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20th Rijeka International Conference
Contemporary Philosophical Issues

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20th Rijeka International Conference
Contemporary Philosophical Issues
April 19-20 2018

Thursday
April 19th 2018

ETHICS AND POLITICS

10.00-10.45 Nenad Mišćević: Rawls's Original Position as a Thought-Experiment:
Some Methodological Issues

10.50-11.35 Tomislav Bracanović: Internet of Things, Big Data and Privacy

11.35-11.45 Coffee brake

11.45-12.30 Nikola Regent: Skinner's Methodology and Republican Theory

12.35-13.20 Viktor Ivanković: Neurointerventions, Nudges, and Transparency

13.20-14.30 Lunch

MENTAL HEALTH

14.30-15.15 Luca Malatesti & Marko Jurjako: Just Network-based Classifications
of Mental Disorders? Not Really!

15.20-16.05 Marko Jurjako: Are Psychopaths Insane?

16.05.-16.15 Coffee brake

SCIENCE

16.15-17.00 Majda Trobok: The Mathematics - (Natural) Sciences Analogy: The
Context of Justification

17.05-17.50 Antonio Danese: A Metaphor for Scientists

17.50-18.00 Coffee break

MEANING AND INFERENCE

18.00-18.45 Matjaž Potrč: Propositional Modularity

18.50-19.35 Nenad Smokrović: Informal Logic and Normativity of Reasoning

Friday
April 20th 2018

TIME

10.00-10.45 Boran Berčić: Presentism and Relativity

10.50-11.35 Marin Biondić: Eternalism, Presentism and Death

11.35-11-45 Coffee break

11.45-12.30 Denis Paušić: Eternalism and Truthmakers

12.35-13.20 David Grčki: Rationality in Time

13.20-14.30 Lunch

VARIA

14.30-15.15 Aleksandra Golubović & Leonard Pektor: The Place of Education in Contemporary Philosophical Debates

15.20-16.05 Iris Vidmar: Genre Fiction and its Many Puzzles

16.10-16.55 Neven Petrović: Judging Politicians Morally

16.55-17.10 Coffee break

MEANING OF LIFE

17.10-17.55 Matej Sušnik: Harm, Death and the Quality of Life

18.00-18.45 Filip Čeč: The Meaning of Life, Infinity and Supertasks

Rawls's Original Position as A Thought-Experiment: Some Methodological Issues

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The paper address Rawls's Original Position specifically as a thought experiment (TE, for short), looking at methodological issues it opens. They can be systematized into three groups.

First, those having to do with the internal structure of thought experimenting in Original Position behind the Veil of ignorance: specify the steps the thinker (or reader) is supposed to take, and present them as plausible stages of the TE as a whole.

Second, those that have to do with thinker's immediate judgments concerning concrete and specific matters of justice, presented to her behind the Veil. The judgments are not the result of a distanced third-person reflection of some presented model, but of first-person enactment; the most plausible cognitive reading of it is in terms of simulation: the thinker simulates her reaction under a range of different imagined situation. This account finely meshes with recent independent work on simulation.

Third, when it comes to justifying considered judgments and to the process of more comprehensive reflective equilibrium, there is a set of issues that arise in connection with the proposed understanding of justice. The interest of this group is twofold. First, it is philosophically relevant in itself, second, it points to and helps explain the process that has been triggered by the awareness of the issues. As usual in TEs the reflection and discussion linked to the building of a comprehensive reflective equilibrium, lead the author (and his followers) to redesigning the original TE. The most important developments of Rawls's thought can be understood from the perspective of the task of re-designing.

Internet of Things, Big Data And Privacy

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The Internet of Things (IoT) is “the network of physical objects that contain embedded technology to communicate and sense or interact with their internal states or the external environment”; Big Data is “high-volume, high-velocity and/or high variety information assets that demand cost-effective, innovative forms of information processing that enable enhanced insight, decision making, and process automation” (definitions from IT Glossary available at www.gartner.com). IoT is about to make Big Data even bigger, allowing thus more insight into – and more accurate predictions about – human behavior, preferences and decision-making. This technological development raises specific ethical issues, with violation of privacy being the most prominent one. The presentation will consist of three parts: (1) a short description of IoT and Big Data, with a special focus on their commercial and non-commercial uses; (b) a brief review of some typical claims and arguments to the effect that these technologies pose a threat to privacy; (c) an analysis of some frequently mentioned examples of privacy violations due to these technologies. The main purpose of the presentation is to show that, although IoT and Big Data do pose some threats to some human rights and/or interests, categorizing these as violations of privacy may not be the best possible conceptualization of the ethical problem at hand.

Skinner's Methodology and Republican Theory

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The presentation will examine the relationship between Quentin Skinner's contextualist methodology, his interpretation of Machiavelli's views on liberty, and the contemporary "revival" of republican theory. It will explore how Skinner's political ideals directed his interpretation against his own methodological precepts, to offer a basis for the (neo-)republican revivalism. Skinner's interpretation of Machiavelli as a theorist of negative liberty will be examined in detail. The second part of the presentation will look at the consequences of the previous analysis for contemporary republican theory, especially for the work of Philip Pettit.

Neurointerventions, Nudges, And Transparency

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In two of his forthcoming papers, 'Neurointerventions, Nudges, and the 'Mere Substitution' of Influences', as well as 'Neural and Environmental Modulation of Motivation: What's the Moral Difference?', Thomas Douglas has defended the analogy between behavioral influences (in the literature often referred to as 'nudges') and certain neurointerventions. The relevant cases in Douglas's defense are the paradigmatic *cafeteria nudge* – where healthy options are made more attractive by being placed on eye-level – and Douglas's hypothetical *cafeteria spray* – where an airborne agent is dispersed on cafeteria premises in order to induce healthy cafeteria choices. We are to assume both techniques have the same aim (and only this aim) and both are effective, but leave room for avoidance.

Douglas's claim is that the cafeteria nudge and the cafeteria spray are analogously non-threatening to autonomy. At the core of this analogy lies the suggestion that in the absence of these influences, individuals would still face some other influences – without the nudge, individuals will be influenced by the random placement of food, and without the spray, they will be influenced by biochemical features of their brains. Furthermore, Douglas looks for features of these influences that might mark the moral difference between them, but tentatively concludes that all of them fail.

In my presentation, I consider one possible morally relevant difference between the cafeteria nudge and the cafeteria spray. I assess whether the cafeteria spray is a more problematic influence by default given that individuals cannot fully isolate their preferences from the influence once the presence of the influence is communicated to the subjects. The preferences stimulated by the cafeteria nudge, on the other hand, seem to be much more easily dissolvable once the influence becomes transparent. At first glance, we can produce conditions for transparency that make cafeteria nudges permissible, but it is not obvious the same conditions can be produced for cafeteria sprays. I explore these issues further in the presentation.

Just Network-Based Classifications of Mental Disorders? Not Really

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The network approach to mental disorders is a recent proposal that offers a nuanced view of the role that biological factors should have in the conceptualisation of these disorders (Borsboom 2017). The core assumption of this account is that mental disorders should be conceptualised as networks of causally interacting symptoms. Moreover, Denny Borsboom and colleagues (Borsboom, Cramer, and Kalis forthcoming), argue that the network approach is incompatible with a reductionist characterisation of mental disorders as “brain disorders” and, more than that, it shows why this type of reductionism is untenable.

In this paper we argue that Borsboom and colleagues fail to recognise that difficulties in the integration of biological and neurological information in the classification of mental disorders is also due to the *heterogeneity* of our current categories of mental disorders and associated symptoms. It seems that they exclude without reason a significant role that biological factors should have within their proposal. We think that such a role could be spelled out by means of a plausible interpretation of the current biomarker-based attempts at classification of mental disorders. Borsboom et al. appear to interpret some eminent instances of these attempts (e.g., Insel and Cuthbert 2015) as endorsement of the reductionism that they criticise. However, we think that there are interpretative grounds and, more importantly, theoretical reasons for thinking that these attempts might be underpinned by what we call *revisionary reductionism*. Revisionary reductionism is the view that current syndrome-based classifications of disorders and those involved in the network approach could be *revised or partly or completely replaced* by individuating, amongst individuals that satisfy them, cognitive, genetic, neurobiological and even behavioural differences that might be conducive of better treatment, prediction and explanation.

Are Psychopaths Insane?

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In the paper I discuss whether psychopathy should be considered a mental disorder. This question is important for determining the appropriate social response towards individuals with psychopathic traits. In their paper “Is psychopathy a mental disease?”, Thomas Nadelhoffer and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong have argued that in any plausible account of mental disorder, neural and psychological abnormalities correlated with psychopathy should be regarded as signs of a mental disorder. I oppose this conclusion by arguing that at least on a naturalistically grounded account, such as Wakefield’s ‘Harmful Dysfunction’ view, empirical data and evolutionary considerations indicate that psychopathy might not be plausibly construed as a mental disorder.

The Mathematics - (Natural) Sciences Analogy: The Context of Justification

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The paper takes the starting point to be the view that, in the context of discovery, the analogy between mathematics and the natural sciences holds throughout and then explores if such an analogy could hold (and to which extend) in the context of justification too.

A Metaphor for Scientists

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In this paper I want to propose an analysis of the concept of natural selection in two different books of Charles Darwin: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) and *On the Various Contrivances by Which British and Foreign Orchids Are Fertilized by Insects* (1862).

Natural selection is one of the most important causal explanation in Darwinian theory. The British naturalist dedicated the *Origin of the Species* to describe the observations and deductions that led him to elaborate the theory of natural selection through the concepts of random variation, inheritance and struggle for survival and the analogy with artificial selection. The result was, for the first time, the history of species described as natural process that no longer needs final causes or divine interventions.

Orchid book, on the other hand, represented the attempt to concretely insert the explanatory pattern of natural selection in the scientist's daily work and led to the discovery of plant-insect coevolution.

An analysis of the differences in the presentation of the same theory in two works born with different functions, one to expose the long Darwinian argument and the other to defend it from the attacks by creationists and scientists, is important to understand why Darwin decided to publish a huge number of data and observations on the selection in these two works and not in others. In fact, if the explanatory pattern of natural selection was able to explain at a theoretical level how the evolutionary process developed, it would have lost all scientific value if its explanatory capacity had not been tested in relation to scientific method and if scientists had not integrated it into their naturalistic descriptions.

In this sense the two works, although very different, are complementary: the first offered the cultural framework of a new way of understanding nature, the second implemented a new way of doing science.

Propositional Modularity

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Fodor is known for two proposals: language of thought (LOT: 1975) and modularity of mind (MOM: 1983). LOT presents a computational model of higher cognition, whereas MOM is dedicated to informationally encapsulated sensory processes. Later on, Fodor started to be worried about holistic abductive nature of higher cognition, concluding that the mind cannot work this (namely LOT) way (2000), and that an account of its richness presents the main puzzle besides to the one of consciousness. New Synthesis bets upon massive modularity in order to address holistic abductive higher cognition nature. Fodor is not happy with this, but does not offer solution. LOT, says Fodor, works for modular processes. Mental content is propositional, involving representations and syntactic rules. Background cognition is dismissed. We claim that there is propositional modular centering of content indeed, which however gets supported by morphological content. Reasons are effective in belief and content formation, chromatically illuminating the occurrent content without that they would be necessarily explicitly displayed in consciousness. Proposition with its pointed externalist flavor role is just an abstraction from the complete cognitive state where background morphological content provides belief fixation support. Propositional evidential justification gets its place in the space of reasons by doxastic justification massive morphology.

Informal Logic and Normativity Of Reasoning

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The topic the paper is focusing on is the *normativity of everyday reasoning* (arguably performed in a dialogical argumentative setting) and, more precisely, the relationship between formal and informal logic and the role they play in such an account of normativity. The proposal is that a normative claim cannot be expressed either in the terms of formal logical rules only or in terms of informal rules only. It is a combination of both. Hence, the way of determining appropriate normative claim, namely, what kind of logical rules are normatively appropriate, on one side, and which doxastic state and deontic operator should be chosen, on the other, is a matter of mutual adjustment between requirements of rationality and human cognitive deductive reasoning set-up.

Presentism and Relativity

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What Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (STR) shows in the dispute between presentism and eternalism? There are different answers:

1) STR directly supports eternalism and refutes presentism. (Rietdijk, Putnam, Sider, Ney, ...)

2) STR is compatible with presentism. (Bourne, Zimmerman, Markosian, Savitt, ...)

3) STR shows that our pre-theoretical understanding of time should be limited to our referential framework. (McTaggart)

4) STR by itself does not show anything. The dispute between presentism and eternalism is a metaphysical dispute and it should be settled by metaphysical arguments, not by scientific evidence. (Oaklander & Smith)

5) Since it does not encompass the difference between past, present and future, STR is incomplete. (Prior)

In this paper I will try to say something about option 1). Some formulations of the argument suggest the following reading:

All and only present events are real. (Presentism)

For every event E there is a referential frame R such that E is present in R.
(STR)

All referential frames are equally valid. (STR)

Therefore, all events are real. (Eternalism)

The peculiarity of this reading is that eternalist can prove his point only under the assumption of presentism. A number of questions arises here. Can eternalist do without the assumption of presentism? Are possible referential frames sufficient for the reality of events or actual ones are needed? Can an argument of this form be sound? Is an argument against presentism *ipso facto* argument for eternalism? Etc.

Eternalism, Presentism, and Death

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In this paper I analyze role of metaphysical theories of time, eternalism and presentism, in a contemporary discussion of the badness of death. Paper begins with our intuitions on badness of death, or our ordinary value judgments on death. Then, I contrast Hellenistic philosophers' attitude toward death which regard death as nothing or something which does not deserve negative emotions. In the next chapter, I briefly expose contemporary metaphysical discussion of death badness, and two main theories, deprivation theory which defends attitude that death is bad for the person who dies, and Epicureanism which defends attitude that death is nothing for dead person. According to Epicureanism in the case of death there is no subject who can be harmed, because death is a final annihilation, and that claim is point where philosophers introduce metaphysical theories of time. If we accept presentism, then it seems that Epicurus is right because only what exists is present and it's content, and dead person are not in the present. But, presentism can be upgraded by notion of possible beings that are real but do not exist; in that case all possible beings *are*, even if they do not exist. In that case we have subject for death badness. If we accept eternalism, we claim that equally exist past, present and future time and its content, and it seems that in that case we have subject of death badness. In the final chapter I regard that upgraded presentism and eternalism are not highly plausible positions and I think that these positions are not necessary for resolution of subject problem of death badness. Except that, these positions cannot resolve problem of impossibility of experience in the case of death even if they are resolution for the subject problem.

Mellor on Truthmakers

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Ever since McTaggart's timeless paper "The Unreality of Time" the debate has taken well-defined contours and within it, many important positions have been developed to suitably describe temporal nature of the world we live in. The main debate however, is the debate between the so called "A-theory" and "B-theory" of time. A-theory takes time to be *tensed*, that is, events and objects have temporal properties of first being future, then present and/or consequently past. Furthermore, the future, present and past are real features of the world, making events and objects come into existence from future times, into the present moment (or interval), and drift into the past. In other words, time flows and things change through time. On the other hand, the B-theory of time takes events and objects to be scattered through time in relation one with another, as one being *later than, simultaneous with* and/or *earlier than* the other. There are no temporal properties of events and objects, only relations between them which are objective and never changing. Put in other words, time does not flow, i.e. the flow of time being only an illusion and not real feature of the world. These are the main questions within the debate and to start and answer them (as many others), we need to give an answer to question stated before, *what makes one statement true at one time and false at the other?*

What are the truthmakers, or truth conditions, that make a statement "It is raining tomorrow" true at some time t_1 (and false at t_2)? Hugh Mellor gives detailed account of what truthmakers for such statements are, and what kind of facts about the world make them true. Mellor held the token-reflexive view in his *Real time* first published in 1981., but after development of the so called "new theory of time" he modifies his position and assumes indexical theory in *Real time II* published in 1998. We shall review both token-reflexive and indexical theory and show how states of affair of the world, or facts about the world, give truthmakers for statements that hold through time in Mellor's new theory of time.

Rationality Over Time

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One of the key problems in the philosophy of rationality is how we make decisions. We make decisions every day. From mundane decisions about what to drink on our lunch break to more important decisions which have further consequences on our lives. In order to analyse our decision making in the context of the philosophy of rationality we certainly need two things (two conditions): (i) normative assessment and (ii) explanation and prediction of behaviour. The normative dimension of rationality is prescriptive, i.e. it tells us what people should do while the descriptive dimension of rationality deals with what people are actually doing. In other words, it tries to explain and predict human behaviour.

Here, I am interested in a specific case of decision making problem: dynamic choice. Dynamic choice is a type of decision problem in which one's choice/choices are spread over time. People engage in sequences of choices that are not always reducible to a series of independent, individual choices. They make choices about how they will choose, and they make choices in the light of earlier commitments to choose in certain ways. They make plans for the future and they have a degree of concern for the plans that they have made in the past. This is the notion of sequential choice.

As the normative dimension of rationality I take the abstract axiomatic model of decision making (von Neumann and Morgenstern 1944) and as the descriptive dimension of rationality I take several commonsensical examples to illustrate real decision making in practice.

I am trying to find a reasonable middle ground between normative and descriptive in order to solve the problem of dynamic choice. Intuitions tell us (at least most of us) that some preference changes should be considered as rational while others should certainly be considered as irrational. Rational preference changes are those associated with the agent changing his mind in situations that do not seem problematic, like wanting coffee at one moment and choosing tea the moment after. Preference changes that should be considered irrational are those carried out arbitrarily and repeatedly by an agent. The question I try to answer is what are good criteria for the distinction between rational and irrational preference changes, that is, is there an appropriate theoretical ground that could justify our intuitions in support of such a distinction. It has been shown that formal decision theory cannot help us. Choices can always be presented in a way that breaks the independence axiom of formal decision theory leading into sequential inconsistency (Bermúdez 2009).

I propose differentiating between rational and irrational preference change based on reasons. I use Mercier and Sperber's (2017) model of reasons as social constructs to distinguish rational from irrational behaviour. Mercier and Sperber's model together with their concepts of intuitive inference and epistemic vigilance stands out as a great candidate for solving the problem of dynamic choice.

The Place of Education in Contemporary Philosophical Debates

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We have been witnessing great crises of values, both domestically and abroad. Undemocratic tendencies and practices are gaining momentum, which should no longer be ignored; a solution is needed. Traditionally, at least when it comes to the process of education, such a solution was sought through reliance on the authority and ability of the teachers and their direct teaching of values. However, in the contemporary processes of education and upbringing such practices are in decline, in favour of more indirect methods based in higher levels of teacher-student cooperation and the development of critical and creative thinking. To that end we offer an analysis of the current situation and one possible way through which it would be possible to use literature and film to influence the acquisition of values indirectly, thereby also influencing the education for values at large.

Genre Fiction and Its Many Puzzles

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Genre fiction is often trashed on the account of its formulaic nature. However, the longevity of some of the longest running genre fiction TV serials suggests that these works, regardless of their alleged formulaic patterns, manage to inspire and reward continual viewers' interest. In this paper I set out to explore what motivates and sustains such interest. In the first part, I offer a phenomenological, rather than definitional account of genre fiction. I then explain the origins of its formulaic nature, emphasizing in particular three kinds of puzzles that develop against the formulaic nature; aesthetic, ontological and psychological. I end by arguing that two factors in particular – fictional characters and mimetic level – help solve these puzzles and keep viewers' interest sky-high.

Judging Politicians Morally

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It is pretty common practice almost everywhere to judge politicians or candidates for political functions predominantly on the basis of comprehensive and strict moral criteria. That is, all kind of media and political opponents rush to find and publicize some immoral or suspicious episodes from the politicians', more or less distant, past and thus try to induce general public to exert a pressure the ultimate purpose of which is to remove these individuals either from their positions or from candidacy for them. I find this practice seriously damaging since it very likely disables our communities to get able persons who could manage our political matters efficiently and fruitfully. My presentation aims to offer conditions under which we can, at least sometimes, accept even immoral individuals as our political leaders and attempts to give several arguments for doing so.

Harm, Death and The Quality of Life

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The Epicurean argument that death does not harm those who die rests on the assumption that nothing could be harmful unless it affects one's conscious experience. Not many find this argument convincing. While it may be true that people cannot experience their own death, it is often claimed, the Epicureans are wrong to think that this fact is sufficient to establish the claim that death does not harm the person who dies. Hence, most philosophers think that it is possible to reconcile a firmly held belief that death is a harm with a highly reasonable assumption that death is the absence of all experience. This paper argues that such compatibilist approach to the relation between harm and death should be rejected. I argue that the Epicureans are right to assert that an individual cannot be harmed by his own death. But even if death cannot affect those who die, I suggest, it can certainly affect the lives of those who die. In other words, while death can never harm an individual who dies, it could nonetheless affect the value of his life.

The Meaning of Life, Infinity and Supertasks

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Some have argued that for our life to have a certain meaning it has to be the case that during it we are able to leave a permanent trace. However, as time passes everything decays and therefore the products of our efforts fade away and because of that our lives lack a meaning. Such a conception of the notion of meaning of life relies on the idea that a condition can be meaningful only if it lasts infinitely. I will compare such a conception of the meaning of life with the notion of supertask, a task that consists in infinitely many component steps, but which in some sense is completed in a finite amount of time, and analyze the ramifications of this comparison.