



Department of Philosophy,
Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences,
University of Rijeka



HRZZ research project
Metaphilosophy IP-2022-10-2550



Croatian Society for Analytic Philosophy

Povodom Međunarodnog dana filozofije
pozivamo Vas na predavanje

Alien Structure and The Nature of Metaphysics

Prof. Antonio Capuano

(Auburn University, USA)

koje će se održati

Četvrtak, 21. studenog 2024. u 13:00, predavaonica F-401

Abstract:

In his recent book, *Alien Structure*, Matti Eklund explores the possibility of alien languages and its consequences for metaphysics. He introduces the idea of alien languages using the following little story: “Suppose that an explorer of a faraway planet returns and tells us the following about the community there and place they inhabit. The environment, she says, is not very different from well-known places on Earth. The inhabitants of this planet are as successful in navigating their environment as we are in navigating ours. They have successful science, as shown for example by their technological advances. But the language they use, both in daily life and when engaging in scientific inquiry, is radically different from ours – so different that their words can’t be classified as belonging to any of our linguistic categories. They do not, for example, use nouns, verbs, or adjectives. And it is not possible to faithfully regiment their language using familiar devices like singular terms, predicates, and quantifiers. We face here an especially radical form of non-translatibility. Their language is not simply a language with words we cannot translate into our language but a language whose words belong to altogether different linguistic categories. By immersing herself in this community the explorer managed to learn their language; and the explorer also managed to teach some of them our language. She reports that while her informants did manage to learn our language, in the sense that they learned which sentences it is appropriate to utter when, they did express incredulity regarding the idea that atomic sentences of our language could really express truths, for they found it incredible that reality could contain what is required for our sentences to be true, entities like objects, having properties and standing in relations”. Although I find the question Eklund raises, I find alien languages and the corresponding idea of alien metaphysics impossible, perhaps even incoherent. In this paper, I will motivate my skepticism and draw from it some lessons for metaphysics.

This event is funded by the HRZZ research project *Metaphilosophy* IP-2022-10-2550