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P H I L O S O P H Y
C O N F E R E N C E

The Self

Department of Philosophy
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**Croatian Society
for Analytic
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(Hrvatsko društvo
za analitičku
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Transhumanism

Eric Olson
Department of Philosophy
University of Sheffield
e.olson@sheffield.ac.uk

The Metaphysics of Transhumanism

Tranhumanism hopes to enable us, through technology, to dispense with the limitations of being human. This hope frequently presupposes important and contentious metaphysical claims: e.g. that it is possible for an inorganic digital computer to have thought and consciousness, that it is possible for a human being (that is, someone who starts out as a human being) to become partly or wholly inorganic, and that it is possible for a human being to be 'uploaded' into a computer without any material continuity. I aim to spell out these claims in detail and consider how likely they are to be true.

Self in Different Philosophical Traditions

Boran Berčić
Department of Philosophy
University of Rijeka
boran.bercic@ri.t-com.hr

Logical Positivists on the Self

Logical Positivists are not known for their work on the Self. However, they had very interesting and elaborated view on the nature of the Self. The negative part of their view was primarily a critique of Descartes' Cogito, a traditional stronghold of the rationalistic philosophy. The positive part of their view was the empiricist reductionist account of the Self: the idea that the Self was a construct. Their view about the Self, as opposed to the Descartes' view, can be summed up in five points: 1. Self is not something simple, it is something composed of elements. 2. Self is not know by a direct insight, but indirectly, inferentially and gradually. 3. Self is not the Archimedian point of the knowledge, it is discovered later in the proces of the rational reconstruction. 4. Self is not known a priori but a posteriori, its existence is an empirical discovery. 5. Self is not something that exists necessarily, its existence is contingent.
Positivists' view was that the true nature of the Self was best revealed by its place in the constitution system, that is, by its place and role in the process of the rational reconstruction of knowledge. This is why the most interesting positivists' insights into the nature of the Self are to be found in the Rudolf Carnap's Der logische Aufbau der Welt and Hans Reichenbach's Experience and Prediction. Since they were reductionists about the Self, they had to answer the objection that is nowadays known as the objection from the unowned experience (John Campbell Past, Space, and Self). And their answer was elaborated and systematic: although the basis of our constitution system is our experience, we discover that fact later, through the constitution of the physical, autopsychological, and heterpsychological. Therefore, the reductionist analysis of the self as a construct out of experience can be carried out in a non-circular way.

Goran Kardaš
Department of Philosophy
Department of Indology
University of Zagreb
gkardas@yahoo.com

No-Self View in Buddhist Philosophy

It is generally accepted that the claim „self does not exist" is one of the central points of the Buddhist philosophy. But it is much less evident what exactly is the subject of this claim (ātman„self") and what is the scope of this negation. Actually, Buddha has never explicitely stated „self does not exist" (that would be an ontological claim that Buddha rejects along with its opposite, „self exists"), but has pointed out that the idea of self is just redundant for the explanation of psycho-physical processes. And it is not just redundant, but is dangerous in that it generates a „wrong view" about reality by way of the superimposition (prapañca) of non-referring concept of substance onto it. This process of (mental and linguistic) superimposition, that has the adherence to self as its core, always inevitable ends in mental and emotional turmoils or „suffering" (dukkha).
In my presentation I will firstly provide a general Buddhist setting within which „no-self view" occurs and then will proceede with the presentation and discussion of main arguments against „self view" as are advanced by Vasubandhu (a Buddhist philosopher, 4th C.E.) in his magnum opus Abhidharmakośabhāšya . Majority of these arguments are centered around the problem of memory that, according to his opponent (defending „self view"), cannot be explained without the concept of self that unifies experience.

Kristijan Krkač
Zagreb School of Economics and Management
The Faculty of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus
kristian.krkac@gmail.com

Wittgenstein on Self in PI: We, Robots

In the text the author develop some previously researched ideas on Wittgenstein on consciousness in his later philosophy (see Krkač, Lukin 2006a, 2006b, 2012), namely in PI. The starting point is identity of a quite developed kind of a robot capable of learning, i.e. the Terminator model T-101. In previous paper (Krkač, Lukin 2012) the author developed specific criticism on standpoint of Antti Kuusela's paper "Wittgenstein and what's inside the Terminator's head" (Kuusela 2009:266-79). In the present paper, and based on criticism of Kuusela some further possible implications will be explicated concerning the nature of self, particularly self-consciousness in Wittgenstein's PI. In a nutshell, what is analyzed in the paper is Wittgenstein's form of life condition which differs, not only human self from animal or artificial selves, but which differs particular human selves one from another as well. Nevertheless, acquisition of a particular form of life and living a life which by its practices, routines, and culture essentially manifests human self is problematic criterion of self for a series of reasons some of which are the following: the criterion claims perhaps only necessary condition of a self, but not the sufficient as well, the criterion is quite complex, forms of life are in constant change.

Ana Gavran Miloš
Department of Philosophy
University of Rijeka
anag@ffri.hr

Self in Ancient Philosophy

In the field of ancient philosophy there is an ongoing debate about the way ancients understands the question of the individual as a self and more importantly whether they operate with anything similar to the modern concept of selfhood in "subjective-individualist" terms. My aim is to explore opposed views offered by C. Gill and R. Sorabji and to argue for Sorabji's position. Gill argues for a holistic interpretation of a person in Greek philosophy where a human being is understood as a structure of three different aspects: metaphysical, psychological and ethical. The result of such a view is the idea of a person as an "objective participant" which is highly incompatible with usual terminology of personhood such as I-centeredness, me-ness or individuality. On the other side, Sorabji argues against Gill's idea of structured self and claims that human beings could not survive unless they thought of themselves in terms of the me and me again. Therefore, in Sorabji's view ancient philosophers undoubtedly show an interest in the individual person and in the individual seeing itself in terms of me. I will argue that such Sorabji's conception of selfhood is more compatible with ancient ethical framework and their concept of agency.

Ljudevit Hanžek
Department of Philosophy
University of Split
ljuhan@ffst.hr

Self-Consciousness in the Brentanian tradition

Franz Brentano is most famous for his rehabilitation, and transformation, of the medieval notion of intentionality, but the topics of consciousness and self-consciousness are (arguably) at least as equally important in his work. According to Brentano, self-consciousness consists in a mental state's reflexive awareness of itself - mental states have a primary object, which is usually a physical phenomenon, and a secondary object, which is the mental state itself. While the primary object is in the focus of attention, mental state's awareness of itself is incidental and secondary. Brentano's arguments for believeing in the existence of such a form of self-consciousness rely on a variety of phenomenological, metaphysical and epistemological considerations, some of which bear a resemblance to contemporary discussions of higher-order theories of consciousness (Armstrong, Lycan, Rosenthal, Carruthers). Brentano's views on self-consciousness were extremely influential in the phenomenological school in the early 20th century, particularly through his famous student Edmund Husserl. Recently, a number of authors working in analytic philosophy have developed those views in a theory which figures as an alternative to standard views on the relationship between consciousness and self-consciousness (Textor, Thomasson, Kriegel).
In my presentation, I will introduce the historical context in which Brentano formed his theory of self-consciousness, and the influences behind it. Then I will present the arguments he advances in favor of his conception, and the objections to those arguments. Finally, I will present the contemporary neo-Brentanian theories, explain their divergence from Brentano's original proposal, and their relationship to higher-order theories of consciousness.

Self in Literature

Aleksandar Mijatović
Department for Croatian Language and Literature
University of Rijeka
amijatovic@ffri.hr

Bodies Impersonalized: Literary Modernity and Personal Identity

In the second edition of An Essay Concerning of Human Understanding (1694) John Locke developed modern conception of personal identity as opposed to the Cartesian conception of the immateriality of soul. According to Locke, persons are distinct from humans and their persistence depend neither on the same soul nor on the same material body. Consciousness has central role in Locke's explanation because it enables self to reflect upon itself and to unify its distinct moments of the existence. The unity of person does not depend on the materiality of substance, but on the fixity of consciousness which remains the same regardless of the change of the bodies.

In order to show that personal identity is independent from the body, Locke introduces various fission examples. Locke's fission examples are connected with the possibility of law to account for persons and with possibilities of law to identify people and determine if they are outside or inside the rule of law. His images of amputated hand and little finger reminds on torture and death penalty. However, if identity is not in the substance, then exercise of law must be redirected from the body to people's selves which become a new object of torture.

And that is precisely the question of Robert Louis Stevenson's Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886). Who must be punished for disobeying the law: Jekyll or Hyde? Are Jekyll and Hyde two or one persons? Is it possible to explain the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde in the vocabulary of bodies and persons? It could be argued that this tale from literary modernity appeals for changing our views on personal identity. But if such thesis it tenable, how could be it articulated without introducing metaphysically strange entities such as transhumans, doppelgängers, monsters? As it will be demonstrated, Stevenson argues that there is nothing monstrous, extraordinary and strange about such entities.

Jelena Dragičević
Department for Croatian Language and Literature
University of Rijeka
dragicevic1010@gmail.com

Modernism and Problem of Identity in Luigi Pirandello's Novel One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand

In his work, Italian novelist, playwriter and essayist Luigi Pirandello, presents us with the constructivist version of the world. With that notion he reflects on his literary characters and their personal identities. In his last novel One, No One and One Hundred Thousand, the main character Vitangelo Moscarda experiences an identity crisis. True to Pirandello's relativism, Moscarda concludes that due to perception of others he is not one for himself and others, but is actually one hundred thousand.

The novel poses the questions about uniqueness or plurality of personal identity and constitution of self. Is sameness necessary condition of constitution of identity? Does identity supervene on substance or is it reducible to one? Does Pirandello pose a genuine philosophical problem and how to understand that problem in philosophical terms? According to Paul Ricœur, the identity crisis can be interpreted as selfhood which lost its sameness. However, that disruption of the identity on dimensions of sameness and selfhood makes the narrative identity of novel. But Ricœur rejects the vocabulary of crisis, dissolution and disruption as ways to describe something that threatens identity. He presents Locke's, Hume's and Parfit's notions of identity as its gradual 'desubstantialization' and as a separation of selfhood from sameness.

In the essay On Humour Pirandello rejects Cartesian tradition by showing how comical effects emerge from failed self-reflection. In One, No One and One Hundred Thousand Pirandello demonstrates that identity depends on recognitions of others. The self is nothing but a fictional construction derived from struggle for mutual recognition.

Metaphysics of the Self

Márta Ujvári
Department of Philosophy
Corvinus University of Budapest
marta.ujvari@uni-corvinus.hu

Haecceity Today and with Duns Scotus: Property or Entity?

According to Kaplan's famous dictum "haecceitism is the doctrine that holds that it does make sense to ask, without reference to common attributes, whether this is the same individual in another possible world". So the main role of haecceity in contemporary metaphysics is to secure the transworld identity (TWI) of concrete individuals in nonqualitative terms. Since Selves are individuals they share the problem of TWI. The view considered here is committed to taking haecceity as a special, impure, non-qualitative relational property, advocated by authors like Rosenkranzt and Diekemper.

A host of questions suggests itself: does haecceity as a property exist also uninstantiated? Does it afford a good alternative to Leibnizian TWI in qualitative terms? How does it connect up with the individual's specific nature and its individual nature? Problems with the property view are spelled out by Chisholm and Adams.

In a different ontological framework Duns Scotus formulates the role of haecceity as yielding the principle of individuation. He takes haecceity an entitas positiva capturing the individual difference within the common nature. His views on the issue were largely motivated by finding insufficient the suggestions for individuation by his contemporaries. Obviously, the property-view and the entity view of haecceity are not co-tenable. Here I shall argue that the feeling of discomfort can be mitigated by considering that a common concern for the individual motivates the application of haecceity though in different ontological frameworks: today it is the Fregean function-argument framework of first order metaphysics, with Scotus it is the Aristotelian substance-accident framework.

In the details I shall try to assess to pros and cons of the historical view and the contemporary views on haecceitas.

Idexical "I"

Takashi Yagisawa   (Skype)
Department of Philosophy
California State Univeristy, Northridge
takashi.yagisawa@csun.edu

Meta-Representational Me

What is the nature of our notion of the first person (*me*)? I start by reviewing the best theory we have of the linguistic meaning of the word "I," namely, the two-dimensional indexical theory. According to this theory, the reference of "I" is always relative to a *context of utterance* and "I" refers to x relative to a given context of utterance C if and only if x is the *agent* (speaker, writer, signer, etc.) in C, and this reference is *rigid*, that is, it does not shift with shifting *circumstances of evaluation* (with respect to which the truth value of what is said--content--relative to C is determined). I propose a theory of the first person which explains this rigidity. The idea is that the basic notion of the first person is not primarily substantial (directed to an object) but is modal (specifying a way). The way in question is a way of representation. An external objective situation is represented in a certain unique way to me; call it the "*me*-way." The same situation may be equally well represented to someone else, but not in the *me*-way. From this representational-modal notion of the *me*-way, I extract the derivatively substantial notion of *me*. I explicate the notion of the *me*-way by distinguishing it from the notion of the *self*, and the distinction is clarified by analogy in terms of the two-dimensional semantic theory of tense logic, in which "now" and the present tense are distinguished. There is also a useful analogy with the case of alethic modality, in which we extract the notion of a possible world from alethic modal notions like *possible* truth and *actual* truth. The rigidity of "I" is explained by means of the unchanging *me*-way of representation of the content irrespective of the circumstance of evaluation.

Ethical Self

Matej Sušnik
Department of Philosophy
University of Rijeka
msusnik@net.hr

Ideal Self in Non-Ideal Circumstances

Any plausible theory of reasons should capture the way in which reasons figure in the explanation and justification of our actions. Normative reasons, in other words, are not only expected to exert a 'motivational pull' on the agent, but they should be able to justify what the agent does as well. In order to meet these requirements, many philosophers endorse the view according to which normative reasons depend not on the motivations of one's actual self, but rather on the motivations of one's ideal self. According to this internalist picture, what one has reason to do does not depend on what one is actually motivated to do, but rather on what one would be motivated to do if one deliberated correctly, had no false beliefs, and had all relevant true beliefs (Williams, 1980). However, as some philosophers point out (Johnson, 1999; Sobel, 2001), this view overlooks the possibility that one could have a reason to act in a certain way precisely because one is not ideally placed. The trouble is that the specification of one's actual circumstances sometimes include one's imperfection, so it is simply not possible for one's ideal self to be in the same circumstances (Williams 1995). As a result of their attempt to avoid this difficulty, internalists fail to meet the above mentioned requirements, so the revised versions of internalism fail to account for the explanatory and justificatory role of normative reasons. In this paper I discuss this puzzle in more detail and evaluate some of the proposed solutions.

Marin Biondic
Department of Philosophy
University of Rijeka
marinbiondic@yahoo.com

Value Judgments of Causing to Exist and Never Come to Existence -
About Whom We Talk

In this article I will examine value talk about nonexistent people, especially about "people" who are in the state of not-yet-in-existence and "people" who never existed. Is it good or bad for such "people" that start to exist or not exist forever? First of all, is such question meaningful? Can we say, meaningfully, that nonexistence is good or bad for "somebody" who never came into existence? About whom we talk in such cases? Where is the referent? Who is that "somebody"? Who are those "people"? Is our utterance in such cases completely meaningless? Or there is a meaning in such value sentences, but we should be very cautious when we formulate such sentences and when we speak of value of existence and nonexistence. Some prominent philosophers, as Derek Parfit, think that we can meaningfully talk about value of existence versus nonexistence. But in addition, David Benatar thinks that "it is better never to have been" exactly on the asymmetry between presence and absence of goods/bads for existent people and nonexistent "people". In this article, I try to defend position that there is a meaning in some kind of value judgments of existence versus nonexistence for people, and that Benatar's position is plausible position. In the other words, our value judgments of existence versus nonexistence are meaningful if they have proper referent, and it is far from clear that value of existence is positive.

Self-Knowledge

Nenad Miščević   (Skype)
University of Maribor, Slovenia
University of Rijeka, Croatia
CEU Budapest, Hungary
The Value of Self-Knowledge

We have to distinguish the immediate knowledge of one's mental states (I know that I feel pain, ostensibly, in my foot) from the more indirect knowledge of one's dispositions, character traits, and other causally relevant deeper traits, call it CD self-knowledge (causal dispositional).
The CD self-knowledge has been traditionally the object of search for wisdom and meaningfulness in one's life. What is its value? Cassam has recently argued that it is a purely practical one, and his opponents (Eric Schwitzgebel) have stressed the possibility of intrinsic value.
The paper argues that CD-knowledge does have intrinsic value, and connects it to self-inquisitiveness, human desire to learn truths about oneself.

Luca Malatesti
Department of Philosophy
University of Rijeka
lmalatesti@ffri.hr

Identification and Self-Knowledge

In this paper I investigate two classes of epistemic capacities that appear to be required by the identification process that several philosophers pose at the basis of moral responsibility (Watson 1982; Wolf 1990; Fischer and Ravizza 1998; Velleman 1989, Velleman 1982). On the one hand, the apprehension of the 'minimal self', a direct and immediate phenomenology of oneself, provides the agent knowledge of itself as a self-aware moral agent. The experience of the minimal self that one has from a direct first person (first-first person) perspective warrants the 'sense of agency' and 'sense of ownership' (Gallagher 2000) of a willed action. On the other hand, I maintain that a further type of knowledge of our beliefs, emphatic states, motives, desires, and life plans is essential to the capacity of identification with them. At the core of the investigation of this normatively rich notion of the self, which emerges from the process of identification, I pose the capacity for mental time travel. (Kennett and Matthews 2009)

Mental time travel requires that the agent is able to see itself as a diachronically structured unit, therefore it requires that the agent adopts upon herself an indirect first person (first-third person) perspective that allow her to constitute a 'narrative self'. The agent has to be able to detach from herself and from her dominant motives and desires. In taking such a "step back" the agent is able to "objectify" her motivational mental states and herself a construct a narrative. Moreover, such an "objectification" permits her to consider alternative future outcomes by means of alternative narratives constructed on the basis of motives or life plans of her future (or possible) selves.

I will argue that possessing the capacities for an "objectifying" self-narrative is necessary to have contrastive decisions, a plan or a life project. In fact, the process of identification requires having several competing objectivised desires that we can compare, weight, and make a decisive commitment towards. Thus, there are some relevant types of self-knowledge involved in "wholeheartedly accepting" our desires and other motivational states (Frankfurt 1988) that constitute our own self-image or, as some authors like to name it, "a person life view" (Schechtman 2014).

SCIENTIFIC COLLOQUIUM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

12.15 - 13.30

Eric Olson

Department of Philosophy
University of Sheffield
e.olson@sheffield.ac.uk

Immortality

What would it be like to live forever? Could it be a good thing, or would an endless life inevitably become pointless or shallow or boring? It is clear that this would be an important question if we actually are going to live forever, as many religious traditions have it. But what if we're not? Why bother thinking about immortality if we haven't got it? The reason, I think, is to understand the significance of our mortality. In order to know how good or bad it is that we are going to die, we need to compare it with the alternative: our not dying. However, most discussions of immortality involve much more than just our not dying. The immortality stories that philosophers and poets imagine differ from the status quo in many other ways. Most obviously, in the stories we are in some way immune to death. This appears to make many of those stories impossible. In any event, they are the wrong way to think about what would be the case if we didn't die. I argue that we should think about the significance of death by comparing it to a more modest and realistic sort of immortality. This makes a big difference to the debate about what immortality would be like.