



PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM

Steven French

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“Are There No Things That Are Scientific Theories?”

Friday, February 19, 2010

Learning Center, Room 184

3:30 pm - 5:30 pm

Abstract

The ontological status of theories themselves has recently re-emerged as a live topic in the philosophy of science. We consider whether a recent approach within the philosophy of art can shed some light on this issue. For many years philosophers of aesthetics have debated a paradox in the (meta)ontology of musical works (e.g. Levinson 1980). Taken individually, there are good reasons to accept each of the following three propositions: (i) musical works are created; (ii) musical works are abstract objects; (iii) abstract objects cannot be created. However it seems clear that, if one wants to avoid inconsistency, one cannot commit to all three. Following up recent developments courtesy of Cameron (2008), we consider how one might respond to the corresponding set of propositions in the (meta)ontology of scientific theories. (This is a joint work with Peter Vickers.)

Steven French is Professor of Philosophy of Science at the University of Leeds. His main research areas are philosophy of science and history and philosophy of physics. He is the author of *Identity in Physics* (Oxford University Press, 2006, with Décio Krause), and *Science and Partial Truth* (Oxford University Press, 2003, with Newton da Costa), as well as of several papers in journals such as *Journal of Philosophy*, *Philosophy of Science*, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, and *Synthese*, among many others.

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