

'What We Do: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on the Aims and Methods of  
Philosophy'

5th International Graduate Conference of the Department of Philosophy of Central  
European University

4th April, 2014

Friday

09:00 *Registration & Coffee*

09:30 *Welcome*

09:40 - 10:30 Sebastian Wyss  
(University of Zurich)  
"Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy:  
Negativism and Value" Comments:  
Colin McCullough-Benner

10:30 - 11:20 Stephen Ryan  
(University of Edinburgh)  
"Reliance on Intuitions: A Response to Cappelen" Comments:  
Róbert Mátyási

*Break*

11:50 - 12:40 Matti Heinonen  
(University of Helsinki)  
"Collective Intentional Action and the Naturalist's  
Dilemma" Comments:  
John Michael

*Lunch*

14:20 - 15:10 Felicity Loudon  
(University of St. Andrews)  
"Engaging Philosophically with Past Philosophy" Comments:  
David Webberman

15:10 - 16:00 Anna Christen  
(University of St. Andrews)  
"On the Significance of Geistesgeschichte within  
Contemporary Philosophy" Comments:  
László Kajtár

*Informal Pizza and Drinks Dinner*

5th April, 2014  
Saturday

10:00

*Coffee*

**Keynote**

10:30 - 12:00

**Fabienne Peter**  
**(University of Warwick)**  
**"Justification in Moral and Political Philosophy"**

*Lunch*

13:30-14:20

Ali Emre Benli  
(LUISS University)  
"Problem of Consent: Theorizing Justice and  
Political Guidance in Contemporary Democracies"

Comments:  
Orsolya Reich

14:20 - 15:10

Kevin Tobia  
(University of Oxford)  
"Moral Intuition, Expertise, and Methodology"

Comments:  
Anton Markoč

*Break*

15:40 - 16:30

Kapelner Zsolt  
(CEU)  
"Why Analytic Philosophy Needs a Definition"

Comments:  
Dániel Kodaj

16:30 - 17:20

Alexander Geddes  
(University College London)  
"Judgments about Thought Experiments"

Comments:  
Katalin Farkas

19:30

*Conference Dinner*

Abstracts

**Keynote**

**Fabienne Peter**  
**(University of Warwick)**  
**"Justification in Moral and Political Philosophy"**

John Rawls influentially argued for the independence of moral and political philosophy from other areas in philosophy such as metaphysics and epistemology and put forward a metanormative theory that later came to be known as political constructivism. How successful is this strategy? In my talk I shall review the debate between advocates and critics of constructivism in moral and political philosophy and argue for an intermediary approach to the justification of moral and political judgments that combines elements of metanormative realism and constructivism.

Ali Emre Benli  
(LUISS University)

"Problem of Consent: Theorizing Justice and Political Guidance in Contemporary Democracies"

The meta-ethical discussion on ideal and non-ideal theorizing has brought about a number of models which link theorizing justice and policy guidance. Especially, the transitional and the comparative models have attracted significant attention. In this paper, I point out a central problem the two models share. I argue that both models, to the extent that they apply ideal principles in non-ideal circumstances, contradict with a contemporary democratic insight that policies should be given consent by those who are its subjects.

First, I analyze the two models and show that both models require ideal principles in order to construct non-ideal principles. Second, I suggest that political guidance offered by theories of justice should be within democratic standards. I argue that if in democratic societies policies should be given consent and if policies are guided by non-ideal principles constructed according to the above models; then, ideal principles should also be given consent. Third, I argue that it is not possible to find consent regarding ideal principles. For, the content of any ideal principle is morally indeterminate and people disagree. Finally, I claim that the models do not have moral grounds and the policy makers would impose a morally arbitrary authority on individuals.

Anna Christen  
(University of St. Andrews)

"On the Significance of *Geistesgeschichte* within Contemporary Philosophy"

According to Richard Rorty, *Geistesgeschichte* "wants to give plausibility to a certain image of philosophy, rather than to give plausibility to a particular solution of a given philosophical problem". It is concerned with what questions philosophy *ought* to be asking rather than with possible answers to given

questions. What role does *Geistesgeschichte* play for our contemporary philosophical activities and how does this approach differ from *historical* and *rational reconstructions*? By contrasting and linking the three genres I will elucidate Rorty's thoughts of what philosophy currently does - and what it *ought* to be doing.

I will investigate the methodological differences and joint efforts of Rorty's idea of historicity within *historical* and *rational reconstruction*. By addressing Rorty's exploitation of 'the hermeneutic circle' I will then discuss the interdependence between the two and their common reliance on *Geistesgeschichte* – and thereby reveal the importance of a *honorific sense of 'philosophy'*. I will conclude that the significance of *Geistesgeschichte*, in Rorty's hands, is due to its power to induce philosophical conversation that is selfjustificatory and leads to canon-formation, which is crucial for our ongoing philosophical investigations as captured in *historical* and *rational reconstruction*, but also for the discipline 'philosophy' as a whole.

Alexander Geddes  
(University College London)  
"Judgments about Thought Experiments"

Anna-Sara Malmgren claims that intuitive judgments about thought experiments are metaphysical possibility judgments of a certain sort. She does so in the course of defending rationalism—the view that such judgments are justified a priori, if at all—from a series of arguments put forth by Timothy Williamson. I argue that her proposal should be rejected, for two related reasons. First, it cannot account for the incorrectness of certain judgments. Second, it renders genuine disagreement about thought experiments a surprisingly rare phenomenon. I end by showing how this undermines her attempted defence of rationalism.

Matti Heinonen  
(University of Helsinki)  
"Collective Intentional Action and the Naturalist's Dilemma"

This paper approaches contemporary philosophical accounts of collective intentional action from a meta-theoretical perspective, and argues for an interpretation of their theoretical status according to which they should be seen as models of hypothetical unified or distributed agential systems that can serve to represent the social cognition and behavior of suitable kinds of real agents acting together in complex social environments, but which do not by themselves make truth-valued claims either about how such agents actually function or about the cognitive mechanisms underlying their behavior. The model-based approach is argued to provide the best response to a form of "pessimistic meta-induction" that troubles philosophical accounts of collective intentional action that rely solely on conceptual intuitions about possible cases, and to the "naturalist's dilemma" that arises in connection with methodologically naturalistic approaches to collective intentional action that draw on empirical and theoretical research in disciplines outside of philosophy.

Kapelner Zsolt  
(CEU)

"Why Analytic Philosophy Needs a Definition"

In this paper I argue that, contrary to the common view, analytic philosophy needs to have a definition, otherwise the philosophical practice analytic philosophers engage in is methodologically flawed. There is a consensus among scholars that contemporary analytic philosophy lacks doctrinal and historical unity, i.e. there is neither a set of theses shared by all analytic philosophers, nor a single trail of influence holding the whole discourse together. While most authors welcome the eclecticism, some believe that this fundamentally calls into question the legitimacy of the philosophical practice analytic philosophers engage in. I side with them claiming that if analytic philosophy cannot be defined, it cannot be thought of as an intellectually responsible philosophical discourse. My argument is the following: analytic philosophy is an exclusive and oppressive philosophical discourse in that the majority of its members ignores or underrepresents authors, methods, and doctrines held to be of great importance in other discourses. If analytic philosophy lacks a definition, there is no philosophical principle governing the exclusion and oppression. In this case exclusion and oppression is governed by considerations completely arbitrary from the philosophical point of view. For this reason it is imperative for analytic philosophy to have a definition.

Felicity Loudon  
(University of St. Andrews)

"Engaging Philosophically with Past Philosophy"

How can we engage philosophically with past philosophy, when it so often proceeds on grounds radically different to those of the rest of modern analytic philosophy? How can we treat the work of a past philosopher not only historically, by interpreting and elucidating his arguments, but also philosophically, by evaluating their success or failure? Literary medium, background scientific knowledge and historical context often conspire to deny any common standard of argument with a modern analytic philosopher.

Alasdair MacIntyre suggests a solution to these issues in his article "The relationship of philosophy to its past", arguing that the grounds for engaging philosophically with past philosophy are to be found in the narrative we tell about the discipline. By identifying more precisely the issues at stake and analysing the detail of his solution, I argue that it has some serious weaknesses, but nevertheless points to a way forward for engaging meaningfully with past philosophy.

Stephen Ryan  
(University of Edinburgh)

"Reliance on Intuitions: A Response to Cappelen"

Cappelen (2012) argues that analytic philosophers do not rely on intuitions and therefore that debate concerning the reliability of intuitions is badly misguided. Cappelen's strategy is to attack two arguments imputed to his opponents: the Argument from 'Intuition'-talk (AIT) and the Argument from Philosophical Practice (APP). This paper argues that Cappelen's strategy fails, in particular when it comes to analytic

epistemology with particular focus on Cappelen's treatment of Gettier cases. The upshot is to create scope for a view according to which philosophers rely, in an epistemically significant sense, on intuitions exhibiting conceptual competence.

Kevin Tobia

(University of Oxford)

"Moral Intuition, Expertise, and Methodology"

Despite the force of many recent findings in experimental philosophy, a common criticism of these findings is that the "intuitions" being tested are not philosophically relevant ones. The great majority of these studies have tested ordinary subjects, or "the folk," specifically college undergraduates. Finding the intuitional unreliability of these subjects is certainly interesting, but perhaps this is not the appropriate evidence to bear on the use of "philosophical intuitions" in philosophy. When evaluating the use of intuitions in philosophy, it seems valuable to test whether philosophers' intuitions are more reliable (or perhaps less reliable!) than those intuitions of ordinary people. Some have suggested that philosophers may not be expert intuiters, and there is clear need for empirical support of this claim (Weinberg et al, 2010). This paper explores whether a number of presumably irrelevant influences affect the intuitions of philosophers and non-philosophers. I present four experiments demonstrating that philosophers' intuitions are influenced by framing effects, environmental variables, and presentation effects. Namely actor/observer framing, cues to cleanliness, and font differences impact philosophers' (and non-philosophers') intuitions. These results provide empirical evidence against the expertise defense of philosophical intuition.

Sebastian Wyss

(University of Zurich)

"Wittgenstein's Conception of Philosophy: Negativism and Value"

Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy stands out in that it sees philosophical problems as linguistic confusions; as arising out of a misunderstanding of our forms of language. With that it ties philosophy closely to language and meaning and thus gives an account of its *a priori* nature. On some interpretations of Wittgenstein, getting rid of linguistic confusions is the only aim that philosophy has. This negative view of its aims invites the worry that this rids philosophy of all that is good about it and makes one wonder what then is its value.

My strategy to deal with this worry is twofold. First I show that this negative aim is important in that philosophical problems are unavoidable so that we can't simply walk away from them. Second, I argue that the purely negative interpretation is wrong. For Wittgenstein, the aim of philosophy is not purely negative in that it resolves linguistic confusions, but it also has a positive aim: clarity. Finally, I show that the positive and the negative aim of philosophy are intrinsically linked.