissertation, namely, that vagueness is a linguistic, i.e., non-ontological phenomenon.

The precision constraint disallows that all and only ordinary objects are persisting things. Views that try to demarcate ordinary objects in terms of causal powers, lawful behavior, continuity, etc. all breach the precision constraint. Other views adhere to the precision constraint, but at too high costs. Compositional nihilism states that composition never occurs, so that the only persisting objects are genuine atoms. On compositional monism, the entire world is one big partless object.

The correct answer to the successive composition question is that, without restriction, every time during which some x s exist is a time during which some y exists where y is composed of the x s at the said times, and y does not exist at any other time. This is the thesis of Diachronic Plenitude, so-named because it implies that every non-empty spacetime region contains an object fitting exactly in that region. Most of these objects are unrecognized in folk ontology, but everything recognized by folk ontology is included in the plenitude. Every object has precise temporal boundaries and a precise composition profile at every moment of its existence. What is often vague is which of these sharp objects is the referent of a given singular expression; this is due to the vagueness of a predicate that features in the expression.

Recent work on vagueness and persistence has it that Diachronic Plenitude either precludes three-dimensionalism or renders it untenable. I show that these claims are false. Against Theodore Sider, I argue that Diachronic Plenitude does not entail four-dimensionalism. Against Achille Varzi, I argue that the ontology of a plenitude of three-dimensional objects meets the precision constraint in exactly the same way as the ontology of temporal parts. Against Mark Heller I argue that plenitudinarian three-dimensionalism does not violate a tenable supervenience principle. Diachronic Plenitude itself, regardless of whether it is combined with three- or four-dimensionalism, flouts the supervenience of persistence on any base level facts, as it liberally allows all filled spacetime regions to contain an object fitting in that region.

None of this would matter if Plenitudinarian Three Dimensionalism could not solve traditional puzzles of constitution, so I show that it does. I then respond to Sider’s objection from the possibility of time travel. I revise the foregoing ontology to allow objects to be located at two different places at the same time and have their properties relative to places as well as times.